Minutes
Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
May 13, 2008 at 7:00 pm

Members present:

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

Staff present:

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office
Michelle R. Mayfield, Department of Law
Michelle R. Mayfield, Department of Law
Charles M. Jones, Department of Public Works

Others present:

Albert R. Boscov, Our City Reading, Inc.
Randy Seaman, Bright Sign & Maintenance Co., Inc.
John Thies, Bright Sign & Maintenance Co., Inc.
Adam Mukerji, Reading Redevelopment Authority
Christopher J. Fell, United Corrstack, LLC
Jeffery C. Euclide, Entech Engineering, Inc.
Charles Feghali, United Corrstack, LLC
David F. Stauffer, United Corrstack, LLC
Eugene Orlando, Jr., Roland & Schlegel, P.C.
Gregg A. Bogia, Bogia Engineering, Inc.
Eric M. Mountz, Traffic Planning and Design, Inc.
Edward V. Giannasca, II, Giannasca Development Group, LLC
James Burdge, Giannasca Development Group, LLC
Stephen H. Bensinger, Stackhouse Bensinger Inc.
William G. McShane, Willow Holdings, Inc.
David A. Kostival, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the May 13th meeting to order, asked all presenters to sign the attendance sheet, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Ms. Mayfield requested the agenda provide for a member's nomination to the soon-to-be-established land-use ordinance revision committee. Mr. Rothermel moved to accept the modified agenda. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the modified May agenda.

Review the **concept** plan for **"Entertainment Square"**, street lighting, signage, landscaping and other streetscape enhancements proposed for the general area around the intersection of North 2nd and Washington Streets.

- and -

Review the **lighting** plan for **the 200 through 800 blocks of Penn Street**, a coordinated lighting scheme proposed for Penn Street between 2nd and 9th Streets. [0:01.54]

Mr. Boscov explained that he was trying to make "Entertainment Square", and the inner-City generally, more dramatic and exciting, enough to attract more restaurants and the people that follow. He described a light-emitting diode (LED) scheme planned for the Goggleworks building, and already approved by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, whereby strings of LEDs would be sandwiched between the panes of existing window glass. He said he was still waiting on the Museum Commission's approval of an LED sign atop the building. He introduced representatives from Bright Sign, Inc., along to explain the planned marquee for R/C Theatres' Reading Movies 11. He likened it to marquee designs of old, which he considered more exciting than those typical of contemporary theaters. Mr. Seaman described a pair of "high-resolution LED message centers", capable of running movie clips, to be included on the marquee, with neon elements carrying the R/C and IMAX identities. Mr. Boscov noted that the marquee had been raised about six inches, in response to some sidewalk clearance concerns voiced previously. He said the design has been approved by the IMAX Corporation.

Mr. Raffaelli asked about the other aluminum frames seen on the sides of the theater. Mr. Seaman said they were areas intended for additional neon (border) accents, and possibly R/C logos.

Turning to a video presentation, Mr. Boscov described a running message board proposed for the 2nd and

Washington Parking Garage, where it faces the theater, meant to announce local headlines and community events.

Mr. Boscov repeated the motivation to make downtown an exciting, attractive place. Originally limited to "Entertainment Square" he now claimed to have the funding available to continue the pedestrian-oriented street lighting on Penn Street between 2nd and 8th Streets, and maybe 9th. He planned to keep pursuing the funds necessary to extend it though to 11th. With renderings in hand, he described the preferred standards, including an element of translucent, red acrylic rings intended to compliment the Pagoda as one looks up Penn Street. He hoped for a uniform look, with the luminaries all at a 16-foot mounted height, and at a 6-foot candle intensity, for the sense of safety in downtown visitors. He hoped to add the west side of the first block of South 2nd Street, in front of the Reading Area Community College. He said the lights are intended to illuminate the sidewalks, more than the streets, and alluded to efforts to bring another dozen quality restaurants downtown. He estimated about 6 decent establishments currently, feeling that more would help to support the other entertainment offerings and begin changing the overall mix of stores on Penn Street. He said the theater offers 9000 seats/day, estimating 4500-5000 resulting pedestrians on a Saturday night, about 3500-4000 on a Friday, incrementally-less on other days, and proportionally-more for blockbuster showings. In any case, he expected it to attract visitors on a daily basis, as opposed to the less-regular draws of the live performance venues.

Mr. Boscov explained that they'd be changing the tops of the attractive, existing poles, in an effort to best match the existing style while keeping cost-effective. He reminded that the parking garage planned with the hotel project is planned for LED accents, as well. He said he's been working with the City's electrical contractor on all the technical details, uncertain of who had the approval authority on the final design. Mr. Miller characterized the Commission's role as advisory, recommending they address the logistical issues with the Department of Public Works.

Asked to explain the retrofitting of the existing standards, Mr. Boscov continued. He said the new fixtures would be added where poles exist, with infill poles for a closer spacing and more light. He said they hadn't decided what to do with the so-called "Pagoda lights" attached to the existing, assuming that was for the City to decide. He hoped to have the new lights, in the North 2nd and Washington Streets vicinity at least, installed and operating in-time for the theater opening in mid-August. He said the movies will be offered at $1 each, for the first week, with those proceeds to be split between the Community College and the Will Rogers Institute.

Turning attention back on the theater marquee, he mentioned a possible delay in the delivery of the LED message centers. Mr. Seaman explained that the 16-millimeter, 5- by 13-foot boards utilize such new technology that, in the United States, only one such 3- by 4-foot example has so far been installed. He said, when delivered, they will be the largest in the Country.

Mr. Rothermel asked about calculations of added energy costs for the new street lights. Mr. Boscov admitted a higher operating demand, and the possibility of changing the bulbs in the future. But he insisted that a new, more-secure impression of downtown Reading was imperative to its turn-around. He mentioned Philadelphia's "Avenue of the Arts" as a similar experience. He said the operation of the lights could be scheduled or staggered if energy savings was at issue. Ask if he planned installation "phases", Mr. Boscov answered "all at once", hoping to have the Penn Street installations complete by the return of standard time. He acknowledged Hirneisen Electric Inc., under contract with the City, for providing their assistance "gratis".

Asked more about the mounting heights, Mr. Boscov confirmed that they'd be trying to maintain a uniform 16 feet, recognizing the inconsistency of the existing fixtures in height and spacing. He said the higher 'cobra head' street lights would remain, unchanged.

Mr. Rothermel asked if any additional lighting was being planned for the Penn Street Bridge. Mr. Boscov hoped to continue a similar theme across the Bridge, but reported the Department of Transportation's recommendation to wait until scheduled repairs are completed. Mr. Jones clarified that the Department has its consultant working to determine "repair" or "replacement", expected to take about 9 months, when another consultant will be hired for a final design, with construction bids to follow. Mr. Rothermel recalled a coordinated lighting project in the early 1990s, to the Bridge and the 200, 300, 900 and 1000 blocks of Penn. He felt the overall coordination of lighting should be considered now, fearing a return to the previous conglomeration of mismatched fixtures. He recalled those earlier efforts, hoping that any newly-introduced theme would be made consistent. Mr. Boscov noted his personal preference to carry the same style across the bridge.

Mr. Rothermel asked how the theme related to the "Corridor" branding initiatives. Mr. Boscov thought the fixtures installed on West Reading's Penn Avenue "totally different", and too dim for the current needs of the City. Mr. Rothermel expressed the preference for continuity, discussed previously by the Initiative for a Competitive Greater Reading. Mr. Boscov thought it would be great if that joint effort came to pass, but noted an urgency in attending to Penn Street.

Asked how the preferred standard was chosen, Mr. Boscov called it the closest match to the existing style. He said there hadn't been a final decision on color, and that they may look for a sample before ordering anything. Mr. Lauter asked about the addition of lamp posts. Mr. Boscov planned "many more", estimating a current spacing at 165-175 feet. He said the new standards would be "very, very similar" to the existing. Mr. Rothermel recalled Spring City Foundry having produced the existing poles. He asked about the unit costs. Mr. Boscov estimated one complete pole at $6000, recognizing the Governor's and Department of Transportation's support.

Mr. Lauter asked if they had considered increasing the wattage in the on existing fixtures. Mr. Boscov said it wouldn't match. Mr. Lauter liked the style chosen, but noted the existing standards were more reflective of a historic city and its buildings, and wondered what the impression would be in 20 years, recalling the "lollipop lights" recently replaced in south Reading. Mr. Boscov said the downtown had lost its glamour, and needed the relighting to catalyze the change. He agreed to keep shopping for other available styles, and to consider the Historic Architectural Review Board.

Addressing the replacement of the Court Street pedestrian extension, demolished during site preparations for the R/C Theatre, Mr. Boscov suggested adding lights there, and proposed a scored cement treatment, with brick pavers in soldier courses dividing sections of the pavement. He briefly explained the events leading to the errant demolition. He intended cherries and dogwoods for the green space between it and the Miller Center's access driveway. Mr. Miller felt it was less important to recreate the ornate walkway and planters that existed, and more important to reestablish a purposeful pedestrian connection, ideally with some texture and interest beyond plain sidewalk cement. Mr. Boscov recognized several exit points from the Theater to the walkway.

Mr. Raffaelli suggested a "different application" for the Pagoda lights. Mr. Jones mentioned the Downtown Improvement District's ownership, calling them "extremely expensive to operate and… to maintain".

Mr. Boscov concluded, and hoped to return at the June meeting with updated plans for the DoubleTree Hotel.

Subdivision and Land Development:

Review the **preliminary** land development plan for the **CedarPak #4 Paper Mill (United Corrstack, LLC)**, a new paper mill proposed for the former Reading Tube Corporation building on that parcel known as 800 South Street. [1:05.33]

Mr. Fell recalled his presentation of the sketch plan at the April meeting, and called the preliminary plan a presentation of their efforts since. He introduced Mr. Euclide as able to explain the more technical aspects of the land development plan, and Mr. Stauffer, general manager at United Corrstack and eventually for CedarPak. He said CedarPak purchased the Reading Tube facility in 2005, and soon thereafter petitioned the Zoning Hearing Board for a height variance, heard in March 2006 and granted that April. He noted a review comment regarding the lapse between the variance and the actual plan submission. He said they had received an extension from the Hearing Board, which he hoped addressed the concern. He explained that they needed to secure the variance early-on, in order to continue planning the Evergreen Community Power project, which has been their focus since. Turning to some photographs, he explained the constituent buildings, the abrupt changes in topography, and some heavily wooded areas. He used another drawing to illustrate the parts existing, remaining and to be altered; most changes planned for the west side of the structure. He called the electrical substation interconnection activities on-going with Metropolitan Edison Company. He described a material flow from South Street, and through a new drive around the building to access its north end, where today they cannot. He indicated the existing shipping/receiving docks on the south end, and additional maneuvering and parking areas designed. He said green space would be added.

Mr. Fell recognized the County Planning Commission and City Planning Office requests for a reservation connecting the Reading Greenway to the Neversink Mountain trails, and noted a conceptual provision on the plan, where a fence line could be moved inland. He said they still had details to work out. He mentioned CedarPak having performed a complete topographic survey in order to better understand the "particulars" of the facility and the potential use of its existing infrastructure, giving as an example, a 4x4 concrete stormwater outlet collecting and discharging runoff from property and how they might utilize it, consistent with the current standards for stormwater discharge. He said they had talked with the City's Utilities Division regarding an industrial waste discharge permit and the sanitary sewer module. He said another engineering firm in being hired specifically to investigate structural requirements of that infrastructure. He hoped to have all those details finalized in-time for the final plan submittal.

Mr. Bealer, noting a portion of the property crossing the municipal boundary, asked about Cumru Township's participation. Mr. Fell said they had explained the situation to Cumru officials, who have asked to be copied on the plans, but given the amount of their land affected, "didn't express a strong intent to comment

actively". Mr. Bealer asked if a federal permit was required for stormwater volume discharged. Mr. Fell claimed to already have such a permit, and that they would abide by the current statute and its new standards for sampling. Mr. Euclide said they would follow the direction of the County Conservation District.

Mr. Fell turned toward the review correspondence of the Planning Office, the Department of Public Works and the County Planning Commission, counting approximately 80 items to consider. He thought about three-quarters of the comments dealt in three general areas; the plan's documentation and notation, the landscaping and screening considerations, and the environmental issues of stormwater impact, sanitary sewage, and erosion and sedimentation control. He said Entech Engineering expected to submit an erosion and sedimentation control plan to the Conservation District by the end of May or early June. He said all the other areas of concern would be documented. He identified areas preferred for internal roads, where rail had been years ago. He said they have contacted Norfolk Southern Corporation to that end, and have already been assured that the railroad does not intend to reactivate the rail within the project area. He hoped his explanation sufficiently addressed the issues about the zoning timing.

Regarding the traffic planning, the "incremental" increase by CedarPak, and Mayor McMahon's strong recommendation at the April meeting to work with Giannasca Development Group toward a mutually-beneficial solution, Mr. Fell mentioned "at least 5 hours" worth of meetings with Giannasca held since. He said the preliminary plan presented is consistent with the traffic patterns as they are currently arranged. He called CedarPak a culmination of their significant investment. He described the finished building at a 70 height to house the new machine, and a manufacturing flow from either the north or south end. He said the electric poles, the ring bus and the substation are already in-place for Met-Ed and PJM Interconnection. He said service was down for the night, as they make the change over to the new ring bus, and would be reactivated the next morning. He said he intended to consider the feedback in the review letters, submit an erosion and sedimentation control plan, the sanitary sewer module and industrial waste discharge documentation, once defined, respond to the review items, and return with a final plan. He anticipated a Conservation District submittal as early as July or August.

Mr. Rothermel asked about building color. Mr. Euclide said it had not yet been selected. Mr. Palka expected an improvement to the area. And Mr. Bealer noted opportunities to increase the green space and screening treatment from Canal and South 7th Street. Mr. Fell agreed that there were opportunities in some existing gravel areas, and especially around the property perimeter. He mentioned the steep slopes and heavily-wooded areas along the property lines.

Mr. Lauter, raising the truck traffic issue, asked if United Corrstack had been copied on the Traffic Planning and Design-prepared study, commissioned by the Giannascas and distributed to the Planning Commission. Mr. Fell insisted that they fully participated in it, and the discussion of the different options, their latest meeting held on May 8th. Mr. Lauter asked about the total traffic volume projected with the build-out of the entire facility. Mr. Fell answered between 50/ and 60/day currently, and referred to Mr. Stauffer for his recollection of the information previously provided for Bogia Engineering's *City of Reading Multiple Intersection Traffic Study,* commissioned by Greater Berks Development Fund in August 2006. Mr. Stauffer remembered 346 trips/day, or 173 trucks, and a current estimate of 337 for the Evergreen Community Power and CedarPak projects. He noted the two numbers were within 1% of each other. Mr. Miller noted that neither estimate included the traffic to/from the United Corrstack mill. Mr. Stauffer acknowledged, clarifying that the study accounted for incremental increases through the year 2030. Mr. Lauter asked again for an ultimate total. Mr. Bealer summed 228 trucks per day. Mr. Fell said between 200 and 230 trucks/day; 60 from United Corrstack, 60 from Evergreen Community Power, and another 100-110 from CedarPak. Mr. Raffaelli noted some inconsistency in the numbers given, feeling they should be able to accurately calculate the traffic volume based on the capacity of the paper mills and boiler vis-à-vis the trucks' capabilities to deliver. Mr. Fell insisted that he and Mr. Stauffer were referring to the Bogia study, which addressed riverfront traffic overall, and not the Traffic Planning and Design study, a result of recent discussions of alternatives to the "industrial collector". Mr. Raffaelli asked why the Bogia study hadn't been shared with the Planning Commission. Mr. Stauffer said the study was requested by the City, motivated by the trouble anticipated from the operation of the Berkshire Bottling Works. He said all users along the industrial collector participated, and that their own calculations were based on a 20 ton/truck capacity. He offered to supply the break-down for the final plan review. Mr. Raffaelli asked again, why the Planning Commission wasn't included, offended by the expectation of a favorable decision based on incomplete information. Mr. Jones said the report had been completed at the request of the City, but paid for by Greater Berks Development Fund, making it their property. He said it had been made available to the City's traffic engineering staff. Mr. Raffaelli questioned the intentional withholding from the planners. Mr. Jones called it "a traffic engineering document". Mr. Raffaelli countered that traffic impacts were among the Commission's areas of concern. Mr. Jones said the plan presentation for Evergreen Community Power

included relevant information from that study, including recommended improvements to the South 5th and Laurel Streets intersection, now subject to change in light of the "RiverView at Reading" announcement.

Mr. Miller wondered why the assumptions made for the August 2006 Bogia study were so radically different from the estimates given in testimony to the Zoning Hearing Board on March 8th and July 12th of 2006. Mr. Stauffer characterized it as an evolving plan, but reminded that the numbers provided focused on the increase over that generated by Cambridge-Lee Industries, approximately 40 trucks/day. Mr. Miller said that had been sorted out in the hearing, and that the totals still way off. Mr. Stauffer said he would have to research those numbers. Mr. Fell suggested the volumes were underestimated, having initially planned the expansion on a much smaller scale. He said, in early 2005, the Cedarpak facility had not yet been envisioned. Mr. Miller clarified that he was referring to a hearing regarding the Cedarpak expansion, held in the summer of 2006. Mr. Fell said they were considering a smaller power plant at that time, and that it wasn't until that May that they had determined its design. He said they returned to the Zoning Hearing Board on that matter in August 2006. He said he couldn't explain the numbers presented that March. He repeated that the estimate accounted for the "incremental" increase over Cambridge-Lee's traffic, who continued to operate into the fall of 2006. Mr. Miller insisted that the break down had been recognized and itemized in the testimony, and wondered how much more the volume might "evolve". Mr. Fell said they were confident in the current estimates, and those provided for the Bogia study. After further discussion, Mr. Stauffer acknowledged that the full build-out would result in approximately 457 truck "trips"/day.

Mr. Raffaelli asked about the County Planning Commission's opinion, and if they had considered the impact on the West Shore By-pass and other streets beyond the City. Mr. Miller said he had just received the County's comments, and that they recommended a traffic study. Mr. Fell noted that the specific wording says: … coordinated with the City…", not necessarily assigning the work. Mr. Lauter, recalling their previous intention to restrict the majority of their traffic to "off-hours", asked if that was still the intent. Mr. Stauffer said they intend to continue so restricting traffic to Evergreen Community Power, but that traffic to the United Corrstack and Cedarpak mills would be spread throughout the 24-hour period. Mr. Lauter asked their opinion of the findings of the Traffic Planning and Design study. Mr. Fell said he saw no inconsistencies.

Mr. Orlando, having been involved throughout the project's history, was at a loss to explain why the Bogia study had been kept from the Planning Commission. He intended to do what he could to have it released. He said it accounted for total anticipated build-out, and considered the Traffic Planning and Design preparation a discussion of options, the result of a request by the Mayor and others for a cooperative development of alternatives. He said if City Council decides to change the route of the "industrial collector", they would cooperate to the extent it allows them to continue their operation. He agreed the Planning Commission should have been included in the distribution of the Bogia study, and repeated his intent to obtain it. He called it an actual traffic study, with assumptions still relevant today.

Mr. Fell, feeling his presentation complete, asked for approval of the preliminary plan. Mr. Raffaelli countered that the information was incomplete, especially with regard to the traffic conflicts. Mr. Giannasca asked that his traffic engineer (Traffic Planning and Design) have an opportunity to address some of the issues raised. Mr. Raffaelli suggested that they needed to address the impacts beyond the City boundary. Mr. Miller recommended the Commission table the plan, in consideration of the zoning issues at least. Mr. Fell promised to address those issues, but asked that the process be kept moving. Mr. Miller explained that the Commission can't approve the plan with outstanding zoning issues. Mr. Bealer noted that a final plan anticipated in July/August need not be adversely affected by their tabling the preliminary plan. He preferred more time for considering the other reviews prepared, and for correspondence from Norfolk Southern Corporation which would substantiate the claims about Corrstack's encroachment. Mr. Rothermel asked if a specific traffic study would be prepared, one which would address the US422/Bingaman Street interchange. Mr. Jones said that any modifications recommended would take many years to construct. Mr. Rothermel agreed, repeating his request to involve the County's Transportation Planner. Mr. Lauter reminded that the study needs to include the projected 2000 new residents associated with "RiverView at Reading". He asked how the Commission could be reasonably expected to proceed to a vote without the traffic issues resolved.

Mr. Lauter moved to table the preliminary plan. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to table the CedarPak #4 Paper Mill preliminary plan.

Review the **sketch** land development plan for **Parcel 2 - RiverView at Reading**, a "mixed-use building" proposed for that parcel known as 601 Canal Street (formerly known as Disposition Parcel 32 of the Model Cities One urban renewal area). [2:17.33]

Mr. Giannasca recalled the Mayor's direction, at the April meeting, to work together toward a traffic management solution. He said Giannasca Development Group always engages traffic consultants, for every one of its projects, and repeated his preferences to convert the "industrial collector" to a more pedestrian-friendly street, and reroute the truck traffic to reduce its impact. He said some short-term options will be suggested pending the planning and construction of longer-term solutions. He hoped to avoid a situation where United Corrstack's trucks are stalled by restrictions around RiverView's soon-to-be construction zone. With regard to "Parcel 2", he expected to be closing the sale in the near future. He said construction documents for the Reading Hardware Company foundry building were nearly complete, and that the clean-up of Heritage Park should begin in the next two weeks.

Mr. Giannasca said that the recent focus has been on the "global issues" of traffic, and the draft "planned residential development" regulations. He noted that the Mayor had recently formed a study group to consider traffic, parking and related signage for the City as a whole, especially with consideration to its visitors. He hoped the term "industrial collector", and the route designation could be changed, and intended to petition City Council to that end. He remembered that United Corrstack had earlier stated their amenability to an alternate route, and with his plan to elevate the 600 block of Canal Street (at United Corrstack's traffic entrance) by 3-4 feet, recommended such arrangements be planned well-ahead of time. He explained that the Traffic Planning and Design study had taken on a larger scope, and expanded the options considered, in recognition of the pending conflicts during construction. He alluded again to the "planned residential development" draft submitted for the Planning Office's consideration. Ms. Mayfield insisted that the City's own planning consultant would prepare and present the "planned residential development". Mr. Giannasca deferred to Mr. Mountz for an explanation of the traffic study.

Mr. Mountz mentioned the 'big picture' approach, initially preferred to a full study. He recalled a meeting, held the day following the Commission's April meeting, attended by Giannasca, City and United Corrstack officials. He said the numbers referenced were taken directly from discussions with United Corrstack. Mr. Giannasca added that they had reviewed the Bogia Engineering report and considered it in preparing this latest study. Mr. Mountz turned to illustrations included with the report, and detailing the existing and possible entering/exiting routes for United Corrstack's traffic. He focused specifically on a suggestion to handle incoming traffic via Laurel and South 7th Streets, including a conversion of Laurel's 400 block for two-way flow to and from the Bingaman Street Bridge. He recognized the Department of Transportation's jurisdiction. He continued with a presentation of possible modifications to the cartway geometry along that route, and other long-term concepts including potential new bridge alignments. He noted that the traffic associated with United Corrstack's CedarPak project isn't anticipated until the fourth quarter of 2010. He briefly explained the concepts of a service bridge along the opposite shore of the Schuylkill River (on the remnant bed of the Reading Company's former Wilmington and Northern branch), and a new US422 interchange (near Klapperthal) connecting to a South 9th Street extension, which he described as the best option for reliving existing problems at the US422/Bingaman Street interchange. He characterized the preferred route of the 1970s-era South Reading Bridge Corridor Study as currently impractical due to the developments since of Brentwood Industries and Uni-Chains Manufacturing. He mentioned a superficial consideration of existing rail infrastructure in the vicinity. Asked if he was leaning toward any particular option, Mr. Mountz identified Laurel Street in the interim, as the others were longer-term prospects. He hoped for feedback from the City. Mr. Raffaelli felt the industrial community's reliance on their historical use of the "industrial collector" ignored the then-greater role of the railroads. He wondered who'd be expected to pay for the necessary maintenance and upgrades to infrastructure burdened by continually-increasing industrial traffic. Mr. Mountz suggested using the scope of these projects to leverage available State and Federal funding programs. Mr. Rothermel called new infrastructure "the tip of [an] ice berg", wondering how traffic delivered to the urban grid by a new bridge would be absorbed. He mentioned the inclusion of improvements, including widening, to the 8th and 9th Street corridors all the way to Heister's Lane (about 23 blocks each) in the South Reading Bridge Corridor Study. Mr. Mountz acknowledged, but noted the current pressure on the US422/Bingaman Street interchange, identified in multiple reviews, as another consideration. Mr. Rothermel asked if he understood the origin of the "industrial collector". Mr. Mountz answered that RiverView represented a transition from an industrially-dominated area. Mr. Rothermel said they were trying to relieve other residential areas by constructing it, and that such a reversal would "kill" the properties on Laurel and South 7th Streets. He noted the historic preservation concerns, in addition to the negative impact on residents and property values. Mr. Giannasca interjected that, before he had committed any resources to the RiverView project, he researched the RiverPlace Master Plan, and other policies encouraging the redevelopment of a mixed-use riverfront. He called "industrial collector" an antiquated term from a time of greater industrial influence, and identified conflicting policies within the City's own master planning documents. He noted the national re-thinking on the use of urban waterfronts. He called the Laurel Street modification "purely interim", until the full traffic volumes are realized. Mr. Rothermel considered the contingency

and risk associated with those as-yet uncommitted improvements. Mr. Giannasca answered that, in such a case, RiverView would fail and the riverfront would remain under-utilized forever. He understood that Laurel Street could not support the 'built-out' volume of trucks, and the urgency in arranging for long-term improvements, citing it as the reason for delaying the RiverView-specific traffic study to focus on them. He again called for public feedback on preferences. Mr. Palka felt the South 9th Street extension best, given the lack of established residential areas, but for the time and expense associated. Mr. Burdge mentioned a recent meeting with the Governor's Action Team to explore State program assistance available. Mr. Miller noted the planning of the "industrial collector" ran concurrently with the planning of the South Reading Bridge Corridor; one eventually built, one not. He said as early as 1963, the then-Department of Highways recognized the problems with the US422/Bingaman Street interchange. Mr. Bealer suggested the time for an additional bridge had finally come. He considered the challenges in funding and scheduling the recently-completed US222 improvements and extensions. He noted the bigger challenges encountered in redeveloping Baltimore's harborfront. Mr. Giannasca repeated his commitment to the long-term, and to the public attractions planned with the new residences.

Mr. Raffaelli suggested that contingencies in United Corrstack's supply chain could eventually change the current assumptions about traffic patterns, and the economics of transportation modes. When he suggested that some other supplier might someday offer 'tire-derived fuels' at a competitive rate, Mr. Feghali interjected, and stated emphatically that tires would not be burned in the Evergreen Community Power plant.

Mr. Lauter assumed that the Giannascas must be confident in a solution, if continuing their work despite the unanswered questions. Mr. Giannasca felt that a workable solution would be found. He saw a chance to revive an under-utilized infrastructure, and compared the width of Reading's streets to those in New York City, with its much larger buildings and higher population densities. He felt the desired improvements achievable, and especially with the "critical mass" associated with RiverView. Mr. Lauter thought it made sense in concept, but recalled other disappointments. Mr. Jones explained that the US222 extension only happened with every stakeholder on-board and cooperating, in what he believed to be a first in Berks County's history. Mr. Giannasca perceived, from the response since the mid-February announcement, that so far, everyone was. Mr. Burdge stressed that they were proposing a "walk-able community", which themselves aim to address the larger issues of transportation realities. Mr. Lauter encouraged a meeting with the affected residents of Laurel Street, reminding that the routing of truck traffic through residential areas was the Commission's primary objection to the Berkshire Bottling Works development. Mr. Rothermel supported the redevelopment of 601 Canal Street and the former Reading Hardware Company building, but repeated his call for a real traffic study, with the County and City traffic planners' feedback to the City, and with specific consideration of RiverView's planned disruption of the "industrial collector". Mr. Miller emphasized that the Giannascas we're offering a study, in contrast to Berkshire Bottling Works, who refused even when asked. Mr. Mountz suggested renewing the public beckon for another "South Reading Bridge". Mr. Lauter raised his concern that, as the project gets phased in and the recommended road improvements haven't kept pace, the Commission would be asked to continue approving projects. Mr. Giannasca suggested an analysis of costs and timelines anticipated with those suggested improvements. Mr. Lauter mentioned the history of the planned River Road extension, vis-à-vis the Berkshire Bottling project, as an example of a transportation improvement planned, but never constructed. Mr. Jones said that extension was again under consideration. Asked if they still intended to seek half-occupancies before proceeding with subsequent phases, Mr. Giannasca conceded, noting the typical lender requirement.

Turning to the site plan, Mr. Bealer asked about the intent for the 700 block of Minor Street, its use and direction. Mr. Giannasca recognized its narrow width, relative to its value in circulation. Mr. Miller said its current use is little more than as a service lane.

Other business:

election of Commission officers-2008 annual term [3:51.16]

Having forgotten to establish a nominating committee at the April meeting, Mr. Raffaelli requested that Mr. Palka again prepare a slate of nominations to be presented at the June meeting.

minutes-April 8, 2008 Planning Commission meeting [3:52.16]

Mr. Rothermel, noting the page 2 reference to some requested revisions to the March 11 minutes, wondered how the Commission could verify the requested changes were made, if not detailed. Mr. Miller suggested that between the drafts given the members, the final versions on-file, and the audio recordings of the meetings themselves, a sufficient trail existed. Mr. Bealer asked for some updates to the footnotes.

Mr. Lauter then moved to approve the April 8th minutes, as amended. Mr. Rothermel seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the amended April 8, 2008 meeting minutes.

Resolution #38-2008

award of contract-to "draft, amend, prepare, revise and rewrite City of Reading Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and Official Map"

Ms. Mayfield reported the contract having been awarded to Urban Research & Development Corporation, a first meeting with City staff, and a 'priority list' of needed amendments, including the "planned residential development" regulations for the "RiverView at Reading" project. She asked that a Planning Commission representative be assigned to sit on a "rewrite committee", and for suggestions of other interests to be represented. Mr. Raffaelli suggested Mr. Rothermel, who declined citing scheduling conflicts.

As the members in attendance considered those who weren't, Mr. Miller reported that Carson Kober-Mazurkiewicz had regretfully resigned her seat, citing professional and personal obligations.

Asked if the appointment could be postponed a month, Ms. Mayfield agreed, noting that special meetings may be required over the summer anyway for considering the "planned residential development".

Mr. Bealer mentioned an email written to William Evans, State Senator Michael A. O'Pake's Executive Assistant, regarding a railroad spur to serve United Corrstack, and an acknowledgement since received.

Mr. Bealer reported that, on May 20th, the Blighted Property Review Committee would be traveling to Harrisburg to meet with their, and Allentown's equivalent boards, to discuss methods and strategies, and again in Allentown June 9th. He said they'd be seeking guidance, especially in light of the City's budget implications for the Review Committee.

§508.3 agreement to extension-Department of Fire and Rescue Services – Southwest Station - preliminary land development plan [4:03.49]

Mr. Miller said that Stackhouse Bensinger Inc., as agent of the Department, requested an extension to the July 8th Planning Commission meeting. He said without it, the deadline would be June 10th, but that the earliest he figured the Commission could act, relative to the zoning hurdles, would be July 8th.

Mr. Lauter moved to consent to the requested extension. Mr. Rothermel seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to agree to the July 8th extension.

Resolution #39-2008

Mr. Miller asked if there were any questions on the other issues mentioned in his staff comments. Mr. Bealer hoped the pedestrian access, connecting Front Street (in the vicinity of the Reading Phillies stadium) to River Road (at the Warren Street By-pass) through the Carpenter Technology Corporation property, if closed, would include a mitigating measure favoring the City, like a formal commitment to the Schuylkill River Trail's access along the western shore. Mr. Miller noted a legal agreement in-place, the policies of the Comprehensive Plan and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. He personally recognized the dangers present, and said that Carpenter had approached the administration directly.

Regarding the Reading Eagle Company's request to remove some metered spaces and reserve others around their Court Street, Penn Street, and North 4th Street entrances, Mr. Rothermel wondered why the Commission was involved.

Mr. Rothermel firmly opposed rezoning the Residential Outlet (RO) district to Commercial Neighborhood (CN), citing an already-expanded commercial area influenced by the Reading Station Outlets. Ms. Mayfield said the Commission could wait until the June meeting to prepare its comment, on it and the proposed Kenhorst Boulevard rezoning, each having only been introduced to City Council at the previous night's meeting.

Mr. Miller reported that the Department of Public Works and the Shade Tree Commission had given their consent to the landscaping scheme proposed for the southwest corner of North 5th and Washington Streets. Mr. Rothermel recalled previous city engineers' opinions that downtown sidewalks widths be maintained at 13 feet.

§303.a.1 recommendation-Opportunity House's petition to vacate Lafayette Street, between Pear and North 2nd, and

North 2nd and Pear Streets, between Beech and Lafayette [4:10.28]

Mr. Rothermel recalled Lafayette Street's construction as a deliberate attempt to connect dead-ended streets. Mr. Miller noted that aim of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Jones said a plan shown him of the proposed construction would alleviate his concerns, if built consistently.

Mr. Bealer moved to recommend against vacating the streets based on the information presented, because of the potential impact on neighboring properties not yet acquired by Opportunity House, and the possibility of creating dead-ends. Mr. Rothermel felt that, if those properties were acquired, it would be a different consideration. Mr. Miller called it a matter of how far the vacation would cover, and intended to obtain a graphic plan. Mr. Rothermel seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to recommend against Opportunity House's petition.

Resolution #40-2008

Discussion followed on the status of the status of the Commission's appeal of the signage at 100 North 3rd Street (Appeal No. 2008-06).

Mr. Miller advised the Commission, that if it wanted to make a formal statement on the downtown lighting plans, to do so. Mr. Rothermel estimated that between 13-15 years ago the City had spent alot of money in coordinating and installing the current Penn Street lamps. Mr. Raffaelli suggested they change the existing lamps' ballasts and fixtures. Mr. Bealer hoped matching standards could be installed, but agreed with Albert Boscov's position that something must be done to improve the downtown lighting. Mr. Rothermel called lighting one of several factors affecting public perceptions of downtown safety. Mr. Miller suggested the new entertainment offerings in the works, and others being pursued, addressed some of those other variables. Mr. Lauter felt the style proposed may appear 'dated' in the future, and that the current standards have a timeless appeal. He suggested starting with the installations in the "Entertainment Square", and judging the rest based on it. Mr. Miller agreed, since that area was creating its own identity and could contrast with the more-historic Penn Street.

Mr. Lauter moved to adjourn the May meeting. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the May 13th meeting. – 11:35 pm.