Minutes
Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
July 11, 2006 at 7:00 pm

Members present:

Ermete Raffaelli, Chairman
David Reppert, Vice Chairman
Michael Lauter, Secretary
Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary

Staff present:

Andrew Miller, City Planner
Michelle Mayfield, Legal Specialist

Others present:

Thomas B. Ludgate, Ludgate Engineering Corporation
Michael Pullano, Pike Café, Inc.
John T. O'Neill, Landmark Surveying
Gene M. Jamison, TKG Construction Company
Barry E. Weaver, Blue Marsh Surveyors
Scott T. Miller, Stackhouse Bensinger Inc.
Albert R. Boscov, Our City Reading, Inc.
Lee C. Olsen, Olsen deTurck Architects
Amy Anuszewski, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the July meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Lauter moved to approve the agenda. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the July agenda.

Subdivision and Land Development:

Review the **parking lot** land development plan for the **Pike Café Inc. – Parking Lot Expansion**, 78 additional spaces proposed at that parcel known as 1320 Moss Street.

Mr. Ludgate described the location between Mill and Moss Streets, as "all but" a parking lot already. He said the previous demolition of a building that covered seventy (70%) percent of the lot, had left it with the necessary grading. He described it as an extension of the existing covered facility to the north, with 78 additional spaces relieving pressure from the on-street parking situation. He said the addition would not be covered.

He noted some landscaping proposed along Moss Street, 9 shade trees and 18 shrubs. He said a number of variances were granted by the Zoning Hearing Board, declining to elaborate since he was not personally involved in the hearing. He said the lighting has already been installed, as has the fencing. Mr. Pullano described a 5-foot wrought iron fence on Moss Street, and 8-foot vinyl coated black chain-link on the other sides.

Mr. Lauter asked about the stormwater control measures. Mr. Miller stated that all stormwater will sheet flow toward the south to an exiting catch basin in the street, a plan approved by the City Engineer and Plumbing Inspector. He said he submitted the plan to County Planning, but wasn't expecting a formal review.

Mr. Raffaelli asked for more information on the light fixtures. Mr. Pullano described five 25-foot steel poles, with ten 250-watt metal halide fixtures, each with appropriate cut-offs and mounted on cement bases. He said the neighbors like it and appreciate the off-street parking provided.

Mr. Raffaelli asked about signage. Mr. Pullano noted an additional stop sign and some traffic directional signage. Mr. Ludgate stated that no traffic enters but through the existing lot, through existing signed entrances. Mr. Reppert asked if the fence would be used for banner signage, advertising specials or vendors. Mr. Pullano mentioned vinyl banners to advertise his daily specials, adding that they "last a month or two" before starting to deteriorate. Mr. Reppert discouraged the practice.

Mr. Miller stated that the terms of variances granted didn't address the parking in setback. He said the zoning measures provided on the plan's data table were incorrect. He quoted the section of the Zoning Ordinance prohibiting parking in the setbacks. Mr. Ludgate said he thought it applied to buildings. Mr. Miller admitted that it was basically the same plan as presented to the Hearing Board.

Mr. Miller questioned the travel circulation, in a clockwise direction. Mr. Pullano answered that it just

always was. He said the security camera coverage, the location of the existing electrical service, and his plan to eventually build a guard shack supported continuing the pattern. He added that the customers are accustomed to the current direction.

Mr. Miller said this was the first look at the landscaping material proposed, suggesting they check with the Shade Tree Administrator for appropriateness of the varieties chosen.

Mr. Bealer stated his position that it is the Hearing Board's responsibility to address the zoning issues, like parking in setbacks. He noted that the applicant is basically following an existing configuration. He said he personally had no problem with approving it, noting a significant investment being proposed for the area.

Mr. Bealer moved to approve the parking lot plan, conditioned on the correction of the figures in the zoning table, and approval of the landscaping material by the Shade Tree Administrator. Mr. Lauter seconded the motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve.

Resolution #29-2006

Review the (revised) **final** subdivision plan for **Downing II – Minor Subdivision**, two residential lots proposed from that parcel known as 2369 Downing Street. [0:27]

Mr. O'Neill recalled the previous presentation to the Commission. He described the proposal to subdivide one lot into two, suggesting that the parking encroachment in the required setback can be corrected by turning the Lot 1 house by 90°, to face Downing Street. He presented a plan showing that configuration as another possibility, noting the difference from the plan submitted to the Planning Office.

Mr. Miller recalled the previous presentation where driveway access from the rear alley was considered. Mr. O'Neill said such a design would add impervious surface, interfere with the on-lot septic systems and necessitate moving the homes closer to the street line. Mr. Raffaelli asked about providing the driveway/garage entrance to the sides. Mr. O'Neill said it would still interfere with the sand mound structures.

Mr. Miller recalled the City Engineer's recommendation to withhold Commission approval until the City's sewage enforcement officer approves the design of the on-lot septic systems. He said no correspondence has yes been received. He asked that detail be drawn on the plan itself and written verification from the enforcement officer be provided.

Mr. Bealer asked about the County Planning comments. Mr. Miller noted their reminders for the proper soil testing and driveway sight distances.

Mr. Bealer recalled the first consideration at the May meeting, wondering if the Planning Code's timelines were a concern. Ms. Mayfield affirmed, stating the need to have the applicant request an extension from the Commission, or alternately, deny the plan. Mr. Jamison indicated his desire for the extension.

Mr. Miller noted that the applicant was also requesting waivers from the sidewalk and street lighting requirements. Mr. O'Neill said sidewalks were not present in the area, and street lighting was already present nearby. He recognized the Ordinance requires every subdivision to provide sidewalks and lighting. He noted that curbing exists. Mr. Jamison said there were no sidewalks anywhere in Riverdale.

Mr. Bealer moved to table the final plan, pending the sewage enforcement officer's approval, and granting the request for 30-day extension. Mr. Reppert seconded the motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to table the final plan. Ms. Mayfield asked that the request for the extension also be provided in writing.

Review the **preliminary** land development plan for the **Fox Tail Subdivision**, (known previously as the "Myrtle A. Valeriano Subdivision") a subdivision and two single-family detached units proposed at the southwest corner of the intersection of High and Lowrie Streets. [0:51]

Mr. Weaver stated the plan had been revised in accord with the Planning Office review letter. He said "lot 2" was made a little smaller, the lot lines having been adjusted to conform to the Zoning Ordinance area requirements. He added landscaping and defined the varieties. He said the on-site sanitary disposal had been previously approved for six townhouses, though nothing was available in writing. He noted two existing street lights in the vicinity, proposed that curbing would be installed, in addition to some other minor street improvements. He requested a waiver from the sidewalk requirement, though he is currently showing sidewalks on the plan. He said no storm or sanitary sewers are present, adding that they could install capped laterals, but preferred a waiver.

Mr. Miller advised that they consult with the Plumbing Inspector regarding the roof run-off/leaders' connection to the street, and provide documentation of the City's sewage enforcement officer approval for the design of the on-lot septic systems. He said the outstanding zoning issues have been resolved.

Mr. Raffaelli questioned the statement about the six townhouses. Mr. Weaver said a previous plan established originally 20-foot wide lots. Mr. Miller believed they were not actual lots, but purparts of the larger

parcel. Mr. Bealer felt the current design was more appropriate and consistent with the area. He welcomed the proposed street improvements.

Mr. Raffaelli asked about the style of construction. Mr. Weaver described two-story homes, with a partial reveal of the basement, and two-car garages.

Mr. Miller reminded of the need for the sewage enforcement officer's input, and for a review of the updated plan.

Ms. Mayfield asked if there was a submission to Muhlenberg Township, given the proximity to the municipal line. Mr. Weaver said not.

Mr. Miller said that with the current plan as a two-lot subdivision, it now qualifies as a minor subdivision and consideration as a final plan, advising that future submissions be labeled as such.

Mr. Bealer again questioned the applicable Planning Code timelines, noting that this was the plan's first consideration by the Commission. Mr. Miller, noted that the zoning issues and administrative deficiencies that precluded an earlier review (the previous plan had been voluntarily withdrawn from the agenda of the March 14th meeting), had since been resolved.

Mr. Weaver handed the revised plans to Mr. Miller, for his review. Mr. Lauter asked about building elevations. Mr. Weaver said they would be provided with the final submission.

Mr. Lauter moved to table the Fox Tail Subdivision plan, pending submission of the necessary additional documentation. Mr. Reppert seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to table the plan.

Review the **preliminary** land development plan for the **Goggleworks Apartments**, sixty (60) high-rise apartments proposed for those parcels known as 100 and 110 North Second Street and 101 Pear Street. [1:13]

Mr. Olsen introduced the project team. He noted the zoning change to be considered by City Council at a July 31st hearing. He described this presentation as an update on the design and site engineering, promising additional information on the architectural style, material and color at a subsequent meeting.

Scott Miller described the site plan. He said approximately 84 off-street parking spaces were designed for the parking deck. Mr. Boscov said they had raised the count to 90 spaces, to meet the 1.5-space requirement per dwelling unit.

Scott Miller referred to the City Engineer's July 5th review memorandum, concerned with the driveway access to Washington Street. Mr. Boscov stated that the proposed driveway had been moved back to a 40-foot separation distance from intersection, with a two-car stacking distance provided between the street and the gate. He said the sole motive is safety for the residents

Scott Miller realized that, even with the zoning change, the project will still require several zoning variances, including relief from the maximum coverage and minimum yard setbacks.

Mr. Boscov described the on-going planning of the outdoor garden and sitting areas above the parking level. He hoped the area would encourage the tenants to interact and plan events. He described the apartments as "upscale", expecting about $800 for a two bedroom unit (approximately 1250 square feet) and $635 for one bedroom, all with marble in the bathrooms and hardwood floors. He said a glass exercise room/atrium would be placed atop the building.

Mr. Olsen affirmed that the architectural "table" was still the strategy, using load bearing masonry. He mentioned Labor Day 2007 as the target date for "substantial completion. Mr. Boscov added that the movie theater project is aiming for a Memorial Day 2007 opening. He mentioned the hotel project, as well, expecting it in the spring of 2008.

Andrew Miller gave a reminder of the hearing scheduled for July 31st, and advised the applicant to arrange for a hearing with the Zoning Hearing Board to discuss the necessary zoning variances. He estimated the best-case possibility of preliminary approval at the Commission's September meeting. Mr. Olsen recalled the past practice of granting simultaneous preliminary and final approvals. Andrew Miller said the Commission typically hesitates to do so, but recognized the emerging detail in the plan. He reported that the environmental and geotechnical work was progressing, as well.

Amid discussion of streetscape treatment, Mr. Olsen said the law requires 40% of the exterior of the parking deck to remain open, to avoid having to provide mechanical ventilation. He said decorative block and landscaping were being considered to screen the street-level parking, while maintaining the required opening.

There was a brief discussion on the progress of the movie theater planning. Mr. Olsen reported that they had just received floor plans and building elevations from the lead architect. Andrew Miller gave a reminder of the maximum coverage and possible height violations being proposed. He advised another meeting with the Hearing Board to address zoning relief. Mr. Boscov said a possible IMAX® theater is the only design contingency. Mr.

Olsen said there may be some utility easements complicating the vacation of the pedestrian walk between the theater site and the Front and Washington Garage.

Mr. Bealer asked how the Commission should treat the plan, submitted for preliminary consideration. Ms. Mayfield said no action was required.

Mr. Lauter moved to table the Goggleworks Apartments preliminary plan, pending the resolution of the zoning issues. Mr. Reppert seconded the motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to table the preliminary plan.

Zoning amendment:

Review the **re-zoning petition** for the Manufacturing-Commercial (MC) Zoning District between Walnut and Washington, North Front and North Third Streets. [1:43]

Mr. Miller stated that the Commission may have acted earlier than was appropriate, when it recommended a re-zoning for the existing Manufacturing-Commercial (MC) Zoning District. He suggested the Commission make its recommendation in reference to the more formally-drafted ordinance and supporting materials, and the request for comment dated June 27. He recognized July 27 as the deadline for the City and County planning agencies to give their input, before the hearing on the 31st.

Mr. Bealer moved to recommend Council adopt the proposed map change from Manufacturing-Commercial (MC) zoning to Commercial Core (CC), as shown by the map accompanying the formal request for comment. Mr. Lauter seconded the motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to recommend that Council adopt the proposed map change.

Resolution #30-2006

Award of the **Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program** (LUPTAP) grant. [1:51]

Ms. Mayfield and Mr. Miller reported on the award from the State providing funds for the preparation of zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations, and City Council's approval of the matching funds from the 2007 budget. They anticipated a start in early 2007. Mr. Miller hoped the revisions would, at last, resolve some of the recurrent problems frustrating the City's planning and zoning efforts. Ms. Mayfield expected the effort to take between six and eight months, at least, noting that the contract for a consultant would have to be put to competitive bid.

Minutes: [1:55]

Mr. Raffaelli asked if there were any comments or corrections on the June 13th minutes. Mr. Miller mentioned the reference to Reading Truck Body providing thirty (30) shade trees. He said that, upon review of the Zoning Hearing Board records, it appears only ten (10) trees were being required. He said he intended to change the text of the minutes and resolution accordingly. Mr. Bealer brought some other needed edits to light.

Mr. Lauter moved to accept the June minutes, with the requested corrections. Mr. Reppert seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the June minutes.

Resolution #31-2006

Mr. Miller apologized for the lack of staff commentary with the July mailing.

Mr. Miller referred to the June discussion on Ordinance-defined exemptions to the land development process. Even with the additional policy statements since found, Mr. Miller questioned the effect of a Commission resolution on a Council ordinance.

Mr. Miller reported that the Zoning Administrator has issued a "stop work" order to the owners of Mimmo's Pizzeria.

Other business: [2:06]

Mr. Bealer reported on a meeting he and Mr. Raffaelli attended with the Reading School District Superintendent and Director of Facilities. At issue, were the planned additional magnet schools and the renovations of the soon-to-be-vacated St. Joseph Medical Center on North 12th Street. He described the meeting as a positive

opportunity to allay the Superintendent's assumptions and clarify the Commission's role in community planning. He said the District offered an invite to attend future project planning sessions.

Mr. Lauter moved to adjourn the July meeting. Mr. Reppert seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the July meeting, 4 to 0. – 9:20 pm.