

**Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
March 16, 2005 at 7:30 pm**

Members present:

Fritz Rothermel, Chairman
Michael Lauter, Assistant Secretary
Edmund Palka
Ermete Raffaelli
David Reppert
Wayne Jonas Bealer

Staff present:

Andrew Miller, Senior Planner
Michael deTurck, Acting Zoning Administrator
Joyce Pressley, Manager, Planning and Zoning
Leon Churchill, Managing Director

Others present:

David Paul, Vice President, Twin Door Holding Co.
James McCarthy, PE, McCarthy Engineering Assoc.
Jim Bates, Advanced Building Systems
Dr. Steve George, Albright College
Kevin Kuzio, E. R. Felty, Inc.
Earl Felty, PLS, E. R. Felty, Inc.
Keith Zielaskowski, Pair of Aces, LLC.

Minutes:

Fritz Rothermel called the March meeting to order and reviewed the agenda. Ermete Raffaelli made a motion to approve the March agenda, and David Reppert seconded. The Planning Commission approved agenda, unanimously.

Leon Churchill, Managing Director, introduced Dr. Joyce Pressley, newly hired Manager of Planning and Zoning, mentioning the “modest restructuring” of the Planning Office, giving a brief resume, and introduced Mr. Andrew Miller, in the Senior Planner position, highlighting his background.

Mr. Rothermel welcomed the newly hired and thanked Mr. Churchill for his presentation.

Review of Final Plan, “Moss Street Parking” facility, between Marion and Robeson Streets.

David Paul, VP of Twin Door Holding Company, addressed last month’s landscaping concerns for aesthetics/neighborhood appeal, and the Berks County Planning Commission review concerns regarding inlet box changes.

Mr. Bealer asked about the possibility of adding pitch to the roof for aesthetics. Mr. Paul said some pitch is possible.

Mr. Raffaelli asked if all areas are to be paved. Mr. Paul answered yes, and mentioned the trench drain, to be provided.

Mr. Rothermel asked Michael deTurck, acting Zoning Administrator, the zoning status of the project. Mr. deTurck answered that, as a parking project, he was waiting for Commission review before issuing permit.

Mr. Rothermel inquired about comments from Public Works. Mr. deTurck mentioned the need for a trench drain.

Mr. Bealer moved to approve the Final Plan on the conditions that all necessary permits are acquired, and items from BCPC and Public Works be addressed. Mr. Lauter seconded the motion. Commission approved Final Plan, unanimously, with said conditions.

Resolution #12-2005

Review of Final Land Development Plan, “Albright College - Shirk Stadium”, at North 13th Street.

James McCarthy, PE, McCarthy Engineering said “we have satisfied the reviews”, adding that the Final Plan was labeled Preliminary by mistake - corrected prints were provided. He pointed out existing/new facilities planned, gave an overview of the project, mentioned that the grass is being replaced with artificial turf, and announced that the two variances requested were granted by the Zoning Hearing Board - specifically, those allowing the reduced setback and the height of the press box. He adds that the fencing/landscaping concerns of the Commission have been addressed.

Mr. Bealer asked about the use of the existing stone driveway/parking at the corner of 13th and Exeter Streets versus the proposed, and any plans to pave it. Dr. George said future paving is being considered, and provisions are being made, in case. Mr. Miller asked if the area is for overflow. Jim Bates, from Advanced Building Systems, said it is intended for vendor deliveries and possible VIP parking.

Mr. Rothermel suggested moving the driveway somewhat west, further from the intersection with 13th Street, to alleviate congestion, and recommended a sign to discourage left turns toward the intersection.

Mr. Bates reinforced the vendor priority to the parking area, maybe VIP's, not the general public, adding that no gate is proposed - possibly a moveable barricade.

Mr. Raffaelli asked if the plan proposes to remove the existing running track. Mr. McCarthy says yes. Mr. Raffaelli suggested that service doors be provided along Exeter Street for access to the concession areas. Mr. McCarthy explained an attempt to discourage concessionaires off-loading from the street, adding that is the reason for the parking area provided. Mr. Raffaelli mentioned the benefit of keeping trucks from having to pull in, said the ideal is a drop-off zone of 8-foot depth with service doors. Dr. George mentioned security/aesthetic concerns for the brick façade, mentioned access provided in the center of said façade.

Mr. Raffaelli inquired of the screening proposed for the north side of the field. Mr. Bates explained the fence options being considered, suggested the possibilities of a vinyl-coated chain link or galvanized powder-coated, 8 to 10 feet in height.

Mr. Raffaelli recommended landscaping (maybe arborvitae) to break-up the look, add security. Mr. Bates explained the grade drop-off of 6 feet from the street, as a natural screening. David Reppert inquired of other landscaping/lighting details planned. Mr. Bates and Mr. McCarthy explained evergreen screening and security lighting planned.

Edmund Palka asked about the dominant construction materials proposed. Mr. McCarthy answered "masonry".

Mr. Raffaelli asked about the plans for a scoreboard. Dr. George said that options are being considered, mentioned the possibilities of upgrading the existing scoreboard or purchasing a new one. Mr. Raffaelli recommended seeking corporate sponsorship for an upgrade. Dr. George agreed that would be ideal.

Mr. Bealer asked a "procedural question" regarding the demolition, if it is permissible to start demolition prior to plan approval. Mr. McCarthy said that one can apply for a demolition permit at any time.

Mr. Rothermel asked about fencing along Exeter and 13th Streets. Mr. Bates says landscaping to provide some barrier, combined with fencing options cited earlier.

Mr. Raffaelli recommended they consider treated aluminum fencing, similar to fencing at West Reading playground on 5th Avenue and Hershey's/Luden's on 8th Street. Mr. Bates believes they are proposing fencing equivalent to that at the Luden's site.

Mr. Bates assured that the two stone piers with the lions atop and the original gate will remain.

Mr. Reppert asked about BCPC comments regarding trash storage/screening. Mr. Bates said there are no permanent on-site dumpsters proposed, adding that containers will be brought in for events.

Mr. Rothermel asked what species/pattern of landscaping is envisioned, citing concern for diversity, disease resistance, and visual interest. Mr. Reppert added that a landscaping plan is needed. Mr. Rothermel noted the possible need for Shade Tree Commission review.

Mr. Raffaelli motioned for approval of the Final Plan conditioned on agreement to all requirements from engineering and BCPC. Mr. Reppert seconded the motion, adding the condition of review of the landscaping plan by planning staff and Shade Tree Commission, if applicable. Commission approved Final Plan, unanimously, with conditions.

Resolution #13-2005

Review of Preliminary/Final Subdivision Plan, "St. Nicholas Street Commons", 6-unit townhouse on St. Nicholas Street.

Kevin Kuzio, of E. R. Felty Inc., said they haven't received any reviews, save BCPC's. Mr. Miller will address the matter.

Mr. Kuzio pointed out the parking provided in the rear, mentioned their intent to pave the 10-foot wide alley, and mentioned the landscaping plan, in the works.

Keith Zielaskowski cited the proposal's likeness to the recently approved Belovich plan, referring to their building elevations as similar to his own.

Mr. Miller cited the comments on inlet information differing between the plan and construction detail sheets. Mr. Bealer expressed concern over the grade drop-off toward the rear, seeing this as a storm water challenge, and asked if there is a system proposed to relieve this. Mr. Zielaskowski views the drop-off as a benefit,

reminding that the engineer has achieved a zero-run-off/100% containment, and mentioned the added benefit of garages in rear and daylight basements.

Mr. Palka asked about provisions for sidewalks. Mr. Zielaskowski said he intends to request a waiver of this requirement. Mr. Raffaelli asked if the setback is sufficient to accommodate a sidewalk in the future. Mr. Zielaskowski said that it is.

Mr. Bealer noted the lack of traffic/cars parked on-street. Mr. Rothermel wondered about lots previously developed in the vicinity without sidewalks, wondered whether the City will compel them to install sidewalks, as well, and wondered whether pedestrian traffic is enough to make sidewalks a condition for the Final Plan

Mr. Rothermel questioned the maneuverability in the 10-foot wide alley without additional paving. Mr. Zielaskowski said he intends to angle the corners - an easement has been secured - adding that extra paving is being considered relative to impervious coverage calculations.

Mr. Zielaskowski said that street trees will be provided and will be proposed on the Final Plan.

Mr. Miller asked if the units will be available for student rental. Mr. Zielaskowski said he intends to sell each unit, adding that what the ultimate purchaser does with them is out of his control, and admitted that it would be very convenient as student housing.

Mr. Raffaelli asked for details on the fire wall, if they intend masonry. Mr. Zielaskowski said masonry or stud with double dry wall, and mentioned the intended offsets in the façade, for aesthetics.

Mr. Lauter motioned for Preliminary Plan approval, conditioned on engineering comments, resolution of sidewalk issue and provision of landscaping plan. Mr. Reppert seconded. Commission approved the Preliminary Plan, unanimously, with conditions.

Resolution #14-2005

Other business

Mr. Bealer discussed concern over the sewage treatment issue, mentioned surrounding municipalities, and the competition for allocation of EDU's. He suggested a possible workshop/presentation. Mr. Rothermel recalled the past practice of planning staff providing lists to the Environmental Division, of proposed/anticipated projects within the City, and projections. Ms. Pressley says planning staff will explore the issue. Mr. Miller mentions his conversations with the Environmental Division, said the updates are forthcoming, and explained that the projections are legally mandated for 5-year planning purposes.

Mr. Bealer discussed the proliferation of newspaper boxes on sidewalks and asked whether this is an appropriate issue for the Commission to get involved in. He suggested proposing ordinances to Council. Mr. Raffaelli agreed. Mr. Miller added that it aggravates the litter problem, especially when the material is free. Mr. Bealer said he saw 3 or 4 new boxes the previous week (from the Allentown Spanish-language paper). Mr. Rothermel observed that issues involving the public right-of-way are the domain of Public Works, and recalled other sidewalk ordinances drafted in the past, that never went to vote. He remembers soft drink manufacturers' opposition, saying the Commission may make recommendations, but that they lack any legal weight. He agreed on the issue of litter, but isn't sure what permitting requirements already exist. Mr. Raffaelli mentioned past workshops/charrettes on the subject that were disregarded.

Mr. Rothermel remembered the pay phones appearing in the same way. Ms. Pressley said the sign ordinance may offer some answers. Mr. Rothermel believes zoning does not apply to the right-of-way, saying it depends on the Solicitor's interpretation. Mr. Churchill affirmed the Public Works' authority, adding that many other municipalities face the same issue. Mr. Raffaelli considers the proliferation of Parking Authority vending machines to be a bad example set, if not a violation, adding that a public body is undermining any enforcement.

Mr. Reppert asked about the status of the February minutes. Mr. Miller said he is looking into the matter. Mr. Rothermel asked about the November minutes, remembering that Karl Graybill had taken notes, and asked for some record. Mr. Miller described the discussions by staff over minute-recording and mentioned the challenge of recording the minutes, while trying to participate in the meeting. Mr. Rothermel mentioned the advantage of the BCTV recording and frequent broadcasts. Mr. Miller said he will record the next broadcast of the March meeting. Ms. Pressley said she will line up a staff member to record this month's meeting minutes, adding that the Planner will not have to worry about it.

Mr. Raffaelli requested time following the meeting to discuss a possible litigation. Ms. Pressley advised the Commission take an "executive session". Mr. Churchill recommended that they adjourn the meeting first. Mr. Palka made a motion, Mr. Lauter seconded, and the Commission adjourned the meeting, unanimously. – 9:00pm.