

**Minutes**  
**Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission**  
**June 13, 2006 at 7:00 pm**

**Members present:**

Ermete Raffaelli, Chairman  
Michael Lauter, Secretary  
Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary  
Edmund Palka  
Frederic dep Rothermel

**Staff present:**

Andrew Miller, City Planner  
Michelle Mayfield, Legal Specialist

**Others present:**

Jason R. Sieminski, Cozen O'Connor Attorneys  
Robert J. O'donnell, Robert E. Lamb, Inc.  
Josh Perlman, Reading Truck Body, LLC  
Richard Hetrick, Aston Surveyors/Engineers, Inc.  
Ragesh R. Patel, Vrajesh Corporation  
Dilip Patel, Vrajesh Corporation  
Craig M. Bonenberger, McCarthy Engineering Associates PC  
Shawn Belovich, The Belovich Group Inc.  
Daniel F. Luckey, Reading Housing Authority  
David H. Feick, Entech Engineering  
Terry Roylance, Lord Aeck & Sargent, Inc.  
Paul Gazzerro Jr., Albright College  
Scott T. Miller, Stackhouse Bensinger Inc.  
Albert R. Boscov, Our City Reading, Inc.  
Lee C. Olsen, Olsen deTurck Architects  
Bryan F. Morrison, Olsen deTurck Architects  
Jay W. Worrall IV, Reading-Berks Habitat for Humanity  
Vaughn D. Spencer, City of Reading City Council  
Gary S. Fronheiser, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the June meeting to order, recognized the lengthy agenda, and asked for its acceptance. Mr. Lauter moved to approve the agenda. Mr. Rothermel seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the June agenda.

**Subdivision and Land Development:**

Review the **final** land development plan for **Reading Truck Body, LLC – Shipping Building and Manufacturing Addition**, an addition to the manufacturing facility and a shipping building proposed at those parcels known as 310 and 316 Hancock Boulevard.

Mr. Sieminski introduced himself and distributed an informational packet describing the proposal and the business itself. He introduced Mr. Perlman and Mr. O'donnell, briefly described the 19.83-acre site its 2.41-acre parking lot, and noted the designated Heavy-Manufacturing zoning. He mentioned Reading Truck Body's 40 years of manufacturing standard and custom truck bodies.

Mr. Sieminski said all raw material delivery and product shipping are currently using one access drive/gate from one loading dock, causing a bottleneck condition, impairing productivity and competition. He indicated the positions of the proposed 20,000-square foot shipping facility, and the proposed 20,000-square foot addition in place of the existing loading dock. He said the raw material reception was to be relocated, and a second access gate would be installed to relieve the congestion. Mr. O'donnell pointed out the proposed circulation toward the new exit, and compared it to the current condition.

Mr. Sieminski stated that the renovations could result in increasing the current day-time employment shift from 390 to 410 positions, increasing productivity and keeping operations at the Hancock Boulevard location. He

said reconfiguring/repainting the parking lot could provide an additional 38 spaces, for a total of 303. He explained the need to demolish the existing storage building and shift its location.

Mr. Sieminski noted the variances granted by the Zoning Hearing Board at their May 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, including an increase in permitted building cover to approximately 3% above the maximum and the requirement to plant shade trees in the parking lot, adding that Reading Truck Body has agreed to donate the required (10?) trees for placement at the City's discretion or in the grass islands in Hancock Boulevard. He said placing them within the lot would decrease the available parking. He asked the Commission for final plan approval, stating that all staff review comments had been addressed in the revised plans.

Ms. Mayfield asked if the donated shade trees were made a condition of the Hearing Board in granting the variance. Mr. Miller said the offer is reflected in the plan's general notes.

Mr. Miller conveyed the City Engineer's recommendation for added cover over the replacement concrete stormwater (38 x 53 HERCP) piping at the parcel's northern end. He recommended that any Commission approval be made conditioned on added cover. Mr. O'donnell stated that the cross-section showed six inches of cover. Mr. Miller said the City Engineer noted three inches and was asking for a minimum of nine.

Mr. Bealer asked if a new gate was proposed for the exit. Mr. O'donnell said yes, adding that the existing gate can continue to accommodate entry and exit. Mr. Bealer wondered if Gerry Street could handle the truck traffic. Mr. Miller believed the use of Gerry Street to be limited to Reading Truck Body.

Mr. Raffaelli questioned the policy for employee motorcycle parking. Mr. Perlman said they currently park wherever they find space, agreeing to designate a specific area per the Commission's recommendation. Mr. Raffaelli suggested they be kept inside the property's fence, for security. Mr. Perlman agreed.

Mr. Raffaelli noted that the fence around the parking lot acts as a net, collecting loose debris. Mr. Perlman said their "summer help" details the area. He said more maintenance crews can be assigned to it, on a more regular basis. Mr. Bealer felt the replacement trees should fill the gaps in the Hancock Boulevard islands. Mr. Miller said he would note the Commission's suggestions, adding that the City Engineer and Shade Tree Commission should weigh-in as well. Maintenance of trees in those islands would be the City's responsibility. Mr. Miller said the decision on placement could be made later with their input. Mr. Rothermel asked if the Shade Tree Commission had reviewed the current plan, recalling a Planning Commission resolution that any project proposing a certain number of shade trees be reviewed by the Shade Tree Commission. Mr. Miller said no, only two trees being currently proposed and placed internally next to the proposed shipping building. Mr. Rothermel wondered if there was any way to place the required trees within the parking lot without losing spaces. Mr. Sieminski believed not.

Mr. Rothermel asked how product was moved from the manufacturing facility to the shipping building, sensing a circulation conflict. Mr. Perlman said raw materials are currently delivered via the same ramps the fork lifts use to move the finished product. He recalled some previous incidents, indicating that the new driveway would be reserved for deliveries, the forklifts keeping the ramp to themselves.

Mr. Lauter moved to approve the final plan, contingent on an additional review by the City's Director of Public Works, establishment of designated off-street motorcycle parking, and provision of the ten (10) shade trees approved by the Zoning Hearing Board, their placement left to the discretion of the City's Shade Tree Commission. Mr. Rothermel seconded the motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve.

**Resolution #19-2006**

Review the **preliminary** land development plan for the **Chadwick Condominiums**, 48 apartment units proposed at that parcel known as 1523 Hill Road. [0:26]

Mr. Hetrick described the project as an existing undeveloped parcel in the Residential 3 (R3) district. He said the 48 units would be divided between two buildings, at four units high on the front elevation and two units high toward the rear, due to the slope of the parcel. Space would be provided around the buildings for off-street parking and access to the rear units. He said the zoning permit had been granted. Referring to a section of the Zoning Ordinance, he indicated that no retaining walls would exceed 6 feet in height. He assured their intent to the correct the deficiencies outlined in the review letter, characterizing most of them as "drafting related". He requested preliminary approval and introduced the owner/developer, Ragesh Patel.

Mr. Lauter asked about access to the rear-facing units. Mr. Patel indicated the stairwells on the drawing. Mr. Hetrick said a total of 16 units would face the rear.

Mr. Bealer questioned the Fire Department access to the rear, and asked about an escape area in the rear yard. Mr. Patel stated that the retaining walls are low enough to permit escape. Mr. Hetrick indicated 3 separate means of ingress/egress, with continuous sidewalk provided around the buildings. Mr. Miller said the Fire Marshal had seen the plans.

Mr. Bealer wondered about the effect of the project on the historic stone wall affected. Mr. Patel noted the County Planner's similar concern, adding that material removed would be donated to the repair efforts elsewhere. Mr. Miller asked about the material intended for the retaining wall. Mr. Patel said something "more architectural", and smaller than standard concrete block, mentioning EP Henry's products by name. Mr. Hetrick suggested varying sizes might be used for the decorative effect.

Mr. Rothermel asked about landscaping. Mr. Hetrick noted the evergreen hedgerow, to buffer the parking lot, and intended to diffuse the headlights of vehicles therein. He said the rest of the landscaping plan would be prepared and presented with the final submission.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the maximum building height allowed under the zoning. Mr. Hetrick answered that 60 feet was allowed. Mr. Patel added that the proposed height was only 54 feet.

Mr. Lauter, concerned about the curve to the east on Hill Road, asked about the sight distances provided from the driveway, recalling the speeding vehicles he has observed in the area. Mr. Patel shared the concern, adding that they determined the current location of the driveway, with its elevation, to be preferable to the other side of the parcel.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the effect of the water run-off on the existing storm sewer system. Mr. Hetrick stated his intent to resolve those concerns with the City Engineer. He said a retention area is proposed. Mr. Miller said the City Engineer would be looking for an additional catch basin in the street, and additional detail on drainage area and its construction. He noted the City policies against ponding and infiltration. Mr. Rothermel questioned the adequacy of the existing of stormwater pipe.

Mr. Rothermel asked about tree plantings within the parking lot. Mr. Miller said they are shown on the plan. Mr. Hetrick described diamond shaped planters. Mr. Rothermel noted that the parking lot was not losing spaces by providing the interior trees. Mr. Miller asked about the construction of the planters. Mr. Patel said concrete curb would protect the trees from the vehicles.

Mr. Rothermel asked about building materials. Mr. Patel mentioned concrete stone products for the exterior, over a steel structure, adding that the steel is easier to work with. Mr. Rothermel asked about lighting in parking lot. Mr. Hetrick said the details are provided on the plan, the standards at 14- and 25-foot heights. Mr. Raffaelli asked if the lighting would adhere to "Dark-Sky" guidelines. Mr. Patel indicated that appropriate cutoffs would be included.

Mr. Miller mentioned the specific landscaping requirements for mid-rise apartments. He stated his position that, given the wooded character of the parcel, the Commission should consider recognizing the existing, undisturbed growth as satisfying the requirements, and to limit the disturbed area.

Mr. Bealer asked about the County Planning review. Mr. Miller said the biggest concern dealt with preservation of the stone walls lining the roads on Mount Penn.

Mr. Rothermel asked if they intended to assign the parking spaces to the condominium units. Mr. Patel said the issue hadn't yet been decided. Mr. Rothermel suggested they create loop in the parking lot for better circulation and better marketability. Mr. Patel said he would compare the possibility against the spaces lost.

Mr. Bealer asked about condominium documents. Mr. Patel recalled the request in the Planning Office review, adding that his attorney (**Bower & Gardner?**) is preparing it.

Ms. Mayfield asked that the municipal improvements agreement be included in the final plan submission. Mr. Raffaelli requested building elevations, additional landscaping details, and improvements in the traffic circulation issues. Mr. Miller reminded the Commission to include the City Engineer's stormwater concerns in any motion.

Mr. Bealer moved to accept the preliminary plan, on the conditions of resolving the stormwater planning issues, and preparing a landscaping plan for the final plan review. He added the recognition of the existing woodland, to remain, as meeting the intent of the mid-rise apartment planting requirements. Mr. Palka seconded the motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the preliminary plan.

**Resolution #20-2006**

Review the **final** land development plan for the **Albright College New Science Center**, a new educational building at that parcel known as 1601 North Thirteenth Street. [0:53]

Mr. Roylance introduced himself from Lord Aeck & Sargent, the project architects-of-record. He introduced Mr. Feick of Entech Engineering, filling in for David Settle on the civil engineering side. He recalled the preliminary plan presentation at the February 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, and said the Planning Office comments had been incorporated into the civil drawings, with a few exceptions. He described the proposed placement at Thirteenth and Union Streets, intended as a new gateway to the grouping of academic buildings, its strong connectivity to the

Merner-Pfeiffer-Klein Memorial Chapel, solving its ADA-accessibility issues, and providing a large auditorium and gathering space for events. He said a street “tree-scape” and ornamental lighting would be provided, consistent with the preferred styles of the area.

Mr. Feick said all review comments had been addressed, but for the required parcel boundary/survey detail. The College was hoping for waiver of these requirements and the Ordinance-specified drawing scale. He said the rest of the requirements were met.

Mr. Bealer recalled the County Planning concerns over the proposed drop-off lane. Mr. Feick said the City Engineer had no issues with the design.

Mr. Palka asked about the location of off-street parking. Mr. Roylance stated the College’s position that the building is a replacement, not adding to the student capacity. He noted their arrangement with the Thirteenth and Union Elementary School, the lot at Shirk Stadium, and availability on-street. Mr. Miller alluded to a letter from Synergy Environmental Inc. regarding the Notice of Intent to Remediate (NIR) the former Reading Armory facility, and recalled the College’s intent to reserve part of the parcel for off-street parking. Mr. Gazzero affirmed the progress, noting the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) approval of the environmental findings and methodology employed. He mentioned the order from the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission (PHMC) to prepare a paper on the history of hosiery mills, the armory building having previously been a hosiery mill. He estimated the College was two weeks away from completing the article, and expected the Museum Commission’s release/approval to proceed with the demolition. He said the College and the City were in the process of the title transfer, expected within the next three months. He said the College’s Director of Facilities had already secured demolition estimates. He noted a formal commitment with the City requiring demolition within one year of taking title, adding that the College is prepared to do it immediately.

Mr. Lauter said he would abstain from the vote, recounted the photographic documentation he performed a month previously on the Armory building, and agreed that the process is moving forward. He said the Museum Commission had specific formatting guidelines for the photographic record, including a black and white, archival processing.

Mr. Lauter questioned the detail of the final landscape plan. Mr. Roylance said only the street trees and light posts were specified on the plan. He mentioned the \$50,000 allowance to be included in the contracting bids for landscaping, adding that the “low landscaping” plan had not been developed.

Mr. Bealer recalled his conversations with alumni who voiced regret over the College’s decision to place the new building in-front of the Chapel. He said he still questions the design of the proposed drop-off lane, siding with County Planning Commission. He anticipated safety issues, and voiced his intent to vote against the plan.

Ms. Mayfield asked that any action address the required municipal improvements agreement.

Mr. Palka moved to approve the final plan, conditioned on execution of the municipal improvements agreement, but granting the requested waivers on drawing scale and parcel boundary information. Mr. Raffaelli seconded. And the Commission voted three (3) in-favor, with one (1) opposed (Mr. Bealer) and one (1) abstention (Mr. Lauter), to approve the final plan.

#### Resolution #21-2006

Mr. Raffaelli recalled the one-time controversy over the design and placement of the Chapel, predicting that, in-time, the Science Center will prove itself a worthy addition to Thirteenth Street.

Review the **final** land development plan for the **Penn Street Commons**, 16 two-family attached dwelling units at those parcels known as 1016 Penn Street and 1015 Cherry Street. [1:09]

Mr. Bonenberger, beginning earlier than the agenda-scheduled time and without the rest of the project team, offered to address the civil engineering questions and concerns. He described the proposal as nearly identical to that granted preliminary approval, recalling the Historic Architecture Review Board (HARB) approval of the buildings.

Ms. Mayfield stated that the staff research into the Penn Street driveway issue didn’t yield anything conclusive.

Mr. Bealer asked about revised building elevations. Mr. Bonenberger said the Belovich group was bringing them, showing the differences between the Penn and Cherry Street units.

Mr. Raffaelli questioned the name on gate, its necessity and the appropriateness of naming a project without public areas as a “commons”. Mr. Bonenberger said he would relay the concern to the Reading Housing Authority. Ms. Mayfield questioned the homeowner association document’s reference to a tot-lot. Mr. Bonenberger guessed the text may have been carried over from another draft, adding that nothing was proposed for public use or dedication.

Mr. Miller asked about the Housing Authority's intent on the driveway design, referring to the one-time proposal for adding parallel parking spaces. Mr. Bonenberger was unsure of the Authority's position. He recalled the neighborhood objection relative to parking issues as driving that previous design. He said he had prepared the plan, but withdrew it when the Zoning Administrator took exception to their exceeding the terms of the approved variances.

Ms. Mayfield asked about the plan for emergency access. Mr. Bonenberger wasn't sure, but recalled the need to provide the trash hauler with gate access. He said he hadn't been privy to discussions with the emergency medical services.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the current on-street parking demand. Mr. Miller said that, during the hours he normally spends downtown, he doesn't observe any overload. He said the objection is mainly from the neighbors currently using the vacant lot for off-street parking.

Mr. Miller clarified that there was, at one time, a driveway ordinance governing Penn Street. But without incorporation into the Zoning or Land Development Ordinances and based solely on staff recollection, he questioned its applicability and legal standing.

Mr. Rothermel asked if staff had seen the revised building elevations. Mr. Miller answered yes, but wasn't sure that they were the latest revisions, showing the decreased stoop widths and added transom windows. He said the HARB had made their approval conditional on those revisions, and the developer had agreed.

Mr. Bealer asked how many off-street parking spaces were missing. Mr. Bonenberger said there are still extra spaces per the 1.5-space Zoning Ordinance standard, but the developer had hoped to provide two spaces per dwelling unit.

Mr. Bonenberger said they were still waiting on the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) sewage planning module and Berks County Conservation District (BCCD) erosion and sedimentation plan approvals before commencing construction. Mr. Miller asked if they anticipated any trouble meeting the District's June 1 recommendations. Mr. Bonenberger said no, their major issue being the use of the existing driveway as the construction entrance, where a structure was proposed.

Mr. Bealer asked again about emergency access. Mr. Luckey, having since arrived, assured that the Police and Fire Departments would be provided with keys and any other measures deemed necessary for access, noting the similar arrangements at all Housing Authority properties.

Mr. Rothermel moved to approve the final plan, subject to the City's review and approval of the final homeowner's association documents and municipal improvements agreement. Mr. Lauter seconded the motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the final plan.

**Resolution #22-2006**

Mr. Belovich, having since arrived, distributed building elevations and gave a brief explanation. The Commission members noted that they were the same elevations as previously presented.

**Minutes: [1:34]**

Being ahead of schedule, the Commission decided to move onto its other business, giving the other presenters a chance to arrive. Mr. Raffaelli asked if there were questions or concerns about the May 9, 2006 meeting minutes.

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

**Resolution #23-2006**

**Election of officers: [1:40]**

Mr. Palka, having chaired the nominating committee, nominated the current officers, to continue for the next year. He read the following positions aloud, as a resolution for adoption:

- Chairman - Ermete Raffaelli
- Vice Chairman - David Reppert
- Secretary - Mike Lauter
- Assistant Secretary - Wayne Jonas Bealer

Mr. Lauter seconded the motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the slate, as presented by the nominating committee.

**Resolution #24-2006**

**Staff approvals:** [1:42]

Mr. Miller reported on two developments to which he had personally given consent, based on the size of the projects and the terms of the Land Development Ordinance. He said Eagle Distributing Company is proposing some infill at their Laurel Street location for additional office and shipping spaces. They will also be adding landscaping along Laurel Street in the gap between their facility and United Corstack's.

Mr. Miller said Penske Truck Leasing is planning a partial tear-down and rebuild, with a slightly larger footprint, at their facility on Riverfront Drive. He explained the definitions of the Land Development Ordinance that, he felt, exempted both projects from full review by the Planning Commission. He said renderings of the proposals were on-file in the Planning Office.

Mr. Rothermel recalled the past practice of the Commission taking action to waive the land development procedures for small expansions of existing uses, noting that the developer still had to apply. He said a resolution from about six to eight years ago, with the support of City Council and the Berks County Planning Commission, had allowed for waiving the requirements for projects at, or under, 800 square feet. Mr. Miller repeated his opinion on the importance of codifying such actions in the traditional land use documents. He said time elapsed and staff turnover makes difficult a full accounting of all actions affecting land use. He said certain exemptions, albeit in subjective terms, are already covered by the Land Development Ordinance definitions. He said the history of the matter would be researched.

**Subdivision violations:** [1:50]

Ms. Mayfield reported that sketch drawings had been submitted to the Planning Office staff in the Norfolk Southern/Gary Snyder subdivision case. She suggested the Commission allow an additional thirty days for their formal submission. She said nothing had been submitted in the Kim A. Snyder subdivision case. She recommended the Commission authorize legal action to force compliance.

Mr. Bealer made a motion authorizing counsel to take the appropriate legal actions to remedy the situation. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to authorize legal action.

**Resolution #25-2006**

Mr. Miller said he expected John W. Hoffert, PLS to submit plans on behalf of grantee, Gary Snyder, for review at the next Commission meeting.

Ms. Mayfield addressed the violations observed by staff at 436-438 Bartlett Street. Mr. Miller said the construction is inconsistent with the approved land development plan, most notably the paving of the entire front yards, where spaces had been approved for the rear. Ms. Mayfield requested authorization for a thirty-day investigation, hoping to resolve the matter without legal action. Mr. Rothermel moved to authorize the investigation. Mr. Bealer seconded the motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to authorize the investigation.

**Resolution #26-2006**

**Conditional use:** [1:55]

Mr. Rothermel recalled the request for the Commission's comment at the May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, in regard to the nightclub proposed for the Rancho Merengue Café at 101-103 South Tenth Street. He noted the *Reading Eagle* report that City Council had approved the use, wondering if anyone knew why.

Mr. Spencer, President of City Council, said the applicant had sought permission for additional operating hours on Friday and Saturday nights. He said the Zoning Administrator reported that the applicant provided everything that had been asked of him. He said their cooperative efforts with the Mayor, the Police Department and the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, and the neighbors' characterization of the Café as a good establishment, helped Council view their application more favorably. He said the use was granted on the premise that the privilege could later be revoked if problems arise.

Mr. Rothermel recalled the presentation to Commission as an application for a night club, intensifying the existing non-conforming use. He noted other similar examples that have adversely affected their neighborhoods. Mr. Spencer agreed, but recognized particular circumstances and hours of operation, and said those conditions and limitations were clearly explained to the applicant.

**Subdivision and Land Development:** (continued)

Review the **sketch** 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. [2:00]

Mr. Olsen illustrated the concept with a site plan and visual renderings. He informed the Commission of the letter from Our City Reading, Inc. to City Council requesting the necessary zoning changes for the project. He described the intended room configurations, calling it an exciting project in anticipation of the expected Goggleworks Art Center expansion. He said the Goggleworks has had to turn away 25-30 interested artists in the last six months for want of space.

Scott Miller described the project location, the building's orientation, and a site elevation change of 13 to 14 feet. He said the site was approximately 0.9 acre, between the three parcels. He said the existing structures would be demolished. The entrance and parking for the new building would be at ground level. He said the site is currently zoned 'Manufacturing-Commercial' (MC), and referred to the re-zoning requested as an extension of the adjacent 'Commercial-Core' (CC).

Mr. Rothermel wondered if any thought had been given to re-zoning the Goggleworks itself, thinking the uses therein were more appropriately zoned Commercial-Core. Mr. Olsen agreed. Andrew Miller considered some of the Goggleworks activities to be of a manufacturing or industrial nature, as well as a commercial or entertainment use. He hoped to have that discussion with the Commission, sensing several plausible scenarios.

Mr. Olsen referred to some site photographs. He briefly explained the proposed parking layout and the associated off-street parking exceptions of Commercial-Core zoning. He said on-site, off-street parking was still preferred for marketability reasons. He noted the 1½ space per unit required under Manufacturing-Commercial zoning, hoping to achieve that count. He said they were attempting to keep the parking on one level, with a structural platform/table proposed above (load bearing masonry for its fire protection advantages).

Mr. Olsen described the apartments, proposing that each floor have three one-bedroom units (just over 1000 square feet each, with one full bath) and nine two-bedroom units (about 1250 square feet each, with two full baths). He said the structural platform would result in a 'plaza' effect for the residents. No individual balconies were being designed.

Mr. Boscov said the goal was to develop the nicest apartments in Reading, hoping to attract new residents from outside the City with the internal amenities, the momentum of the Goggleworks, the new theatres, and the new retail/restaurant opportunities in the Second and Washington Streets Parking Structure. He recognized the risk of the venture.

Mr. Olsen mentioned a combination of masonry and Dryvit® for the façade materials.

Mr. Bealer asked about the control of the parcels. Mr. Boscov said Our City Reading owns the garage site, and has an agreement with Chima, Inc. for the other two, pending the completion of an addition to their facility in Wyomissing Borough. Mr. Olsen added that the firms of Stackhouse Bensing and Olsen deTurck are also involved in that project, already in process with the Borough.

Mr. Bealer noted the lighter colors of the Front and Washington Garage and the darker reds of the Goggleworks and the new garage, wondering what was intended for the apartment building. Mr. Olsen answered that more detail would be given in subsequent presentations, thinking they'd be better able to integrate the design as progress is made on the other projects nearby, and at the same time giving the apartment building some distinction of its own.

Mr. Lauter asked about the landscaping intentions for the plaza area. Mr. Olsen predicted a combination of container gardening and paved areas, parrying the idea of a green roof. Mr. Lauter asked if the first-level units could have direct access to the plaza. Mr. Olsen said the option was being considered against the security concerns. He said use of the plaza would be reserved to the tenants, and not accessible by the public.

Mr. Rothermel asked what motivated the diagonal geometry of the building's footprint. Mr. Olsen, having looked at a variety of configurations, cited the anticipated energy of the Second and Washington Streets intersection, adding their desire to place the entrance there and also provide good vistas from the apartment windows. Mr. Boscov noted the perceptions of safety in the area, and the convenience of visitors, as additional reasons for placing the entrance near the intersection. Mr. Rothermel noted the possible traffic conflicts in providing access so close to the intersection. Scott Miller shared the concern, noting that PennDOT's approval was needed, it likely to restrict movement to right turns, in and out. He said sufficient stacking distance was being designed between the driveway and the security gate. Mr. Boscov realized the entrance may have to be moved. He said they were trying to make use of existing curb cuts. Mr. Rothermel thought it refreshing to see innovative designs for downtown buildings.

Andrew Miller felt the zoning discussion to be more pertinent for this phase, in order to move the process forward. He noted the requirements for City and County planning agency comments and recognized the different scenarios such as, re-zoning the project parcels, or the Manufacturing-Commercial district entirely. He recalled the demolitions of Diversified Mechanical Inc. (240 Walnut Street) and the Stelwagon Manufacturing Company (234 Walnut Street), and the close of the Willson Safety Products Company (201 Washington Street) as cause for questioning the current relevance of the Manufacturing-Commercial status of the area. Mr. Rothermel remembered the area being so zoned for those former uses, agreeing that without them, it should be reassessed. Andrew Miller, again citing some specific activities in the Goggleworks, the two remaining automobile-oriented uses, and the light-manufacturing potential in the Mazzotta building, reminded the Commission of the potential non-conformances to consider. Mr. Rothermel stated his perception of the Goggleworks as a “cultural entity” on the whole, recognizing some components as industrial in nature, but still appropriately zoned as Commercial-Core. He considered the possible benefits of having the remaining uses turned ‘non-conforming’, thereby limiting their expansions as manufacturing uses and encouraging their redevelopment in the best interests of the downtown. Mr. Bealer agreed, but, noting other Manufacturing-Commercial zoning along Schuylkill River, wondered if allowing high-rises in those areas would boost land values and more desirable land development. Andrew Miller advised a more thorough consideration of the implications for every other Manufacturing-Commercial district. Scott Miller described the district, currently in question, as an isolated area between the downtown and other residential zones. Mr. Rothermel recalled two of those other Manufacturing-Commercial districts as the former Dana Corporation store yards and American Chain and Cable, both since closed. He recognized the age of the zoning map, suggesting that developers interested in re-zoning, should approach City Council with their needs and recommendations, providing a basis for hearings and commentary from the planning agencies. He disagreed with the expectation that the Planning Commission would determine the boundaries. Andrew Miller said the Commission could sponsor its own vision for the area, satisfying the requirement for its comment, and moving the process forward. He hoped to define the terms of the amendment with the Commission as a whole, specifically avoiding a final decision by the staff until such a discussion was held. Mr. Rothermel said the City has a professional planning staff to make recommendations for the Commission’s review and comment. Andrew Miller cited the powers and duties allowed to planning agencies by state law. He sought to lay-out different scenarios for the Commission’s consideration, looking for its preference before preparing everything in a way not agreeable to it. He recognized three basic options; (1) do nothing, (2) amend the terms of Manufacturing-Commercial zoning, cautioning for the need to preserve industrial opportunities in the City of Reading, even if those spaces are currently vacant or underutilized, or (3) amend the Zoning Map, and to what extent.

Mr. Olsen said that in the project team’s evaluation, they would need a plethora of variances under Manufacturing-Commercial zoning, and after discussing the matter with City staff, agreed that the more appropriate path was to seek a re-zoning. Mr. Rothermel agreed, noting the danger of varying uses, because of the difficulty that non-conformances face when seeking to reconstruct damages when such loss is greater than 50% of the structure. Andrew Miller repeated his position that use variances are not allowed by law, legal non-conformances being created by zonings, not by variances.

Andrew Miller said that, originally, he was not recommending the entire district for re-zoning, but having heard this discussion, was leaning toward it, thinking the re-zoning would likely present greater opportunity for each property involved. He described a difficult position for the staff, hoping to gauge the Commission’s sentiment and turn it into a recommendation to Council. Mr. Lauter said he also prefers re-zoning the entire district. Mr. Rothermel suggested the project might fit better in Residential 3 (R3) zoning than Commercial-Core, that district also being immediately adjacent. Andrew Miller said it had been considered, the problem being that it only permitted “mid-rise” apartment buildings. He said the intent of the Ordinance seems to keep high-rises toward the middle of town.

Mr. Raffaelli asked for a clear recommendation from the staff. Andrew Miller recommended a change to the map, rather than amending the zoning schedules themselves. He said, having heard the discussion, he’d prefer to rezone this Manufacturing-Commercial district in its entirety to Commercial-Core. He recalled his concern for the more ‘industrial arts’ in the Goggleworks, but in considering the food service, the theater, and the fine arts included, the Commercial-Core designation is more appropriate.

Mr. Bealer moved to recommend the map change from Manufacturing-Commercial to Commercial-Core zoning. Mr. Lauter seconded the motion. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the recommendation.

**Resolution #27-2006**

Andrew Miller reminded that there would be more opportunity to comment on the re-zoning, with at least one hearing to be held on the matter. Mr. Rothermel recommended that the Zoning Ordinance include something to

cover the Goggleworks Art Center, a use not currently specified. Andrew Miller agreed, noting many other similar situations, and hoping to wait until it can be done in a comprehensive and coherent way. He reported that grant applications have been submitted to the state for land use planning efforts.

Review the **(revised) final** land development plan for **1431 Monroe Street (Reading-Berks Habitat for Humanity)**, a subdivision and two single-family attached units proposed at that parcel known as 1431 Monroe Street. [3:14]

Mr. Worrall recalled the May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, briefly described the subdivision and land development proposed, similar to Habitat's other projects, and asked the Commission for waivers from the curb and sidewalk requirements, noting the absence of such amenities in the block. Mr. Bealer asked about the feasibility of including funding for curb, sidewalk and stormwater measures with next year's Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). He suggested that such civic improvements were among original intentions of the program, to bring underdeveloped areas up to standard. Mr. Miller said he would discuss the matter with the Community Development Director.

Mr. Raffaelli suggested that Habitat include an additional half-bath in its future proposals.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the County Planning comments. Mr. Miller mentioned something about the plan's notes, nothing substantive. He said all City comments were addressed, save those the City Engineer has recommended the Commission consider waiving, the curb, sidewalk and municipal improvements agreement among them.

Mr. Worrall pointed out the two flowering cherries proposed. Mr. Rothermel wondered if they weren't covered by a municipal improvements agreement. Mr. Miller said not, according to the City Engineer.

Mr. Bealer moved to approve the final plan, granting waivers from the curb and sidewalk requirements. Mr. Rothermel seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the final plan.

**Resolution #28-2006**

Review the **concept** plan for **Reading Movies 12**, a twelve (12) screen cinema proposed for the southwest corner of the intersection of North Second and Washington Streets. [3:22]

Scott Miller introduced the proposal by R/C Theatres Management Corp. He named TK Architects Inc. as the architect-of-record, a firm specializing in movie theaters. He named Olsen deTurck as associate architects, with Stackhouse Bensinger providing the civil engineering services. He briefly described the proposed location, the main entrance on Second Street, and said the theater will utilize existing parking structures in the area.

Mr. Raffaelli asked about the fate of the north-south pedestrian walkway between the proposed theater and the Front and Washington Garage. Mr. Olsen said that to make the design work, the theater must be built up to the garage, cutting off the pedestrian access. Mr. Boscov recalled a conversation with Larry Lee, Executive Director of the Reading Parking Authority, that determined the walkway was not used nearly as heavily as the east-west walkway between the proposed theater and the Miller Center. He said Mr. Lee had no objection to losing the north-south walkway, preferring instead to preserve the east-west corridor. He said the high roof (40 ft) would obscure most views of the Garage.

Mr. Olsen described the theater lay-outs, the vending and ticketing areas, a mezzanine and marquee. He said the building would be a combination of masonry, precast concrete, and Dryvit®.

Mr. Boscov said they are trying to encourage two small retail operations on Second Street elevation to add to the activity and visual interest of the streetscape. He said Wayne Anderson, of R/C Theatres wanted 16 theaters, but the design couldn't be made to fit the site.

Mr. Lauter asked about emergency exits. Mr. Olsen indicated the locations.

Mr. Boscov said the theaters would be all digital video and sound, with stadium seating. He mentioned some consideration of having 11 screens with one being an IMAX®, there being a meeting scheduled in Philadelphia with IMAX® representatives. He said a lot of Wayne Anderson's own money (\$6 million) is being invested in the project. He described the project as the necessary catalyst for the whole area.

Mr. Rothermel cited the traffic situation as his biggest concern, wondering if PennDOT, County and City traffic engineers had been included in the conversation. He questioned the orientation of the primary entrance toward Second Street, and asked about drop-offs. Mr. Boscov noted the garage capacity planning conversations with the Parking Authority. He said the Second Street frontage makes the retail components more feasible.

Mr. Rothermel characterized increasing pedestrian traffic as very desirable, but recognized the major thoroughfare, and a design that would encourage people to drop-off patrons and hinder the flow of traffic. He suggested the building might be better oriented toward Washington Street or the east-west pedestrian walkway. Mr.

Boscov, in conversations with City Traffic Engineer, reached the understanding that most of the movies would be at a time of day after the heaviest traffic has left town. He recognized PennDOT's authority in the matter.

Scott Miller noted that the plan was prepared for staff and Commission comments, assuring that all input would be taken into consideration.

Mr. Bealer felt there wouldn't be much reason to be walking at the rear of the theater. Andrew Miller said he regrets the loss of any pedestrian connection, but recognized the remaining access from three of the block's four sides toward the center, above the average for downtown blocks. He felt the front of the theater would be too tempting as a drop-off, but resisted the idea of turning the building's front in any way that would result in a blank wall on Second Street. He said they'll need some plan for patron drop-off that doesn't involve entering the garage, and paying. Mr. Boscov suggested a possible loading area on Washington Street.

Mr. Raffaelli asked if Reading Area Community College (RACC) still intended to use the entire Front and Washington Garage, when the Second and Washington Streets Parking Structure is complete. Mr. Boscov said they need it during school hours; matinee needs to be arranged in the new Parking Structure. He said if matinee showings aren't viable, they've discussed allowing the Community College the use of the theaters as lecture halls.

Mr. Palka asked if there were any bus stops in the vicinity. No one knew for sure.

Andrew Miller suggested looking to direct theater traffic and drop-off toward the river side of the block, it being the most practical circulation pattern anyway, and with enhanced pedestrian amenities coming as part of the Community College projects. Mr. Boscov stated his intent to confer with the Berks Area Reading Transportation Authority (BARTA), for their input.

Mr. Lauter questioned the adequacy of parking in light of all the new plans for the area. He hoped to avoid the situation, common in cities, where people can't find convenient parking and go elsewhere. Mr. Rothermel recalled previous discussions on the need for comprehensive parking analysis, suggesting that it's needed now. Mr. Boscov characterized traffic and parking as problems he'd like to have to consider. He mentioned a parking garage (minimum of 800 spaces) anticipated with the hotel project and Seventh and Penn Streets, and noted the Parking Authority's recent record of financial solvency.

**Other business:** [2:36]

Mr. Raffaelli mentioned a planned meeting with Reading School District officials on June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 4:00pm in the District's administration building. He characterized it as an informal dialogue regarding the District's expansion plans. Ms. Mayfield advised a committee be delegated, for quorum concerns.

Mr. Miller mentioned a June 28<sup>th</sup> meeting at the Berks County Agricultural Center (7:00pm) regarding the update to the County's Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan.

Mr. Bealer noted the success of the City's first experience with the Pro Cycling Tour bike race, thanking Brian Duncan for his efforts and his representation of the City in the media coverage. Mr. Miller agreed, informing the Commission that Mr. Duncan would be leaving his position by week's end for a job in the Philadelphia area.

Mr. Lauter moved to adjourn the June meeting. Mr. Palka seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the June meeting, 5 to 0. - 11:09 pm.