

**Minutes**  
**Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission**  
**May 25, 2010 at 7:00 pm**

**Members present:**

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman  
Brian Bingaman, Vice 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  
Charles M. Jones, Department of Public Works

**Others present:**

Jason P. Shaner, McCarthy Engineering Associates, PC  
William J. Vitale, Designworks Architects, PC  
Andrew L. Hicks, Tripoint Properties, Inc.  
Stephen H. Bensinger, Stackhouse Bensinger, Inc.  
Louis Masciotti, Jr., Louis Masciotti Architect  
Scott T. Miller, Stackhouse Bensinger, Inc.  
Craig J. Schmitt, Ewing Cole, Inc.  
Scott M. Hunsicker, Reading Baseball, LP (Reading Phillies)  
Carole Duran, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the May 25th meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Lauter moved to accept the May agenda, as presented. Mr. Bingaman seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the May 25th agenda.

**Subdivision and Land Development:**

Barley Square - final land development plan [0:00.06]

Mr. Shaner reminded the Commission of the proposal for a 60-unit apartment building on the South 2nd Street side of the property, and now a Berks Women-in-Crisis facility on their recently-purchased South 3rd Street side. He referred to a few "house-keeping" corrections to be made. Asked about the format of the municipal improvements agreement, Mr. Shaner confirmed that Tripoint and Berks Women-in-Crisis would enter into separate agreements. Ms. Mayfield said they must be resolved before building permits are issued. Andrew Miller said Public Works' concerns seem to have been addressed, and only the municipal improvements issues remained. He thought the draft estimates had been submitted to Public Works. Mr. Hicks said they were being revised. Mr. Rothermel questioned the County Planning Commission basing their objection on floodplain issues. Andrew Miller explained that the '100-year' boundary, crossing through the site, was "deemed inconsistent" with the County (Vision 2020) Comprehensive Plan. He added that the grading and utility plan proposes to fill that part of the site, thereby raising it above that elevation. Asked if the County considers local zoning ordinances in their determinations, Andrew Miller said that particular comment related specifically to their own comprehensive plan. Asked about the surrounding street elevations, he noted the area wasn't steeply pitched, and that the proposed fill would also serve to level site. Mr. Rothermel recalled the construction of Blue Marsh Dam as a flood-mitigation measure, and other construction within the floodplain since.

Mr. Vitale briefly reviewed the floor plans for Berks Women-in-Crisis, already shown at the April meeting, then turned to the exterior design, building materials and colors; some masonry material combined with either a fiber-cement siding or synthetic stucco (EIFS), with some articulation (bump-outs) in the façade. He described a seat wall along the South 3rd Street boundary in a matching masonry material, and perhaps a fence, budget permitting. Mr. Lauter recommended skateboard deterrents for the wall. On security concerns, Mr. Vitale described the property as open, but with lighting on pole fixtures, bollards and wallpacks. Turning back to the façade treatment, he intended to consult with Tripoint's architect as the design progressed. He anticipated construction beginning in October.

Mr. Rothermel moved to approve the final land development plan for Barley Square, conditioned on the remaining plan corrections and municipal improvements agreements. Mr. Bingaman seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the Barley Square final plan.

Resolution #27-2010

R&D Building Addition (Sweet Street Desserts) - final land development plan [0:28.03]

Mr. Bensinger reported that all the necessary “outside agency approvals” had been secured, and changes made to the plan per the review letters. He delivered sets for signatures, thinking it fit for approval, but understood the Planning Office would need to verify those corrections. Ms. Mayfield wondered about the municipal improvements calculation. Mr. Bensinger said the City Engineer had indicated the only “municipal improvement” proposed is the additional manhole access to the storm sewer, and “trusted” Sweet Street would provide it. Andrew Miller intended to confirm that, before releasing the record plans. Asked about some excavation already observed on the property, Mr. Masciotti said they had recently encased the underground electric lines in concrete, as a safety measure in advance of the new construction. Andrew Miller confirmed the progress on the plan, and suggested action subject to a review of the latest sets and an ‘okay’ from the City Engineer. Mr. Rothermel reiterated the City’s general aversion to placing buildings over its underground infrastructure, and said his vote was based on the assurances of the City Engineer.

Mr. Bingaman moved to approve the final plan, as presented. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve Sweet Street’s R&D Building Addition final plan.

Resolution #28-2010

First Energy Stadium Renovation & Addition (Reading Phillies) - final land development plan [0:34.03]

Scott Miller briefly explained the orientation of the existing building, dating from the 1950s, described a planned expansion of the concession area, and a modified main entrance and ticketing area. He said a difference in elevation between the outside grade and interior concourse creates some difficulty in addressing the handicap accessibility. He indicated a one-story building, for a “batting area”, a bigger courtyard area, a new landscaped area and seat wall in front of the Stadium, and additional handicapped-accessible parking. A new open canopy element will shelter a cuing and ticketing area. A loading area will be designated toward the eastern side of the food court “for panel trucks”, but not tractor trailers. Noting the expansion’s projection over some existing parking, he said they’ve also considered a new parking area on Carpenter Technology Corporation’s recently-acquired property at 101 Cathedral Street (formerly the Northwest Swimming Association’s pool). He said it hadn’t been included as part of the current plan because of funding issues and some zoning relief requested from Muhlenberg Township, estimating that a third of the parcel lies within their jurisdiction. He said they were seeking permission to reduce the space size and aisle width to match the minimum City standards (9- by 18-foot stalls and 22-foot wide aisles). He said negotiations for the lease of the lot are underway with Carpenter, and reported consulting the City’s zoning solicitor about the ‘next steps’. Mr. Raffaelli urged a City annexation of the land in Muhlenberg, given that its majority is already within the City, and contiguous. Andrew Miller asked why, if matching the City standards, they’d need to appear before the City’s Zoning Hearing Board. Scott Miller mentioned a possible use issue. He turned to the architect for his presentation.

Mr. Schmitt displayed renderings that showed the massing of the new buildings in relation to the existing. He called it a “schematic level”, with plenty of design work left to do. He alluded to significant interior renovations within the existing grandstands: home and visiting team locker room expansions (to meet current minor-league standards), administrative office rearrangements, an expansion of the food court, and its pre- and post-game entertainment functions, including a new permanent stage, and an alleyway created for a new main entrance. He said one of the column bays in the existing grandstand will remain, as an exit. The ‘home plate façade’ of the 1993 work will remain, but with some masonry fill-ins in the other bays. He said it’s harder to treat the newly-created façade, as fenestration opportunities are limited by the functions on its interior (e.g. concessions and restrooms). He hoped a combination of masonry, possible clerestory glazing and canopy elements, would make it tolerable. He said a new team store is a part of the renovations to the existing structure. Mr. Raffaelli criticized the blank look of the new construction. Mr. Schmitt understood, said the Phillies share the concern, but felt it unfair to compare it with what he termed the existing, ceremonial “money shot”. Asked about a designated smoking area, Mr. Hunsicker said it was another matter still under consideration. Mr. Rothermel sensed an opportunity in the new façade for a decorative or artistic element which could, at once, treat the blank façade and lend some identity to the ballpark. Mr. Hunsicker said they had included a budget line for that purpose, somewhere within the project. Asked to describe the circulation pattern for a patron entering the Stadium and seated on the left field line, Mr. Schmitt said

the existing “third base” entrance gate would remain, though entry through the new main gate would essentially follow the same path through the grandstands as before, and noted the merchandising preference in doing so. Asked if anything else about that concourse was changing, Mr. Hunsicker said the most left- and right-end concession spaces would be removed, and with them their cueing lines, resulting in additional width. Mr. Jones, having joined the meeting in time to hear the discussion on canopy designs, noted his preference for something metal, as opposed to the canvas material being considered, given the City’s maintenance responsibility. On the unpaved parking area to the north of the Stadium, Mr. Hunsicker resisted the idea of developing or paving it, since the approximately 28 “fireworks nights” each season are their best attended, and the area serves as a “drop zone”, then precluding its use as parking. Questioned about the project cost, Mr. Schmitt said \$10 million total, of which he estimated \$8½ million for “brick and mortar”. Mr. Hunsicker said \$5 million has been provided by Pennsylvania, and the other half from the City and the Phillies, per the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) funding model. Mr. Bealer asked about the entrance from Centre Avenue, an issue raised as well by the City Engineer and County Planners. Scott Miller expected the curb cut would be closed, eventually, but felt their deadlines unable to wait on the state highway application procedures. Mr. Hunsicker added that the area is needed for player parking, especially the major league visitors that they intend to separate from the fans. Scott Miller acknowledged the Planning Office and Public Works reviews, and felt all the issues identified could be addressed satisfactorily, in time for the next meeting. He mentioned a large, underground brick culvert traversing the site, and said they are hoping to contract for a videotaped assessment of its condition. Mr. Schmitt elaborated that the building foundation would consist of cantilevered grade beams and concrete caissons, driven at or below culvert elevation, in order to transfer the load around it.

Mr. Bealer moved to table the final plan, pending some additional detail and review. Mr. Bingaman seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to table the First Energy Stadium Renovation & Addition plan.

#### **Other business:**

##### §609.c review-petition to rezone 513-523 Crestmont and 512-524 Arlington Streets, Residential 2 (R2) to Manufacturing Commercial (MC) [1:20.19]

Andrew Miller referred to his written comments. He explained that the rezoning would allow for the parking area, and possibly a future Quaker Maid Meats plant expansion, recalling Quaker Maid’s January 26th presentation. He expected that, if the map change were enacted, an updated presentation would soon follow. He said the review is an opportunity for the Commission to offer its recommendations to City Council. Discussion continued on the demolitions and excavation, vis-à-vis permits.

Mr. Bealer moved to recommend that City Council look favorably upon the petition to rezone the Crestmont and Arlington Streets properties under Quaker Maid’s ownership. Mr. Bingaman seconded. Asked if the project was adjacent to residential uses, Andrew Miller confirmed. He noted Quaker Maid’s intent for parking concerned him because of possible light trespass, and the mount heights suggested by the pedestals already installed. A landscaped buffer, mentioned in their January presentation, required more detail. Mr. Rothermel asked if their previous projects had been constructed ‘as planned’. Andrew Miller said not. The Commission voted unanimously to recommend that City Council consider rezoning 513-523 Crestmont and 512-524 Arlington Streets, from Residential 2 (R2) to Manufacturing Commercial (MC).

**Resolution #29-2010**

##### §209.1.b.2 review-draft zoning ordinance by Urban Research & Development Corporation [1:28.24]

Ms. Mayfield reminded the Commission of its public meeting scheduled for June 3rd. She asked for a resolution authorizing the submission of draft zoning ordinance to the County Planning Commission, as required by the Municipalities Planning Code.

Mr. Bealer moved to forward the draft zoning ordinance to the Berks County Planning Commission, in accord with §607.e of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Mr. Bingaman seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to forward the proposed zoning ordinance for the county planning agency’s recommendations.

**Resolution #30-2010**

##### §207 nominations-2010 Planning Commission office holders [1:30.56]

Mr. Raffaelli requested the recommendations of the ‘nominating committee’. Mr. Lauter reported a recommendation to keep the 2009 office holders in place for another year, and with their consent:

- Chairman - Ermete J. Raffaelli
- Vice Chairman - Brian Bingaman
- Secretary - Michael E. Lauter
- Assistant Secretary - Wayne Jonas Bealer

Mr. Palka moved to close the nominations and elect the slate of officers proposed. Mr. Rothermel seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to elect the slate of candidates, as proposed, in accord with §207 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and its own by-laws.

Resolution #31-2009

review the draft April 27, 2010 meeting minutes [1:32.51]

Mr. Lauter moved to approve the April meeting minutes, as presented. Mr. Rothermel seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the April 27th meeting minutes.

Resolution #32-2010

Mr. Lauter voiced his concern over the institutional overlay districts being proposed for the new zoning ordinance, on behalf of the local colleges. He suggested that the Commission members help communicate the idea to those who may have interest, who in turn, should review the on-line draft and consider attending the June 3rd meeting. Andrew Miller noted that only those overlay districts proposed in the 18th Ward are showing on the City's website. Ms. Mayfield briefly explained the purpose of zoning overlays. Mr. Lauter felt that the overlays go further than the academic cores of the schools' campuses, and noted Urban Research & Development Corporation advised a more-limited boundary. Ms. Mayfield said the draft text imposes additional restrictions where facing residential properties. She said the boundaries were drafted larger, anticipating that they'd shrink following the public input. Mr. Lauter understood that's how the colleges' representatives would have it, but preferred a more conservative approach, concerned that *the word* wouldn't *get out*. Ms. Mayfield said the Commission could itself recommend more-limited overlays. Mr. Rothermel wondered how the boundaries were determined, suspecting the colleges' attorneys had drafted it. Ms. Mayfield said it came from the 'amendment committee' meeting with the consultant. She intended to clarify the material posted on the website. Andrew Miller noted that, in addition to the colleges, the overlays include the Reading Hospital's "School of Health Sciences" property (1025 Old Wyomissing Road) and their soon-to-be property at the Navy and Marine Corps reserve center (615 Kenhorst Boulevard).

Andrew Miller asked Mr. Jones about the need for a municipal improvements agreement from Sweet Street Desserts. Mr. Jones indicated it wasn't necessary. On First Energy Stadium, noting the City's ownership of the land and partial financing of the project, he said he wouldn't be seeking one for it either.

Mr. Bingaman moved to adjourn the May meeting. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the May 25th meeting. – 8:58 pm.