Minutes
Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
January 9, 2007 at 7:00 pm

Members present:

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

Staff present:

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office
Michelle R. Mayfield, Law Department
Jatinder S. Khokhar, Code Services Office

Others present:

Kent D. Morey, Spotts, Stevens & McCoy, Inc.
David A. Wolf, Carpenter Technology Corporation
Robert B. Ludgate Sr., Ludgate Engineering Corporation
George A. Hutchinson, North 4th Street, LLC
Gene London
Madelyn S. Fudeman, Essig, Valeriano, & Fudeman, PC
Daniel H. Laudenslayer, Tarson, LLC
Gordon G. Hoodak, Reading School District (Principal, Lauer's Park Elementary School)
Gregg A. Bogia, Bogia Engineering Inc.
James J. Brady Jr., Spotts, Stevens & McCoy, Inc.
Timothy J. Krall, Spotts, Stevens & McCoy, Inc.
James D. Smith, Spotts, Stevens & McCoy, Inc.
Scott A. Adams, Gilbert Architects, Inc.
Thomas Chapman, Jr., Superintendent, Reading School District
Vern L. McKissick III, McKissick Associates PC
Stephen F. DeLucas, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the January meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda.

Mr. Lauter moved to accept the agenda. Mr. Palka seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the January agenda.

Subdivision and Land Development:

Review the **final** land development plan for the **Building 108 Expansion**, an addition proposed at that parcel known as 101 Bern Street. [0:00.11]

Mr. Morey described existing Building 108, and the expansions to the north and south ends. He said the Zoning Hearing Board approved their requested variance from the building height maximum (Appeal No. 2006-77, at the December 13, 2006 meeting). He said erosion and sedimentation control plans had been submitted to the Conservation District, expecting their response within the next couple of weeks. He acknowledged the Planning Office review, intending to make the required corrections in-time for the next Commission meeting. He sought waivers on three issues related to boundary information, based on size of Carpenter's overall property. Written requests were previously submitted, citing the additional time and expense of a full boundary survey as a hardship. He understood that the Commission's formal action would have to wait until the County Planning Commission had opportunity to comment.

Mr. Rothermel asked for the input of the Department of Public Works. Mr. Miller hadn't received any written comments, but said the City Engineer's utility concerns were being satisfactorily addressed, and the Utilities Division Manager had provided written certification of sufficient sanitary sewer capacity. Mr. Morey said the only public utility to be affected by the project is a City water line. He said they're looking to relocate the pipe outside the building footprint to the north, and will coordinate the same with the Water Authority.

Mr. Rothermel asked the staff's position on the requested waivers. Mr. Miller agreed that the sections were

each related to the boundary details (the parcel bounds, the adjoining ownerships and subdivisions, etc.), information already recorded on other plats. Mr. Morey offered to provide copies of the "real estate plan" for the Planning Office's records.

Mr. Rothermel asked when they anticipated the County Planners' review. Mr. Morey said they have thirty days to submit their comments, expecting it in-time for the Commission's February meeting.

Mr. Bealer moved to approve the waivers of the four Land Development Ordinance requirements, as detailed in the applicant's written request, dated January 9th (§§22-402.4.F, -402.4.H, -402.4.K, -403.1.B). Mr. Rothermel seconded the motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to grant the waivers.

Mr. Rothermel moved to table Carpenter's final plan, pending the input of the County Planning Commission. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to table the plan.

Review the **final** subdivision plan for **323-333 North 4th Street**, a subdivision proposed from that parcel known as 323 North Fourth Street. [0:12.13]

Mr. Ludgate recalled the previous presentations to the Commission. He described the property, formerly used as a wholesale/retail electronics supply, and recently converted to a Family Dollar Store. He said the Dollar Store cannot use the remainder of the building, prompting a subdivision to allow for productive reuse. He called the property an entirely existing nonconformity, approved by the Zoning Hearing Board. He noted the Planning Office review letter, and characterized the required revisions as minor, or not applicable. He said there was no new construction proposed, and nothing left to do with the plan. He hoped the Planning Office staff would have since checked the resubmission. Mr. Miller said he only received it the day before.

Mr. Ludgate said that his son Thomas B. sent a memo with the latest submission, highlighting the changes made per the City review letters. He said the utilities shown are all existing; the only external change proposed is the new paint striping of the parking stalls.

Mr. Miller asked if the individual utility service laterals shown were all existing. Mr. Ludgate answered yes. Ms. Mayfield asked if the revisions, previously submitted on an 8½ x 11-inch facsimile were since incorporated into the plan. Mr. Ludgate answered yes.

Mr. Lauter recalled the Commission's request for zoning clarification. Mr. Miller indicated his dissatisfaction with the result, but questioned the fairness of continuing to delay the application for the Hearing Board's oversight. Ms. Mayfield read from a letter, prepared by the Hearing Board's solicitor stating the requested waivers were granted. Mr. Miller disputed the value of the letter, but noted that the applicant had nothing to do with it. He said he made his best efforts to clarify the matter. Mr. Ludgate said the Dollar Store doesn't need the additional parking, since it serves a local neighborhood, and people walk. Mr. Lauter reminded that the subdivision calls the use of the second lot into question. Mr. Ludgate noted the cross-access easement, feeling there was no way to provide additional parking, without building demolition.

Mr. Miller called it a matter of procedure, regardless of the perceived need for off-street parking. He said it isn't the Commission's responsibility to assume anything about zoning. Mr. Rothermel thought the Zoning Ordinance needed more conscientious administration, alarmed by the history of permitting for this particular property.

Mr. Lauter raised the concern of having two separate entities utilizing the space, and the control over its operation. Mr. Ludgate said the owner needed assurance that they could subdivide the parcel in order to market it successfully. Mr. Lauter noted that the owner purchased the property himself without that guarantee.

Mr. Hutchinson introduced himself, and recognized the City for being business-friendly. He said he represents different national chain stores, and had bought the property about a year ago with the understanding from the previous owner of a legitimate commercial status. He wondered then what to do with the four-story building. And after having weighed the costs and impacts of its demolition, he decided to keep it, and plans to spend $80-90,000 on a new dry-pipe sprinkler system. He said the tenant in-mind will probably be there for many years.

Mr. Lauter asked why the owner felt he couldn't realize those plans without the subdivision. Mr. Hutchinson said the Dollar Store was, to date, the only tenant found, that no one wanted the four-story building behind it. He then introduced Mr. London as a potential buyer, referring to his garment collection, and storage needs. He said the Fire Marshal has already been consulted on protection measures.

Mr. Bealer asked about the testimony at the zoning hearing, wondering if the top three floors were represented as warehouses. He recalled the Commission's concern if it were to become office space, or something else requiring more employee parking. Mr. London confirmed that he was planning on warehouse space, but admitted that could change. Ms. Fudeman, the legal representative for the applicant, said she attended the zoning

hearing where the Hearing Board was told the building would be best used as a warehouse, and not something more parking intensive. She said it was her understanding that the Hearing Board had clarified its decision, and that approval would be granted on the condition of a subsequent Planning Office review. Mr. Miller asked who told her there would be an approval. Ms. Fudeman said the Commission's legal counsel.

Mr. Rothermel wondered what happens to a zoning permit, originally issued for the use of both buildings as equal in intensity to previous use, when the property is subdivided and intensified by additional uses.

Mr. Miller reiterated that his frustrations have more to do with internal procedures, than with the applicant's effort. Mr. Palka felt it was the Hearing Board's problem. Ms. Mayfield agreed that the developer had done everything he could.

Mr. Palka moved to approve final subdivision plan, with the condition that Planning Office staff review the required changes prior to the Commission's endorsement and recording. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted 5-1 to approve the final plan, Mr. Raffaelli casting the dissent.

Resolution #1-2007

Review the **parking lot** land development plan for the **Lauer's Park Parking Plan**, 24 additional off-street parking spaces proposed at that parcel known as 219 North Second Street. [0:37.38]

Mr. Laudenslayer said the Planning Office staff review was delayed by the mail (later found in a puddle), limiting the time available to make the required corrections. He asked for a meeting with the Planning Office to clarify some remaining items. He briefly described the site, and recalled a comment made at the November meeting about vehicular turn-around movements. He said the retaining wall has been moved to allow space for three-point turns, per *Architectural Graphic Standards* outlines. Erosion and sedimentation control plans have been submitted to the Conservation District, the School District needing to amend the NPDES permit granted for the Gordon Hoodak Stadium excavation. He hoped to have everything in order within the month. He referred to a Planning Office comment about the sanitary sewer lateral, calling it an existing feature. He said only some new storm piping is proposed, everything else having existed before, except a sanitary sewer extension to the Stadium's concession stand and some electric line relocation. Mr. Miller asked that the legend and symbols used clearly reflect those improvements that were existing, proposed for the Stadium, and/or proposed as part of the parking expansion. Mr. Laudenslayer said he would have to consult Burkey Construction Co. for their as-built records.

Mr. Miller agreed that they should meet to discuss the specifics, but recognizing the expiring review timeline and the lack of a written request for extension, gave a reluctant recommendation for approval, contingent on subsequent staff review of the remaining corrections.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the existing condition of the area pegged for the additional parking. Mr. Laudenslayer referred to the playground, the safety concern for its proximity to North Second Street, and the planned relocation to the rear of the school building. Mr. Hoodak noted that the area was previously used for parking.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the landscaping proposed. Mr. Laudenslayer mentioned landscaping islands within the parking lot, sugar maples for screening on Thorn Street, and some yew trees. Mr. Miller thought some shrubbery was proposed on the eastern elevation, as well. Mr. Laudenslayer referred to the steep bank as a limitation. Mr. Miller asked about the possibility of headlights shining from the proposed parking lot toward neighboring residences. Mr. Laudenslayer said there are garages acting as a buffer across Park/Thorn Street. Mr. Rothermel thought the parking lot's designed elevation to be higher. Mr. Laudenslayer agreed. Mr. Rothermel asked what the Zoning Ordinance required in landscaping of properties adjacent to residential zones, later identifying a section (§27-1602.15, requiring a fence, wall or hedge) missed in the Planning Office reviews.

Mr. Raffaelli wondered how the Stadium was built without satisfying the land development process. Mr. Rothermel asked if the proper building permits were pulled. Mr. Miller said he wasn't familiar with the whole history of the Stadium's construction permitting.

Mr. Rothermel asked what other corrections were required. Mr. Miller mentioned some notes, zoning data corrections, and utility labeling, and the Conservation District's approval. He asked about the "proposed wells". Mr. Laudenslayer said that was an error, since removed from the plan. Mr. Miller asked about the "stormwater infiltration". Mr. Laudenslayer mentioned an area under the warning track of the Stadium, designed to satisfy a Conservation District comment. Mr. Miller asked about details on lighting. Mr. Laudenslayer said they propose relocating the existing light to the back of the proposed lot.

Mr. Bealer asked about the landscaping previously planned along North Third Street. Mr. Hoodak mentioned a $132,000 grant from the Department of Transportation, the higher than expected bids for the work, and a subsequent redesign. He said the School District is committed to the project, allocating extra funding for it, and

hoping to get it underway by spring. It will include sidewalks on North Third Street, a retaining wall and landscaping of the slope. Mr. Laudenslayer said those details appear on the plan. Mr. Hoodak said a wrap-around driveway was deemed too expensive, and would decrease the usable play area.

Mr. Rothermel moved to approve the final plan, contingent on the provision of the required Land Development Ordinance corrections. Mr. Miller noted that the Land Development Ordinance gives the Commission the ability to direct additional landscaping where deemed necessary, and based on concern for the sight lines to neighboring properties, advised such consideration. Mr. Laudenslayer offered to discuss the matter in his meeting with the Planning Office, recognizing that the shade trees wouldn't help until they mature anyway. Mr. Miller asked if the turn-around provision would be practical, even when the lot is fully parked. Mr. Laudenslayer said yes. Mr. Rothermel felt that if the School District is serious about the efficient use of the lot, they must monitor its use. Mr. Hoodak said that someone will be assigned to do so. Mr. Rothermel amended his motion to approve, contingent on the revisions identified in the Planning Office review, and additional staff review of the lot buffering. Mr. Lauter seconded the amended motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the final plan, on those conditions.

Resolution #2-2007

Review the **final** land development plan for **Sun Rich Fresh Foods, Inc.**, a proposed subdivision and construction of a food product manufacturing facility for that parcel known as 466 Tulpehocken Street. [1:02.33]

Mr. Bogia addressed the Planning Office review, specifically questioning the call for a zoning permit. Mr. Miller clarified that the zoning permit should be obtained before any building permits are sought. He said the Zoning Administrator has participated in the review, confirming the findings of the Planning Office. Mr. Bogia indicated that the area labeled "future parking" would be planted with grass until developed, as required by the Zoning Ordinance. He explained the "juice tank", a 10'2" high, 7'6" wide storage structure.

Mr. Miller relayed the City Engineer's general satisfaction with the industrial waste monitoring and sampling provisions.

Mr. Bogia noted that approval of the erosion and sedimentation control plan was still needed, the Conservation District still looking for additional "best management practices (BMPs)" for stormwater run-off. He said the sanitary sewer module was submitted, and as well the industrial pretreatment plan provided by the Dennis Group, LLC. He said the City Engineer and Plumbing Inspector were satisfied with the stormwater drainage plans, and the municipal improvements escrow amount was agreed to. Ms. Mayfield said preparation of the formal improvements agreement has been delayed by the applicant's design issues.

Mr. Bogia said the missing sidewalk along Tulpehocken Street will be replaced. Ms. Mayfield advised his client to consider replacement of the whole length.

Mr. Bealer wondered about the traffic signalization issue. Mr. Miller said it had been taken care of; the City Engineer had asked for a clarification of responsibility if signalization is ever warranted.

Mr. Rothermel asked if all the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance were met. Mr. Miller confirmed, as long as the "future parking" area is landscaped until developed, admitting plenty of example properties in the City violating this requirement.

Mr. Rothermel asked about driveway width. Mr. Bogia indicated a typical 24-foot width in the cartway, wider where the curblines radii at the driveway's throat, as recommended for truck maneuverability.

Mr. Rothermel asked about precedent, having the Zoning Administrator permit a project in an urban renewal area. Though recognizing that the Zoning Ordinance stands as the de facto parcel controls for the Buttonwood Gateway Redevelopment Area, he suggested the Redevelopment Authority may have approval authority, and advised consultation with their solicitor. Mr. Miller wondered if the Zoning Administrator would have to issue a permit anyway, as a formality. He said one of the reasons they agreed to postpone the zoning permitting, in this particular case, was to give the Planning Commission greater input on the zoning matters, up-front.

Mr. Rothermel asked if the whole property was sold to Buttonwood Gateway, LLC, and if so, if they planned to market the remaining land, not developed as part of the Sun Rich proposal. Mr. Bogia confirmed. Mr. Bealer asked if the LLC planned to retain ownership, or subdivide the remainder and sell it. Mr. Bogia said it would depend on the opportunities stemming from their marketing efforts.

Mr. Rothermel noted that the Redevelopment Authority never used to sell land on speculation, generally requiring plans to be presented for specific projects. Mr. Bealer thought it a benefit, the City not having a marketing arm of its own. He felt it took a burden from the City, expecting that the balance of the land would likely be put to productive use more quickly than if left to the Redevelopment Authority. Mr. Rothermel countered that "the use"

might not be the most desirable to the City. He recalled a proposal to build a veterinary clinic at the intersection of North Second and Penn Streets (now the site of the Community College's performing arts theater, under construction), a use permitted by the Zoning Ordinance, but resisted by the Authority for urban design considerations.

Mr. Raffaelli expressed concern over the trend toward truck-intensive and dependent operations in the urban core, citing several recent examples. He felt the City would benefit from land valuations and planning policies that would make urban lands the most attractive for residential use. He recognized that the community can't always afford to wait for the *best* uses, but might regret it later. Mr. Miller reminded that the parcel is zoned as a Manufacturing-Commercial (MC) district, and that the environmental constraints would preclude other uses, without substantial additional remediation. Mr. Lauter suspected the temporary tax incentives of Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZs) might present business retention problems once they expire.

Mr. Lauter asked about the traffic signalization issue. Mr. Miller explained that the cost of installation would be the burden of any subsequent developer whose traffic volume *might* warrant one. Mr. Bogia doubted a signal would ever be warranted, without substantial additional traffic during the "p.m. peak" timeframe. Mr. Lauter wondered if the often-discussed River Road extension might eventually effect that warrant, when traffic seeks access to Buttonwood Street via the ramps. Mr. Bogia said the new turning restrictions proposed would limit those movements.

Mr. Miller echoed Mr. Rothermel's point about the Redevelopment Authority's traditional terms of real estate transaction, suggesting the City does have agencies and employees designated for its marketing efforts. He recommended the Commission approve the final plan based on a final staff review of the required corrections.

Mr. Lauter moved to approve the Sun Rich final plan, conditioned on the Planning Office's verification of required corrections, the approval of other agencies having jurisdiction, any replacement, rehabilitation and maintenance necessary to provide continuous, usable sidewalk along their Tulpehocken Street frontage, and the execution of a municipal improvements agreements prior to the Commission's endorsement. Mr. Palka seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the final plan.

Resolution #3-2007

Review the **preliminary** land development plan for the **Millmont Elementary and Science Magnet**, a proposed reconstruction of the elementary school at that parcel known as 300 Carroll Street. [1:37.00]

Mr. Brady referred to the revisions made, hoping for a preliminary plan approval. He said they've addressed the comments in the Planning Office review, described the site, surrounded on all sides by public streets, and a new school with a combined population of 750 elementary and sixth grade magnet students. He said they were still waiting on refinement of the Zoning Hearing Board's decision granting the requested variances. Mr. Krall asked if the Hearing Board or its solicitor had contacted the Planning Office. Ms. Mayfield mentioned correspondence received from its solicitor, dated January 5th and provided to the Planning Office, stating that everything requested had been granted, with a copy of the plan attached. She said the letter was provided to the Planning Office earlier in the day, and couldn't verify that it addressed the Commission's concerns. Mr. Miller said he read the letter, disappointed by the lack of the Hearing Board's clarification. He said he wasn't disputing the applicant's representation of the hearing, but had hoped for better documentation. He said if the City is willing to accept such informality from its Hearing Board, there wasn't much he or the Commission could do about it. He said he wasn't asking anything more of the applicant.

Mr. Brady moved on to the Land Development Ordinance issues. He asked if the plan dating was satisfactory. Mr. Miller reminded them to change revision dates only, never the original plan date. Mr. Brady asked for a waiver of the "abutting" ownership references, explaining that the site is surrounded by public rights-of-way. Mr. Miller noted the vague definition of "abutting" and supported the waiver. Mr. Brady explained the proposed rooftop stormwater management, a first for the Conservation District's consideration. He noted the 'green roof' over the eastern area (approximately 2x6 planting trays), with a typical bituminous membrane construction proposed beneath. He said rainwater run-off is reduced via plant transpiration and root uptake, with cooling benefits as well. He described the educational gardening areas in the central courtyard and the pervious TurfPaver surfacing. He said the other roof areas are of a typical pitched construction. Mr. Miller clarified that he was asking about overflow capacity for heavy events. Mr. Brady noted the typical overflow stacks and roof drain system, and its construction detail on the plan. He said the stormwater management report had been submitted for the City Engineer's review. He said the City Engineer had no opposition to the proposed curb bump-outs, intended to separate car and bus traffic, since a two-way usable width remains. Mr. Krall said he consulted the Water Authority about the water line to be covered by one of the bump-outs, their capacity to serve the increased demand, and metering installation (for

radio remote readings). Mr. Brady said he consulted the Shade Tree Administrator regarding the street tree removals proposed along Belvedere Avenue. He said they've been "topped" significantly over the years for the overhead electric lines, and the Administrator expressed no opposition to their removal. They plan to remove 12-13 mature street trees, and provide 20 or more throughout the interior of the site. He said they will provide a site lighting plan with the final submission. No new street lighting is proposed.

Mr. Bealer asked if there were any changes to the ventilation system plans. Mr. Adams mentioned an upcoming meeting between Reading School District officials and the project consultants to resolve the issue. Mr. Bealer asked if there was any progress on the electric line placement. Mr. Krall said he met with the Metropolitan Edison Company; the lines must be relocated for construction safety, and 'Met-Ed' will perform the work based on the final design. Mr. Bealer said he referred the matter to State Senator Michael A. O'Pake's office, concerned for the imposition on the neighbors. His preliminary feedback indicated that burial could be an option if the School District agrees to pays the difference. Mr. Krall said he made his inquiry with that in mind, and got a definite "no", because of maintenance and other reasons besides cost. He insisted the School District prefers underground installation, as well, and was willing to negotiate costs. Mr. Lauter asked if any meetings with planned with the neighbors, thinking their reaction might make 'Met-Ed' more amenable. Dr. Chapman recalled at least four presentations to the residents, between the concept and preliminary planning stages, when they discussed anticipated impacts and the intent to use the Calvary Baptist Church on Park Avenue as a "swing space" during construction.

Mr. Raffaelli thought the cost projections excessive, despite the subsurface preparation required, and subsurface garage construction. He recalled other comparative school construction projects in the County. He felt the proposal violated the District's trend toward smaller school sizes. Mr. Adams explained the construction itself accounts for about $31 million, the $40 million figure including the total, design, financing, and furnishing costs. Dr. Chapman described the project as two schools, a growing elementary and a new magnet. He said it was still a smaller format, and saved the District $5 million by combining schools on property already owned, and employing the same modular construction techniques as their previous two projects. He said the School District is still considering sites for the fourth and final sixth grade magnet program. He said the School Board felt this reconstruction the best option, given their land and resource constraints. He said the School District continues to grow rapidly, adding about 400 students per year. He said Reading is already the largest school district in Pennsylvania, at about 18,000 students (later stating that about 3,500 are bussed, the vast majority walking to school).

Mr. Rothermel asked about the designed height. Mr. Brady answered 38 feet, the 35-foot maximum varied by the Hearing Board. Mr. Adams said that is actually lower than existing the existing building, prompting Mr. Rothermel to point out the dramatically larger footprint. Mr. Rothermel asked if that specific variance was granted. Ms. Mayfield again referred to the solicitor's letter, which does not specify the extents of relief granted. Mr. Rothermel asked about on-street parking demand, concerned by curb bump-out alterations. Mr. Krall said the spaces along Summit Avenue are occupied primarily by the Millmont faculty and visitors. He said the School's new garage would handle all faculty needs, and aside from some new street restrictions, there will still be on-street parking opportunities.

Mr. Brady requested that the clear site triangle requirements, as applied to driveways, be waived. He asked also that the requirements to detail all abutting ownerships be waived. Mr. Rothermel thought the maximum driveway width to be exceeded. Mr. Brady said the driveway narrows to twenty feet, though large radii at the street make it appear much bigger. He said they could reduce the curb cut, but preferred to maintain the 24-foot aisle widths. Mr. Miller said he missed the aisle width violation in his review. Mr. Rothermel expressed concern for the building's mass, appreciating the District's financial savings, but considering the visual impact unfortunate, and a dramatic exceeding of a zoning ordinance established to protect the character of residential areas.

Mr. Rothermel asked why the playground fence was solid. Dr. Chapman said it was the recommendation of the architect. Mr. Reppert felt a more open and visible fence design would better serve the site aesthetically, and still protect the students in the playground. Mr. Rothermel mentioned the School District's fence at 10th and Penn Elementary. Mr. Bealer asked about fence height restrictions. Mr. Miller said fences may be six feet at maximum, but retaining walls were exempted.

Mr. Reppert moved to grant the waivers as requested, (22-402.4.F) the names of all abutting subdivisions and record owners, and (22-502.6.G) the required 75-foot clear sight triangle at the driveway intersection with the street. Mr. Bealer seconded the motion. And the Commission agreed to the waivers, unanimously.

Mr. Bealer moved to approve the Millmont preliminary plan, subject to the required Land Development Ordinance revisions, and a reduction in the driveway width per the staff's direction. Mr. Miller asked about the progress on the traffic study. Mr. Brady expected it in two weeks. Mr. Palka seconded the motion. And the

Commission voted 5-0 to approve the preliminary plan, Mr. Raffaelli abstaining.

Resolution #4-2007

Mr. Raffaelli left the meeting for another engagement.

Review the **preliminary** land development plan for the **Reading Citadel/Intermediate High School**, a proposed conversion of the vacated St. Joseph Medical Center campus roughly bounded by North Eleventh, North Thirteenth, Elm and Walnut Streets. [2:59.00]

Mr. Brady mentioned the progress made since the sketch presentation at the Commission's October meeting. He described the site location and its existing buildings. He said the corner office building will be razed, as will the garages at North Thirteenth and Elm Streets, with modifications to rest of the campus for the educational program. He said the seven-story building height was approved by Zoning Hearing Board, as well as the reconstruction of the tower spire. He said the overall measure of impervious coverage will be reduced. He said the use of the proposed athletic field will be limited to the physical education curriculum. He indicated the locations of new driveways near the gymnasium, the locker rooms, and loading area. He said curb bump-outs were again being proposed for North Twelfth Street, which will be opened to two-way travel, between Walnut and Elm Streets, for safer student drop-off arrangements.

Mr. Krall said they submitted a traffic impact study, and are also proposing two-way travel on Walnut Street between Birch and North Twelfth Streets, replacing a traffic signal at North Twelfth and Elm Streets, and a new signal at North Thirteenth and Elm Streets. Mr. Rothermel asked how many busses were anticipated traveling east on Elm to that traffic signal, and if it would be enough to warrant a traffic signal. Mr. Smith said it will meet the warrant, if made two-way, not only because of the busses but the added car traffic, as well. Mr. Krall said they were no longer proposing a 'school hours' closure of North Twelfth Street.

Mr. Brady estimated a total of 2500 students in four different magnet school programs. Mr. Rothermel expected that parents wouldn't be able to resist dropping-off students on Walnut Street, and wondered if the District had considered an entrance from Elm. Dr. Chapman said it was considered, noting their findings that fewer high school-aged students are dropped-off anyway. Mr. Rothermel asked about comments from the Department of Public Works. Mr. Miller said he was still waiting on the written report. He said the County Planners' comments were received earlier that day. Dr. Chapman said the Reading Citadel will have less staff than the Medical Center had.

Mr. Krall referred to the review letter comment about providing architectural plans. He said they were provided for the zoning appeal. Mr. Miller said he was looking for a copy. Mr. Rothermel suggested the applicant discuss the specifics of the Planning Office review with the staff directly, in the interest of time, and limit the presentation to those issues needing the Commission's input and/or waiver. Mr. Krall mentioned the lot and parcel divisions, intending to combine the various properties into three aggregate parcels. Mr. Rothermel asked if appeals had already been made to the Hearing Board. Mr. Krall answered yes, the written decision similar in detail to the Millmont decision. He said most of the existing nonconformities were being mitigated. Mr. Rothermel agreed, but suggested the new lots proposed would have to be reviewed for approval. Mr. Miller felt, that since the lots were getting larger and most of the zoning infractions were existing conditions, additional appeals were unnecessary. Mr. Rothermel didn't think it an administrative decision. Mr. Krall felt the removal of lot lines and reconfiguration of the structures reduced the nonconformance. Mr. Rothermel felt that, with new lines, come new relationships between the lots and their improvements. Mr. Krall defined them as annexations, proposed because his experience in the City suggested that was the preferred practice for clarity and ease of real estate management. Mr. Rothermel agreed it was the right course, but felt the new lots themselves should seek the necessary relief. Mr. Miller offered to discuss it with the Hearing Board solicitor. He felt that if empty lots were being combined for new construction, it would be a given. Mr. Rothermel said it wasn't a Planning Commission issue, but should be researched.

Mr. Krall said he met with the Water Authority, whose consultant would advise them on the placement of lines, and provide records on prior usage to substantiate a waiver of the sewage planning module process. Mr. McKissick, in response to the Planning Office review, clarified that there'd be no nighttime activity on the athletic field.

Mr. Brady said the Shade Tree Administrator okay'd the removal of a street tree on Elm Street, in the path of a planned driveway. Mr. Krall said the remaining items could be discussed with the staff.

Mr. McKissick showed the building elevation renderings. He indicated the replacement glass proposed for the solarium, the brick base course to be retained from the original 1894 structure, and the replacement top for the spire, thought to have been lost in a storm. He said they planned to salvage the building's slate, stone, and brownstone foundations. He described the function/circulation plan for the building, and some other restoration

efforts. He estimated 131,000 square feet of new construction, 202,000 square feet of existing to remain, and 170,000 square feet of proposed demolition. He said the medical office building was scheduled for demolition the following week, the Birch Street garage for the second week of February, with heavy demolition in the main complex beginning the first of March. He said they expect the Medical Center will maintain some residual use through the beginning of March.

Mr. Lauter advocated for the Artifacts Bank's interest in salvaging any historic building materials not being incorporated into the renovations. Dr. Chapman advised contact with the Turner Construction Company, and asked for a cover letter from the organization.

Mr. Reppert confirmed the staff's recommendation to table the plan, pending the receipt of additional documentation and reviews. Mr. Lauter moved to table the Reading Citadel preliminary plan. Mr. Palka seconded. And the Commission voted 5-0 to table the preliminary plan.

Review the **preliminary** land development plan for the **15th Street Land Development**, a subdivision and six single-family attached dwellings proposed at those parcels known as 615 and 633 South 15th Street. [3:53.50]

Ms. Mayfield referred to the applicant's written requests to extend the Municipalities Planning Code-mandated action timelines on the 15th and 15½ Street land developments until April 9th.

Mr. Rothermel moved to grant the requested extension on the 15th Street Land Development. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission agreed 5-0 to the extension.

Resolution #5-2007

Review the **preliminary** land development plan for the **15½ Street Land Development**, a subdivision and eight single-family attached dwellings proposed at those parcels known as 614, 631 and 632 South 15½ Street. [3:55.42]

Mr. Lauter moved to grant the requested extension on the 15½ Street Land Development. Mr. Rothermel seconded. And the Commission agreed 5-0 to the extension.

Resolution #6-2007

Mr. Miller explained that the extensions would cover the time needed to make a possible appeal to the Zoning Hearing Board concerning driveway design.

Minutes: [3:56.58]

Mr. Rothermel moved to accept the November 14th minutes, following the revision of some typographical errors. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the November 14th minutes.

Resolution #7-2007

Mr. Rothermel moved to accept the December 12th minutes, as presented. Mr. Palka seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the December 12th minutes.

Resolution #8-2007

Other business: [3:58.43]

Ms. Mayfield mentioned some procedural issues for discussion, including the processing of municipal improvements agreements, agreements to time extensions, the issuance of building permits in relation to plan recordings, an amendment to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance submission deadlines, and the scheduling of Commission workshops. Recognizing the length of the meeting, she advised postponing the discussion to the next meeting.

Mr. Rothermel moved to adjourn the January meeting. Mr. Palka seconded. And the Commission agreed unanimously to adjourn the January meeting, 5 to 0. – 11:10 pm.