

# Reading Zoning Change Would Help Development

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**Reading, PA** - City Council unanimously approved a zoning change Monday to allow developers to bring major residential and commercial projects to the south Reading riverfront, including the proposed \$2.8 billion RiverView at Reading.

"This sets the structure we need for any development in that area," Councilwoman Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz said of the so-called planned residential development option that council approved.

The zoning of the area centering on Canal Street will remain industrial, but any developer with 10 or more acres would have the option of bringing in other projects.

Early last year, Giannasca Development Group LLC proposed RiverView, a mix of apartments, condominiums, stores and offices, but said it needed the zoning change to convince banks to finance the project.

"I want to thank my colleagues for a thoughtful approach to the issue," Councilman Stephen P. Fuhs said.

Giannasca at first wanted the city to give it master developer status for the area, although it owned little of the 82 acres its proposal encompassed.

Council balked at that idea, and Giannasca and the city eventually agreed to pursue the zoning change that will control any project proposed by any developer in the area.

Passage was delayed when the advertising requirements for the public hearing in January weren't met, and the city had to schedule a second hearing in February.

Among other rules, the zoning change requires any development to be pedestrian friendly and have a commercial main street.

Council also:

- Awarded a civil engineering contract for \$308,000 to Herbert, Rowland & Grubic Inc., Lancaster, and a separate architectural contract for \$256,460 to Seiler &

Drury, Norristown, both for the new laboratory building for the sewage treatment plant on Fritz's Island.

- Ratified hiring four police officers - James Kennedy, Craig Chapman, Derrick J. Kasprzewski and Alfredo Ortiz - to fill four vacancies.

- Raised the salary of police Chief William M. Heim by 4 percent, or \$4,190, to \$108,957, as specified in his contract.

- Voted 4-3 to award a \$199,800 contract to Hazen & Sawyer, Philadelphia, for a study to decide how much the city should charge property owners for storm water that drains off their property. The proposed charge would help to maintain storm drains.

"I'm not in support of the city of Reading being the first in the state to do this," Councilman Jeffrey S. Waltman Sr. said.

Waltman, Fuhs and Council President Vaughn D. Spencer voted against the move.

"In this economy, \$200,000 for a study of this nature just isn't a priority," Waltman added.

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