

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 6, 2023**

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, December 6, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chair Philip Wert; Vice Chair Christopher Lincoln; Members Daniel Horman, Kacie Rodriguez, Zanna Leindecker (via zoom), and Jennifer Bressler; Zoning Officer and Code Department Manager Chad Moyer; Borough Manager Dean Murray; and Administrative Clerk Stephanie Burkholder. Member Cody Rhoads was unable to attend.

Visitors

Mark Evans, Derck & Edson, LLC (via zoom)
James Rogers, Resident

Steve Ware, Derck & Edson, LLC (via zoom)

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the November 1, 2023 minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Rodriguez. **Motion carried.**

New Business

a. **Discussion with Derck & Edson – Downtown Zoning Ordinance – Session 5** – Mr. Evans presented the design schedule to the Planning Commission which he and Mr. Ware have been working on, including a draft of the ordinance. Assistance was requested from the Planning Commission pertaining to where the ordinance sections of the Downtown Zoning Ordinance should be placed. The ordinance sections would need to specify where the commercial districts are located. Mr. Evans stated that the Gateway District should be added to the ordinance as well as the Commercial Light Industrial Overlay District and the General Business Overlay Business District. There are a few sections of the sign ordinance that would need to be renumbered to accommodate the proposed changes.

Zoning Districts:

During the last meeting, there was discussion regarding permitted uses of the Downtown District, it was thought that proposing all of the uses in the Downtown area should be presented as one within the commercial districts. There are areas of Penn Avenue & Reading Avenue that would allow for the front setback to be 30 feet, which would allow retail frontage along the overlay. Mr. Evans stated that the existing zoning map could be modified to designate the areas where retail frontages would be required, which would prohibit offices on the ground floor in certain portions of Penn Avenue. There may be areas on Penn Avenue where retail or office space could be allowed which would then need to be labeled as a Commercial Overlay District. There are areas where residential uses would be permitted which wouldn't have an overlay. Mr. Evans stated that based on the conversation last month, the creation of a Gateway District would include all of Buttonwood Street as well as a portion of Reading Avenue. The expansion of the Central Business District would include both sides of Reading Avenue in the 700 block. Mr. Evans stated that they plan to provide a draft for everyone at least a week before the next meeting.

Mr. Evans and Mr. Ware departed the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

b. **Mechanical Equipment** – Revised language was provided based on last month’s discussion without a quorum that would limit placement of mechanical units in the front yard and require screening. Mr. Wert asked if the ordinance should be sent to the solicitor’s office for review.

Public Comment

Mr. Rogers questioned what prompted changes to the ordinance concerning mechanical equipment placement in front yards. Mr. Moyer stated that there was a property in the borough that moved their air conditioning condensing unit to the front yard, which met the front yard setback and yardage requirements, however, there are concerns regarding mechanical type equipment being visible from the front of homes. Mr. Lincoln asked how this would be defined when a corner property classified as having two front yards and fences, etc. Mr. Moyer stated that placement would be encouraged in the side yard if feasible. Ms. Leiendecker asked if this would apply to a multi-unit property and Mr. Moyer stated that it would not. Mr. Wert stated that he is concerned with properties converting to mini split systems that are placed on the front of homes. Mr. Wert advised that the Planning Commission should be cautious about how the ordinance is worded and recommended the solicitor’s office review this amendment.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Burkholder
Administrative Clerk