

**Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
February 14, 2006 at 7:00 pm**

Members present:

Ermete Raffaelli, Chairman
David Reppert, Vice Chairman
Michael Lauter, Secretary
Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary
Edmund Palka
Irvin Cohen
Frederic dep Rothermel

Staff present:

Andrew Miller, City Planner
Michelle Mayfield, Legal Specialist

Others present:

Michael Hartman, McCarthy Engineering Associates PC
Bonnie Sowers, The Ray Group Inc.
Paul Gazzerro Jr., Albright College
Terry Sargent, Lord Aeck Sargent
David M. Settle, Entech Engineering Inc.
Earl R. Felty, E. R. Felty Inc.
Kevin Kuzio, E. R. Felty Inc.
Jay Worrall, Reading-Berks Habitat for Humanity
Stephen H. Bensinger, Stackhouse Bensinger Inc.
Amy Anuszewski, Reading Eagle

Minutes:

Chairman Raffaelli called the February meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Palka motioned to approve the agenda. Mr. Cohen seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the agenda.

Review the land development plan for the Albright College Wellness and Fitness Center, a proposed addition to the Bollman Center at that parcel known as 1800 North Thirteenth Street.

Mr. Hartman briefly described the proposed addition, the reconfiguring of the parking lot, and the landscaped buffer around it. He called the content of the City's review letters "mostly drafting related". He noted the corrections made to satisfy the zoning issues raised: the buffer yard provided, the lighting plan included, and a change in location of the driveway.

Ms. Sowers introduced herself as the project architect. She described the planned demolition of the existing entrance and first-floor weight room, for a new atrium-style entrance with its two-story administrative office component. A corridor connecting the addition to the existing Bollman Center is also planned.

Mr. Hartman indicated that the recycling dumpsters, currently staged at the Bollman Center would be moved to the Continuing Education Center parking lot. One dumpster would remain for the needs of the Fitness Center.

Mr. Bealer asked why there isn't any sidewalk, existing or proposed. Mr. Hartman answered that since there hadn't been one, they'd request a waiver of that requirement. Mr. Bealer noted the presence of sidewalk on adjacent blocks.

Mr. Bealer went on to ask about the need to vary the front yard setback requirement. Ms. Sowers described a "duality" between the existing Bollman Center and the proposed Shuman Center for Fitness and Well-being. She said the program requires the administrative offices to occupy a more forward position to control admittance to the Center and provide direction. She added the need for the corridor connecting the two sections of the building and the need to maximize parking. She said the building was initially planned even closer to the street, until the "tranquility garden" was proposed. Mr. Hartman said vehicular circulation in the parking lot makes it necessary to bring the northern end of the building closer to North Thirteenth Street.

Mr. Bealer asked about the plan for campus parking, specifically the often-cited armory property at the

southwest corner of North Twelfth and Bern Streets. He expressed concern for the continued reduction in parking and expansion of facilities. Mr. Gazzo, Albright's Vice President of Administration and Finance, explained a memorandum of agreement between the College and the City. He said the College is committed to razing the structure within one year of taking title, and replacing it with off-street surface parking. Among the impediments to that transfer is a restrictive covenant from the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission. The armory building was once a hosiery mill. The Museum Commission has agreed to lift the restriction if the College prepares a research paper on the region's hosiery mills and marks the site with a plaque. Also, environmental contamination and liability matters must be resolved prior to the transfer. An environmental assessment is almost complete, the findings indicating that hazards present can be mitigated by capping the site with the asphalt proposed for the parking lot. Mr. Gazzo said the report will be submitted shortly, for a ninety-day review period by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). He estimated the approval and release of liability to be granted within six to eight months. He called the structure an "eyesore" that the College is anxious to get rid of.

Mr. Hartman continued with the review letter. He requested the Commission waive the monumentation requirement, since the College owns the entire block and no additional lots are being created. He said the City Engineer agreed that monuments were unnecessary.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the spaces being lost on-site and the Zoning Hearing Board's basis for varying the parking standard. Mr. Hartman said the problem isn't the amount of parking on the campus, but its placement in relation to campus amenities. He said if students walked to their classes, parking wouldn't be an issue.

Mr. Rothermel asked for a description of the materials proposed. Ms. Sowers described a brick and glass structure, designed to match parts of the existing Bollman Center, noting that parts of the Center are split-faced block and metal panel.

Mr. Miller stated that the remaining zoning issues appear to have been addressed. He said the Zoning Ordinance allows parking areas to encroach on the setbacks when provided with an "approved landscaped buffer". He asked that the lighting plan and the landscaping plan for the Tranquility Garden be submitted for review. He mentioned his conversations with the City Engineer and several building inspectors earlier that day, and suggested that action on the plan be delayed until more detail on the utilities and stormwater collection was provided. Mr. Hartman asked for "conditional-final approval" based on the approval of the City Engineer and planning staff of those issues which could be handled outside the Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Raffaelli stated the Commission's preference to grant approval with as few outstanding conditions as possible.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the lighting proposed for the parking area. Mr. Hartman answered, twenty-foot poles on three-foot pedestals. Cut-offs will reduce the measured foot candles to zero before the street.

Mr. Lauter inquired about the shape of the addition and its setback from North Thirteenth Street. Mr. Hartman said that it is nine feet from the right-of-way, 25 feet from the curb line, and about 50 feet in length. Mr. Bealer indicated that they aligned the addition with the emergency exit on the Life Sports Building.

Mr. Miller paraphrased the City Engineer's concerns; the limited stormwater management planning, the reduction in off-street parking, and the projected sanitary sewer needs. Mr. Hartman said stormwater flows were following the existing pattern of sheet flow to the street. He said there was no curbing proposed for the interior of the parking lot. He mentioned a conversation with Rene Wood, Sewage Planning Specialist at the regional DEP office. She agreed that the reduction in seating capacity at the renovated stadium outweighed the increase in flows projected for the Fitness Center. Mr. Miller reminded of the need to document it. Mr. Hartman added that sidewalks could be provided, if necessary.

On a motion by Mr. Lauter, and a second by Mr. Cohen, the Commission voted unanimously to table the plan until the necessary additional information is submitted. Mr. Raffaelli advised Mr. Miller to communicate those needs clearly to the applicant.

Review the preliminary land development plan for the Albright College New Science Center, a new educational building at that parcel known as 1601 North Thirteenth Street.

Mr. Sargent introduced himself as one of the project's architects. He said his involvement began in 2000, as a site selection phase. He mentioned the criteria of placing the building in relation to the other academic buildings and making it visible to the community. He said the field in the southeastern corner of the property was briefly considered, but for the main electrical conduit in the vicinity, as well as the important community green space and the surrounding homes. He mentioned the space in front of the Shirk Stadium as another possibility, rejected due to the large numbers of students, expected to use the facility, that would be crossing North Thirteenth Street. The College found the currently proposed site to be the most functional. He said it will improve handicapped- accessibility to the Chapel, and provide reception/break-out space for events held there. He said it will

engage the streetscape, the building having the same front-yard setback as the Thirteenth and Union Elementary School across the street. He described the current condition of the slope and retaining wall as making the campus inaccessible from North Thirteenth Street. He pointed to the loading dock/service yard available from Union Street. Mr. Lauter indicated his understanding of the explanation given, but asked why the space to the east of the Chapel wasn't considered. Mr. Sargent said the fit was too tight, and would destroy the limited green space on that side.

Mr. Rothermel asked for a comparison between the heights of the proposed Science Center and the existing Elementary School. Mr. Sargent said 70 feet for the Science Center versus 40 feet for the Elementary School. Mr. Rothermel felt that it was specious to relate the masses of each. Mr. Lauter added that only the ends of the Elementary School project forward, with the bulk of the structure set further back. Mr. Rothermel asked if it were feasible to shift the bulk of the Center eastward. Mr. Sargent stated an intent to preserve the axis of the interior court. Mr. Rothermel felt the primary access of the Albright campus was the vehicular entrance of North Thirteenth Street. He said the College is turning what has always been a very open and visible campus into a narrow corridor. Mr. Sargent said the Science Center will only be a half-story out of the ground more than the Chapel. He said landscaping will be used to soften the impact at the corner, and the loading dock will be screened behind the grade.

Mr. Palka wondered where future buildings might be placed. Mr. Sargent guessed the next logical place would be the parking lot in front of the Stadium. He said building north of the proposed Science Center would block the view of the older campus buildings and the historic gate/staircase. Mr. Gazzero said it would depend on the building, noting that the block bounded by Richmond, Linden, North Fourteenth Streets and College Avenue is the next priority. The College is hoping to acquire the one parcel remaining in private ownership, and demolish the houses for a new campus center. They could then replace the existing Campus Center with a parking deck/academic building combination, bringing parking to the middle of the campus.

Mr. Sargent said the Science Center is meant to serve the existing 1600-student population, rather than accommodate new enrollment. He said red oaks are planned for the streetscape. The façade material of the campus buildings are mostly brick. Teal and Master's Halls have stonework and the Chapel has a slate roof. Mr. Sargent proposed a combination of these materials for the Science Center to complement the campus.

Mr. Bealer asked about the construction of the subterranean auditorium. Mr. Sargent described a twelve-inch concrete slab, free of conduit, with poured concrete walls, all finished with a water-proofing membrane. Another protective layer will cap it before sand and whatever paving/landscaping is chosen for the plaza above.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the off-street parking standard. Mr. Miller didn't have the number, but reported that the requirement is based on classroom seats provided and faculty employed. Mr. Settle added that a variance was granted by the Zoning Hearing Board. Mr. Sargent repeated that the use of the building would be by people already on the campus, with few additional staff. He said that three or four spaces may be lost on the street, for the proposed drop-off.

Mr. Gazzero characterized the project as the College's first major construction in 25 years, calling it a "pressing priority". He said it is necessary for market competitiveness.

Mr. Settle said the concept of the drop-off area was reviewed and found acceptable. Mr. Miller noted the County Planners' concern that southbound traffic on North Thirteenth Street would use it for u-turns. The City Engineer, in his review, expressed the similar concern that drivers would make left turns from the drop-off, but that it could be controlled with the proper signage.

Mr. Reppert asked if it was possible to lower the penthouse portions and relocate some roof-top mechanical units, in order to soften the appearance. Mr. Sargent said the penthouse spaces are all allocated to some purpose. He said the roof-top mechanicals are recessed in wells, and out of view.

Mr. Bealer asked if a larger footprint had been considered as an alternative to the height. Mr. Sargent repeated the College's concern for maintaining the historic gateway and the interior view of the older buildings. He said it was a trick to make the building fit as its shown, adding that college buildings are always preferable the lower and longer, from a student utility consideration.

Mr. Miller said the remaining plan requirements could be added between the preliminary and final forms. He then inquired about any anticipated waivers needed. Mr. Settle asked that the improvements agreement/maintenance bonding requirement be waived in recognition of the College's standing in the community. Mr. Miller asked about the sewer capacity required. Mr. Settle said that determination has not been finalized. He also asked that the requirement to show the full parcel boundary, be waived.

Mr. Miller asked that the utility and stormwater management plans be briefly explained. Mr. Settle stated that the electric, cable and telephone lines, currently overhead on North Thirteenth Street, will be buried. The public water and sanitary sewer laterals will tie into services in North Thirteenth Street. Stormwater will be detained in a large, underground concrete vault to slow its discharge to the 60" main. A transformer and emergency generator

will be located in the loading area.

Ms. Mayfield indicated that waiver of the bonding requirement might ultimately have to be considered by City Council, due to the wording of the Ordinance.

Mr. Raffaelli asked if an irrigation system was proposed, suggesting that it might be included in the extensive utility/stormwater systems proposed. Mr. Sargent answered that it wasn't, but said it could be looked into.

Mr. Palka moved to grant preliminary approval to the plan, with due consideration of the City Engineer's and County Planners' concerns. Mr. Reppert seconded the motion. And the Commission voted 6 to 1 to approve the preliminary plan, Mr. Bealer casting the dissent.

Resolution #1-2006

Review the preliminary land development plan for Hancock Boulevard Commons, eight townhouse units proposed at that parcel known as 100 Hancock Boulevard.

Mr. Felty introduced himself and Mr. Kuzio as the project manager. Mr. Kuzio described eight townhouse units proposed to front on Hancock Boulevard, with parking in the rear, and access via a one-way common driveway/alley from Meade Street to Clifton Avenue. The driveway and parking would be screened from view by a graded and landscaped berm. A five-foot-wide concrete sidewalk would replace the four-foot-wide existing macadam. Various shade trees are proposed along the street. The stormwater is to be directed to StormTech® infiltration chambers, similar those used at the Saint Nicholas Street Commons project, last year.

Mr. Bealer distributed pictures of the site and asked about the parking encroaching on the required front yard. Mr. Kuzio indicated that they were planning to seek a zoning variance. He described the private driveway proposed for each unit; 18 feet wide, so as to provide two off-street spaces for each. Mr. Rothermel asked how much of the rear yards were left unpaved. Mr. Kuzio replied that 15 feet of lawn area remains between each unit and the retaining wall of the parking area. The wall itself is to be "decorative stone", 2 feet wide by 2.6 feet in height. Mr. Felty explained the challenge of working within the three front yards of a triangular parcel.

Mr. Rothermel wondered about the neighborhood's on-street parking demand. Mr. Miller stated his impression that it was available around the triangle itself, though he wasn't aware of possible restrictions. Mr. Kuzio stated that parking was permitted along each side of Clifton Avenue and Meade Street, at least. Mr. Rothermel suggested that the variance be sought for a reduction in the parking standard, rather than the setback. He wondered how the limited back yards would bear on the marketing of the homes. Mr. Kuzio felt pushing the parking areas further from the units will still become a setback problem, even if the spaces provided were reduced.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the maintenance responsibility for the driveway. Mr. Kuzio mentioned an agreement between the homeowners. He said the responsibility for the residual triangle hadn't been discussed, guessing that it would be sold with either of the end units. He described it as a "non-building lot", per the terms negotiated with the City.

Mr. Raffaelli asked about the sidewalk maintenance, thinking that the owners of the end units wouldn't want the burden of the sidewalk all the way around the block. Mr. Kuzio indicated that sidewalk was only proposed for the Hancock Boulevard frontage. He said they were hoping for a waiver of the requirement for Meade Street and Clifton Avenue, suggesting that his client already "lost" units in negotiating with the City.

Mr. Raffaelli felt that shape and topography of the parcel wasn't appropriate for development, recalling other configurations proposed in the past, some with units fronting on each street. He asked if the parcel was intended as open space in a comprehensive plan. Mr. Miller cited the City's 2002 *10-year Park, Recreation & Open Space Plan*. He described the sale at the City auction of August 2005, and the additional improvements negotiated between the bidder and the City (brick facades, stepping rooflines, graded and landscaped screening, etc.). He added that the property has yet to be transferred, the land development plan making it difficult to verify that all the necessary conditions have been met.

Mr. Bealer suggested building parking in the residual parcel. Mr. Miller said it is currently shown on the individual parcels, concerned that locating it in a common space would pose additional responsibility and maintenance challenges.

Mr. Raffaelli felt the triangle functions as a gate to the City. Mr. Rothermel asked if there were any deed restrictions on the land, noting that the triangles and greens of Centre Park are so protected. Mr. Kuzio wasn't aware of any.

Mr. Rothermel suggested a less formal approach to the landscaping/screening, feeling that the hedgerow of arborvitae proposed was too rigid, and accentuated the form of the parking area they attempted to soften. He appreciated the graded berm, but suggested that a landscaping professional consider the plantings. Mr. Bealer thought those plantings should be low-maintenance varieties, given the uncertainty in responsibility for its

maintenance.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the City's current recreational uses/maintenance schedule for the property, adding that the sale suggests the City's lack of interest. Mr. Miller said the Department of Public Works mows the property, and the neighborhood occasionally holds events there. Mr. Lauter asked about communication with the neighboring residents. Mr. Miller recalled that the Managing Director had initiated some public dialogue, the initial opposition having apparently faded. Mr. Rothermel asked if appeals to the Zoning Hearing Board still resulted in mailed notification to neighboring residents. Mr. Miller indicated that the practice had resumed.

Mr. Miller told the Commission of the engineering issues yet to be resolved, including additional storm event calculations, and a plan for tying-in to the existing stormwater infrastructure. Mr. Rothermel noted the zoning issues, adding that the Hearing Board's practice of permitting construction in the setback areas makes projects less desirable. He felt the setbacks were made a part of the Ordinance for good reason, and ought to be enforced but for compelling reasons to the contrary. He realized that the requirements often dictate less intense development than the developer wants, but felt many projects would be more palatable if the setbacks were left intact. He restated the Commission's policy of withholding approval until zoning issues have been addressed. Mr. Kuzio said they weren't asking for approval at this meeting.

Mr. Reppert asked if building elevations were available. He expressed some doubt about the "fit" of eight townhouse units in this particular area, adding that the mix of housing styles in other areas of the City evolved more cohesively. He said elevations were needed to make an accurate assessment of their appearance. Mr. Felty explained their preference to divide the row and front some units on the other streets, adding that the City had requested the frontage be limited to Hancock Boulevard. He said the stormwater management is a bigger challenge with the flow toward the backs of the units, making the retaining wall necessary for diversion and collection.

Mr. Reppert suggested other variations in the facades and elevations to visually treat the row. Mr. Kuzio said elevations would be prepared for the next meeting.

Mr. Miller recalled the other conceptual plans prepared by Mr. Felty's firm. He said he preferred the frontage on Hancock Boulevard, given the triangle's gateway character and its visibility from Lancaster Avenue. He added that architectural plans were necessary to confirm that all conditions were met.

Mr. Bealer asked about the Subdivision Ordinance requirement that lot lines be radial to curved streets. Mr. Rothermel said that it was more evidence of the Ordinance being modeled on a more suburban standard, where curvilinear streets with detached homes are the norm. Mr. Miller agreed, and asked the presenters if their client would agree to a voluntary extension of the ninety-day timeline while the more substantive issues were resolved. Mr. Felty said it would be provided. Mr. Kuzio confirmed they would seek zoning relief in the meantime.

Mr. Rothermel moved to table the plan while zoning and engineering issues were resolved, and until the County Planners have submitted their review. He added his recommendation that the required setbacks be respected. Mr. Lauter seconded the motion. And the Commission voted to table, unanimously.

Review the final land development plan for 1428/1430 Monroe Street, two townhouse units proposed at those parcels known as 1428 and 1430 Monroe Street.

Mr. Worrall introduced the project, describing one lot two be divided into two lots, each 25 feet in width. Reading-Berks Habitat for Humanity intends to build two attached units. He noted that a parking variance was approved by the Zoning Hearing Board. He compared the project to their three others at the southern end of the block. When asked about the clearing of the lot, he said a cherry tree was removed. Habitat is trying to save a dogwood on the northern lot.

Mr. Raffaelli asked about the construction of the party wall. Mr. Worrall said it hadn't been discussed at Habitat's last meeting. He distributed a floor plan that seemed to indicate stud and drywall construction. He explained that the parking variance permitted a driveway encroachment into the side yard, granted due to the presence of a utility pole in the rear of the property. He said another variance was granted to allow a half-space reduction in the parking standard for each unit. He said an approximately four-foot-high hedge would help to screen the parking from the neighbor to the south. He mentioned favorable discussions with that neighbor to explain Habitat's intent.

Mr. Raffaelli suggested constructing the party wall of eight-inch concrete block, with 2x10 floor joists joined to the block with a 15° fire cut. He characterized it as superior construction, safer and more private, without extra cost. He recalled the other Habitat projects, two and a half floors with one bath on the second. He recommended an additional half bath on the first floor, as a more current design. Mr. Worrall stated Habitat's intent to provide simple, descent housing, while mitigating costs. He said the decision was made that such amenities weren't worth the added expense. He said this project, like the others, are based on standard Habitat-supplied

designs. Mr. Raffaelli felt it was more than a luxury, adding that the homes' future resale value would be affected. He suggested the necessary hook-ups be included in the construction, at least, to allow for an easier installation later. He said the sewer lateral should also be designed at an accommodating elevation, to avoid the need for a sump.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the City Engineer's recommendations for curb and sidewalk. Mr. Miller said that he mentioned consideration of a waiver, based on the existing conditions of the street. Mr. Miller reported that the County Planners suggested more landscaped screening, and noted concerns about the right of access to the parking at the rear of the lots. Mr. Worrall explained the paved access from the alley in the rear, extending under the Warren Street By-pass, and the paper street/parcel extending from Lackawanna Street west, then south to the same. Mr. Miller noted that, in reality, everyone crosses the Veteran Firemen Association's parking lot to access the rear alley. He agreed that these other opportunities were available, if the current passage was blocked.

Mr. Raffaelli confirmed that the proposal was considered a final plan because of the Ordinance-classifications of size.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the color of the facades. Mr. Worrall noted the faux stone facing on the other projects, an Eldorado veneer donated by Schuylkill Stone, Inc. He said it was more likely that this project would be finished in vinyl siding. Mr. Rothermel suggested earthen colors.

Mr. Rothermel moved to accept the final plan, waiving the Ordinance requirements for curbing, sidewalk and a municipal improvements agreement. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted to approve the plan, unanimously.

Resolution #2-2006

Review the parking lot plan for the Sacred Heart Convent Parking Lot, at their property on St. Bernardine Street.

Mr. Bensinger greeted the Commission and described the 35-space parking lot proposed. He recalled the previously-granted approval of the Convent's land development plan. He said all the City's review comments were easy to address.

Mr. Bealer asked about the retaining wall, wondering why the nine-foot height proposed couldn't be divided between opposite sides of the parking lot. Mr. Bensinger explained grading/elevation challenges at the driveway, and the Ordinance requirements governing it.

Mr. Miller noted that the revisions had not been made. Mr. Bensinger agreed, adding that the issues are minor. He sought conditional approval. He confirmed that the minimum width of the trapezoidal-shaped spaces met the Ordinance standard.

When asked about landscaping, he noted the surviving trees and offered to consider adding more, minding the infiltration areas present. Mr. Rothermel suggested some additional plantings, in the foreground as viewed from Greenway Terrace.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the safety considerations of the elevated surface. Mr. Bensinger mentioned the wheel stops and an 8-10" reveal of the wall over the macadam surface. He admitted that more would likely be required. He described the wall's construction of interlocking block, reinforced by a geosynthetic textile. Stone backfill and perforated PVC piping would be used to promote drainage. He did not have an estimate of life-expectancy.

Mr. Miller wondered whether to treat the project as a simple parking lot design or a revision to the previous land development plan. He noted that the Commission's approval was needed, either way, reminding that the necessary revisions had not yet been provided. Mr. Rothermel felt that, as a Zoning Ordinance requirement, formal land development approval and recording weren't necessary.

Mr. Bealer moved to table the plan, until the revisions are made as required by the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Palka seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to table.

Other business

1103 Marion Street – conversion (Appeal 2006-05)

Mr. Bealer showed pictures he'd taken of the property. He said there was no visible fire escape, doubting there was room for additional egress from the interior. He said the deck on the rear was the only apparent means of entry/exit.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the parking situation in the neighborhood. Mr. Miller noted the Zoning Administrator's opinion that it was sufficient. He explained that the owner purchased the property in 1999 as a multi-unit property. The owner is again marketing the property as multi-unit, and wants the City's confirmation.

Mr. Miller added that a parking variance would also be required. Mr. Rothermel agreed, feeling the variance and conversion should be denied if off-street parking wasn't available.

Mr. Miller referred to a preliminary floor plan showing a stair well available for emergency exits. He said, whatever the outcome of the appeal, a codes inspection should be performed.

Mr. Rothermel moved to recommend that Council deny conversion for 1103 Marion Street, based on the lack of available off-street parking, the lacking evidence of compliance with fire safety and other applicable City ordinances. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted to endorse the recommendation, unanimously.

31 Angelica Street – conversion (Appeal 2006-08)

Mr. Miller described the official status as a single, the owners seeking recognition of three units. He said the first problem is, as an R2 district, conversions aren't permitted, by condition or otherwise. He said the Zoning Administrator alluded to a taxing status that suggested additional units had been recognized, but quickly added that the City's records do not recognize anything but the single-family dwelling. He said the owners recently purchased the property, marketed as a permitted multi-unit. He reminded that the minimum floor area and parking standards would need varying to permit the three units, as well.

Mr. Rothermel felt the property was usable as a single. He moved to recommend that Council deny conversion for 31 Angelica Street, based on the zoning and construction as a single-family dwelling, and the lack of evidence to the contrary. Mr. Reppert seconded. And the Commission agreed to the recommendation, unanimously.

Mr. Rothermel recalled the City Council's stated desire to reduce the residential density of the City (Ordinances 7-1997, 4-2001 and Resolution 49-2000). He said that, except for over-riding reasons to the contrary, conversions should be denied. Mr. Miller stated the need to formally amend the Zoning Ordinance, by ordinance, noting that conversions still appear in certain zoning district schedules as conditional, but permitted uses. Conditional uses must be approved when meeting all the expressed standards and criteria of the Zoning Ordinance.

508 North Ninth Street – conversion (Appeal 2006-09)

Mr. Bealer explained that the building, being renovated from a fire, is too large to be limited as one residential unit. Mr. Miller indicated that preliminary floor plans were submitted. He agreed that conversion was appropriate, adding that four units may be a more reasonable number, rather than the five being requested in the appeal.

Mr. Rothermel noted that the documentation provided indicated six separate electric meters on-site. He asked about the off-street parking arrangement. Mr. Miller said five spaces were designed for the site, adding that a variance would be necessary. Mr. Rothermel recalled a past practice of reducing the parking standard to one off-street space per unit, where buildings were being rehabilitated. He suggested that the owners approach the Electric Repair Company about their vacant lands to the south, in an effort to design more off-street parking. He asked if a code inspection was intended. Mr. Miller assumed so, as part of the construction permitting.

Mr. Bealer moved to recommend that Council approve conversion for 508 North Ninth Street, subject to the provision of detailed floor plans, meeting the minimum residential standards, approved by the code enforcement division, and further, that the owner approach the neighbors about constructing additional parking adjacent to the structure. He supported a variance from the literal parking standards, if necessary. Mr. Rothermel seconded. And the Commission voted to endorse the recommendation, unanimously.

Minutes

Mr. Raffaelli asked if there were questions or concerns about the December 13, 2005 meeting minutes.

Mr. Reppert moved to accept the December minutes, as presented. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

Resolution #3-2006

Review the draft 2005 Planning Commission annual report

Mr. Rothermel suggested some minor revisions to wording of the text. He asked for clarification on the terms of the Fourth and Cherry Street Parking Garage Expansion, thinking that two additional decks were approved, as opposed to one. Mr. Miller noted that the plan is missing from the file, and the minutes are incomplete.

Mr. Miller explained that he wasn't sure how far to go in explaining the projects or offering opinion in the narrative, noting the itemized list included at the end the report.

Mr. Raffaelli asked about the confusion over the Gordon Hoodak Stadium at Lauer's Park. Mr. Miller

mentioned seven separate attempts to clarify the issue with the project engineer, to no avail. He said there is currently an uncertainty over the boundary location. Mr. Rothermel remembered the Commission asking for additional landscaping, to be shown on a separate plan. Mr. Bealer concurred, referring to a Home Town Streets/Safe Routes to School grant the District received. He recalled a problem with the ownership and boundaries as they were shown, and mention of a plan to purchase adjacent lands from Metropolitan Edison Company. Mr. Miller pointed to the need to take seriously the requirements for boundary information and material corners, noting that hasn't been the trend in the past. He felt it was as important that the developers demonstrate their awareness of the boundary, as it is for the City to have the visual record of the plat. He felt that no matter what the size of the owner's total holding, some reference to it should be made with each and every development proposal. Mr. Bealer said he would look into the matter.

Mr. Miller stated that the Report was due March 1st. All Commission input and modification of the draft was limited to this meeting.

Mr. Raffaelli requested some other wording changes. Mr. Palka moved to approve the Annual report, with the changes identified. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the Report.

Resolution #4-2006

Mr. Raffaelli requested an opportunity to have the Reading School District brief the Commission regarding its future expansion/renovation plans. He felt the Commission should have input and opportunity to make recommendations earlier than the District has allowed. Mr. Bealer said he could approach the School Board, having been named a community liaison for the District. Mr. Miller mentioned Thomas Hylton as a new ally in the school planning concern. Mr. Hylton is working under a William Penn Foundation grant to study the viability of smaller, neighborhood-oriented schools.

Mr. Rothermel reminded that May was the month for electing Commission offices. Mr. Palka offered to chair the nominating committee, with Mr. Reppert and Mr. Bealer agreeing to assist.

Mr. Miller reported that the planning docket is growing beyond the Commission's scheduling capacity, indicating the need to for a possible second meeting in March. He mentioned the Reading Public Museum's sketch plan for expansion as having been submitted in time for the February meeting. He encouraged the Commission to waive the sketch requirement, since the Museum officials were amicable when told they were left off the agenda.

With no further business, Mr. Rothermel motioned to adjourn the February meeting. Mr. Palka seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the February meeting, 7 to 0. – xxxxxx pm.