

**Minutes**  
**Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission**  
**August 31, 2010 at 7:00 pm**

**Members present:**

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman  
Brian Bingaman, Vice Chairman  
Michael E. Lauter, Secretary  
Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary

**Staff present:**

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office  
Michelle R. Mayfield, Department of Law  
Charles M. Jones, Department of Public Works

**Others present:**

Randy J. Dautrich, Dautrich Engineering & Inspection  
Paul A. Szewczak, Liberty Engineering, Inc.  
James E. Dockey, Muhlenberg Greene Architects, Ltd.  
Scott T. Miller, Stackhouse Bensinger, Inc.

Chairman Raffaelli called the August meeting to order and, on Ms. Mayfield's direction, asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Bealer moved to accept the August 24th agenda, as modified for August 31st.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the August agenda. Mr. Raffaelli asked for clarification on the presentation of the "Franklin Street Sidewalk Improvements". Ms. Mayfield explained that the presentation given August 24th was sufficient, as no formal action was necessary.

**Subdivision and Land Development:**

Victor Emmanuel Parking & Banquet Hall Addition - parcel annexation and final land development [0:00.54]

Mr. Dautrich briefly explained the extension and tie-in of the stormwater piping, and backfill of the remaining railroad grade. He said the Beneficial Society has decided to forego the new banquet building for now, and focus on the parking upgrades. He said they'll let the cross-access agreement with UGI Utilities expire, and showed a redesigned lot wholly within Victor Emmanuel's boundary. He said they'll clean up the area around the Thun Trail and save the larger trees. Pavilions shown on the plan may also be left to a future phase, though their concrete slabs would be poured in the meantime. Mr. Raffaelli asked about provisions for storage, noting the long-term presence of trailers and dumpsters behind the restaurant. Mr. Dautrich said they'd add a dumpster, and expected the trailers to be removed. He said they may use half of the proposed pavilions for storage. Mr. Raffaelli cautioned against altering an approved plan with piecemeal changes and temporary measures. Mr. Dautrich clarified that he wasn't clear on their intentions, or storage needs, but insisted the trailers would be removed. Mr. Raffaelli thought the driveway width, apron construction and curb-cut radius should account for large delivery vehicles. Mr. Jones said the City-standard detail is shown on the plan.

Andrew Miller hesitated to recommend approval with uncertainties in the construction and uses, notably for the pavilions. He said it seems the plan keeps changing, and noted other plan issues remaining. He asked if the plan had yet been shown to the Schuylkill River Greenway Association. Mr. Dautrich said not, still waiting on other reviews and approvals. Andrew Miller reminded that he first requested their consideration in June. He noted the zoning and erosion controls approved, but notes and legal descriptions in need of correction. He suggested the pavilions be removed from the plan. Ms. Mayfield said it would be a zoning enforcement matter, if built differently. Andrew Miller wondered why they'd let it come to that, when the uncertainty is already evident. Ms. Mayfield disputed the basis of recognizing them as an agency with any review privilege, as so determined by the Planning staff. Mr. Dautrich said he wanted to wait until he had a complete plan. Mr. Lauter guessed the Planning Office was looking to identify any special concerns earlier on. Mr. Bealer thought the storage issue should be clarified. Asked for a recommendation, Andrew Miller only noted the Planning Code deadline.

---

<sup>1</sup> Short of a quorum August 24th, the three members present agreed to 'try again' one week later on August 31st. Since no official action was called for, Barry Isett & Associates was allowed to present its design for streetscape treatments in the 500 block of Franklin Street. The members on-hand offered feedback.

Following some further discussion, Mr. Dautrich agreed to a 60-day extension, and to consult the Greenway Association. Mr. Bealer moved to agree to the time extension. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted 3 to 0 to extend, by 60 days, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code's §508.3 limits on review time, with Mr. Raffaelli abstaining.

**Resolution #40-2010**

Sylvania Homes II – Accessible Housing (Reading Housing Authority) - preliminary subdivision / land development plan [0:26.05]

Mr. Szewczak referred to his presentation the month before, and briefly described the five single-story handicapped-accessible dwelling units. He said they may not be reserved for handicapped tenants exclusively, but were designed accordingly. He indicated a grassed area to handle the stormwater impact. He said the parcel lines of the existing “Sylvania Homes” project are being redrawn for financing reasons and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requirements. He said the Conservation District has already issued its permit, and the Housing Authority has filed a petition to vacate Sheridan Street. Conversation continued on the required off-street parking, vis-à-vis public housing projects and handicapped tenancy, and on-street parking available. Asked if the placements of the buildings were topographic considerations, Mr. Szewczak affirmed, explaining the direction of the slope.

Mr. Szewczak recognized the issues left to address, and had “no problem” with the items identified in the Planning Office review. Andrew Miller stated that the Planning Commission could not act until the Sheridan Street matter is resolved, suggested it be before the next presentation, and advised a time extension. Mr. Szewczak agreed to email a written request to extend the review period by 90 days.

Turning to the architectural presentation, Mr. Dockey depicted three three-bedroom units and two two-bedroom units, with articulated façades differentiating them. He said each would have covered porches and entries, and that the materials would match the nearby Housing Authority units, for aesthetic reasons and inventory efficiency; bricked lowers and vinyl-sided uppers with architectural shingles. He said the party walls would extend through the roofs, for the sound attenuation benefit.

Mr. Lauter moved to table the preliminary plan. Mr. Bingaman seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to table the “Sylvania Homes II” preliminary plan.

First Energy Stadium Parking Lot - parking lot land development plan [0:50.54]

Scott Miller mentioned the July presentation, and the issues raised. He said the special exception has since been approved by the Zoning Hearing Board, immediately following the hearing, with a written decision expected. He thought most of the Planning Office issues addressed, and noted a letter from Muhlenberg Township, stating their position, scanned and applied to the cover sheet. Andrew Miller cautioned that a signing block may be necessary to meet the County's recording requirements. Scott Miller agreed to check into it. He reported the erosion and sedimentation controls approved, and said a couple of stormwater-related issues remain for the City Engineer's consideration. Discussion continued on a foot path connecting the lot to the fronting sidewalk, the Reading Phillies' staff direction of game-related traffic, a draft agreement with Carpenter Technology Corporation, and a small municipal improvements agreement required.

On Andrew Miller's characterization of the remaining issues, Mr. Bingaman moved to approve the “First Energy Stadium Parking Lot” plan, subject to satisfaction of the remaining issues identified. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the First Energy Stadium Parking Lot.

**Resolution #41-2010**

Scott Miller added that Carpenter is hoping for restrictions from on-street parking on certain sections of Cathedral Street. Ms. Mayfield and Mr. Jones offered to explore it, noting it was unrelated to the parking lot plan.

Goggleworks Parking Lot - parking lot land development plan [1:01.40]

Andrew Miller explained that the applicant never sought zoning approval. He offered a resolution explaining the circumstances of the plan submitted, the failure of the applicant to submit a qualifying plan, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code's time limits on reviews, and the applicant's refusal to authorize any extension of that time limit. His recommended language cited the following deficiencies of requirements of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance: parcel dimensions (§22-402.2), the engineer's and surveyor's seal (§22-402.4.E), tract bearings and distances (§22-402.4.K), deviations from the existing zoning (§22-402.4.L.2), information on abutting streets (§22-402.4.Q), observing building setbacks (§22-402.4.R.3), statement of parcel number (§22-402.4.R.6), sizes and materials of sewer facilities (§22-402.4.R.7), erosion and sedimentation controls

and their approval by the County Conservation District (§§22-402.5.D and 22-501.5), and conformance with the Zoning Ordinance (§22-504.1). Mr. Lauter moved to deny the plan for the reasons given, and as read. Mr. Bingaman seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to deny the Goggleworks Parking Lot plan, for failure to comply with the City's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

**Resolution #42-2010**

Mr. Bealer observed that the lot has since been fenced, and equipped with a card reader. Andrew Miller agreed that it was already in use and on other City officials whether or not to cite the owner.

**Other business:**

§603.c.2 conditional use review-117 South 3rd Street (conversion) [1:07.55]

Andrew Miller distributed a written assessment of the application against the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. He described a nearby parking area, to be leased, as occupied during the day, but less so in the evening hours. He thought it may be used by a bakery across the street, but couldn't tell from available records. He mentioned making several visits at different times of day, but unable to confirm that the required spaces are available. Ms. Mayfield recalled the property being on a 'blight list'. Andrew Miller explained that a visually continuous façade extends across several parcels, giving a misleading impression of the property's size. He said the application didn't give all the required interior measures of area, and thought Council might look for a "middle ground" based on the building's size. He explained that the Fire Department had inspected the property after a fire, and described it as a 'five unit' in its report, based on observed conditions. He added that such reports have no relation to, nor bearing on zoning permitting. He reminded the Commission that they have an opportunity to comment, but were not required to do so.

Mr. Lauter recognized the applicant's significant effort to prepare a detailed application and secure some off-street parking, but moved to recommend that City Council give further consideration to the issues raised by the Planning Office in its review, such as the availability of the off-street parking arranged and its continued use. Mr. Bingaman seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to recommend that City Council consider the review of the Planning Office and seek additional information on the conditional use application of 117 South 3rd Street.

**Resolution #43-2010**

review the draft July 27, 2010 meeting minutes [1:26.38]

Mr. Lauter moved to approve the July meeting minutes, as presented. Mr. Bingaman seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the July 27th meeting minutes.

**Resolution #44-2010**

Mr. Raffaelli again raised the issue of the assigned meeting space, and recent communications from the Mayor and Managing Director. He noted that other City boards ordered to move have yet to do so. Mr. Lauter suggested that some members arrange a meeting with that management to discuss the concerns. Andrew Miller indicated that the video equipment was still not working, but might by their next meeting. Everyone agreed that the Penn Room was preferable to Council Chambers for the Planning Commission's needs.

Mr. Bealer reported that foundation work was progressing on Sweet Street's building addition. He said the demolition of the Garden State Tanning building, and rough grading for Berks Women in Crisis are also making progress. Ms. Mayfield cautioned that the developer has yet to execute a municipal improvements agreement and record their land development plan.

Mr. Bingaman moved to adjourn. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the August 31st meeting.