
City of Reading City Council

Public Hearing

May 29, 2008

Lancaster Avenue Firehouse

Council Chambers

5:00 pm

Council President Spencer called the Evidentiary Meeting to order.

COUNCILMEMBERS

Council President Spencer

Councilor D. Sterner District 3

Councilor S. Marmarou District 4

Councilor M. Baez District 5

OTHERS

Legal Specialist M. Mayfield

City Clerk L. Kelleher

City Planner A. Miller

I. Purpose

Council President Spencer stated that Council will hear testimony on the application for the construction of a firehouse on Lancaster Avenue. City Council needs to consider the impact this use would have on surrounding properties.

Council President Spencer asked Legal Specialist M. Mayfield to conduct the hearing.

Legal Specialist Mayfield noted the presence of Fire Chief Rehr, and representatives from Stackhouse Bensinger, along with City Planner Miller to give testimony on the conditional use application for the construction of the Firehouse at 101 Lancaster Avenue.

II. Testimony from Applicant

Representatives from Stackhouse Bensinger presented their Conditional Use Application for conditional use to place a firehouse in this commercial highway zone.

The conditional use application was entered into the record as Exhibit 1.

Representatives from Stackhouse Bensinger reviewed the site plan and displayed drawings of the proposed 1700 square foot building. They stated that the plans are currently being reviewed

by the Planning Commission and an application for variances has been made to the Zoning Board.

District 2 City Councilor M. Goodman-Hinnershitz arrived at this time.

The site plan and deed were entered into the record as Exhibits 2 and 3 respectively.

Council President Spencer explained that City Council understands the project as several presentations have been made to the body over the past two years. He stated that Council's questions and concerns were addressed as they were raised.

Councilor Marmarou inquired how the consolidation of two firehouses will affect the response time to this expanded neighborhood.

Fire Chief Rehr explained that the construction of this firehouse would allow the consolidation of the Oakbrook and Liberty Firehouses. He stated that the new building will be constructed at a location mid way between the two existing stations or fire departments response time will not be degraded. He stated that the installation of traffic light preemption devices will allow fire fighters to control the traffic signals which will ease their entrance onto Lancaster Avenue. He stated that a traffic study has shown that the fire trucks will be entering traffic in the opposite direction from the usual backups.

Councilor Sterner noted the increased capacity of the firehouse and questioned which apparatus will be located at the station. Fire Chief Rehr stated that the firehouse will hold the hazmat brush trucks and two service trucks.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz inquired where the boat apparatus will be stationed. Fire Chief Rehr explained that the boat apparatus used by the scuba team will be housed at either UGI or the Liberty Firehouse.

III. Findings of Fact from City Staff

City Planner Miller stated that the opinion from the County Planning Commission contains no objections to the construction of a firehouse on Lancaster Avenue. The City Planning Commission is currently reviewing the application and is awaiting the opinion of Penn DOT before composing and providing their recommendation to City Council.

IV. Public Comment

Bonnie Sussman -Versace Lancaster Avenue business owner - stated that she is pleased with the proposed project and asked Council to support it.

There was no other public comment or commitment from the applicants. Legal Specialist Mayfield announced that Council expects to either approve or deny the application at their regular business meeting scheduled for June 23, 2008.

The Public Hearing was adjourned.

Linda Kelleher
City Clerk