



Allentown

435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, Pa. 18101

Minutes - Final

City Council

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Public Hearing

Call to Order

Present: 6 - Candida Affa, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Joshua Siegel, and Natalie Santos

Excused: 1 - Cynthia Mota

[15-5209](#)

Bill 55

Amending the Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance of the City of Allentown by (i) rezoning certain parcels to B-5 Urban Commercial District, (ii) adding an additional note (T) to section 1315.03 altering the area and yard requirements for certain parcels zoned B-5, and (iii) providing for a repealer clause, a severability clause, and an effective date.

Sponsors: Mr. Siegel and Hendricks

Attachments: [Bill 55 W. Allen Street and W](#)
[W Allen Street and W Liberty Street Exhibit A \(Map\)](#)
[Rezoning Petition - W Allen Street and W Liberty Street](#)
[ACPC Recommendation URP Rezone fv](#)
[City Planning Commission Action and Staff Report](#)
[Petty Cash Voucher - Reimbursement of Payment to Lehigh County](#)
[Law Department Bill 55](#)
[Referral Letter from Mike Hanlon regarding Bill 55 - 2 W Allen and 1 W](#)
[Liberty Street to be rezoned B-5 Urban Commercial District](#)
[Letter from Lehigh Valley Planning Commission regarding Bill 55 W.](#)
[Allen Street and W to be rezoned B-5](#)
[2 W. Allen Street \(PIN #640744791819\) and 1 W. Liberty Street \(PIN](#)
[#640744789158\) Posting DSCF2326](#)
[2 W. Allen Street \(PIN #640744791819\) and 1 W. Liberty Street \(PIN](#)
[#640744789158\) Posting DSCF2327](#)
[2 W. Allen Street \(PIN #640744791819\) and 1 W. Liberty Street \(PIN](#)
[#640744789158\) Posting DSCF2328](#)
[2 W. Allen Street \(PIN #640744791819\) and 1 W. Liberty Street \(PIN](#)
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[2 W. Allen Street \(PIN #640744791819\) and 1 W. Liberty Street \(PIN](#)
[#640744789158\) Posting DSCF2341](#)
[Bill 55 Rezoning on W Allen and W Liberty Mailing Labels](#)
[The Morning Call Ad 7300742](#)
[10-19-2022 COMMUNITY SUPPORT PACKAGE - BILL 55](#)

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that the purpose of this meeting is to take public testimony on the possible adoption of an Ordinance amending the City of Allentown Zoning Code. The bill proposes to amend the Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance by rezoning parcels at 2 W. Allen Street and 1 W. Liberty

Street to B-5 Urban Commercial and, adding a text amendment altering the area, yard and height requirements. The Public Hearing was advertised in the Morning Call on October 3 and 10. The proof of publication, signage of the posting of the property and property addresses notices were sent to are incorporated into the official City Clerk's record.

The procedure for the Public Hearing:

1. Mark Hartney, the Deputy Director, will briefly explain the petition so we are on the same page. The intent will be to have a discussion of the staff and Planning Commissions various suggestions at our regular meeting where this is scheduled to be voted on.
2. The Petitioner will give the presentation to Council
3. The purpose of the meeting is for comments from the public on the proposal. Members of the public may give statements in support or opposition to the proposal, please state your name and address.
4. Time permitting, Council can ask questions, but we be also aware that the petition is on the Council agenda that follows, and further discussion can take place there; and the Council meeting is scheduled to take place at 6:30 PM. The purpose here is for Public Comment.
5. At the conclusion of all comments, the President of City Council states the record is now closed and the matter will be deliberated and voted on at tonight's regularly scheduled City Council Meeting.

Mr. Mark Hartney, Deputy Director - Department of Community and Economic Development, stated that the Petition before Council tonight is a rezoning request and there are basically two parts to it. There are two parcels that are currently I - 3 that the Petitioner is requesting to be rezoned to B-5 and then the second part is a text amendment that would allow all parcels zone B-5 on either side of Riverside Drive to take on B-2 zoning properties from yard height setback requirements. There will be no setback requirements on those parcels and they will be able to build as high as they wanted to on those parcels.

Mr. John Palumbo, Chief Operating Officer- Urban Residential Properties, stated that here today, he also has his Attorney Joe Fitzpatrick from Fitzpatrick, Lenz and Bubba to answer any legal related questions that you may have. If stated that if Council does not mind, he will do just a short presentation and he will be open to any presentation that they may have. He thanked Council for taking the time to review this application. He has a

short presentation and will answer any questions. He gave a brief background on the rezoning overview. This rezoning really stems back to all the way back to 2019 when they met with city staff regarding the development of the Riverfront. For nearly two years since 2019 to 2021, they discussed multiple iterations of the proposed amendment, including a revision of the IRO. Ultimately, it was recommended by Planning that a Comprehensive Rezoning approach including a map amendment to B-5 and a text amendment to MFD was the best approach. As many of them are aware, we presented those amendments to both the Planning Commission and City Council back in early 2021 and the amendments were unanimously approved by both the Planning Commission and City Council. Importantly, since then the Riverfront has started to gain momentum for the first time in over 40 years. This includes substantial construction for the Riverfront Lofts which he will get into in a second. The unanimous Planning Commission approval for the Neuweiler Lofts had unanimous Planning Commission approval of Riverview Lofts II, the construction of Riverside Drive as well as the introduction of improvements of green space within the area. What we have in front of you today is proposing to add an additional parcel into the B-5 district which they believe is a logical extension of an approved zoning as well as the text amendment to provide for flexibility and multiple uses along the Riverside Drive corridor. What he did leave out of here and thinks it is very important to take a community-based approach. They met with multiple community leaders. He knows Council received a package of community support. They got a Petition from nearly 95 local residents with about six or seven letters of support. Those letters of support represent every single property owner that be affected by the rezoning in front of you. The next few slides are going to be a kind of before and after slides on some of the improvements that have happened in the area since the implementation of the B-5 amendment. He stated that on the left side of the screen, the individuals are powerful. On the left side of the screen, this was back in 2020. This is now the Riverfront Lofts which is their second major development on the Riverfront on the N. Front Street corridor. If you see on the left side, that is the existing conditions in 2020 and obviously prior to the previous zoning being approved and then fast forward a 2022 and the building is now substantially complete and is set to come online later this year. He stated that he thinks this is really going to be a catalyst for this area. Ultimately, it is going to spearhead a tremendous amount of development and ultimately the goal is to create and make Allentown one of the best mid-sized cities in the country. Here you have a before and after from N. Front Street and Riverside Drive in 2020 versus 2022. He stated that to him it is a powerful image because if you think about it, it is hard to believe that Riverside Drive was a thought and it was planned, but it was never actually built prior to the rezoning. If you fast forward to 2022 on the right side of your screen you see how Riverside Drive now blends in

with the newly created Front Lofts and it is really the gateway to the entire Riverfront. They think that they zoning in front of Council today is a natural extension to this newly created Riverside Drive corridor. He stated that this slide is also particularly interesting to him because he remembers when he was presenting initially back in 2021 and he talked about how when you are facing the building from N. Front Street, you never know that you have a beautiful eight-acre park and the Riverfront right on the other side. If you look on the left side of the screen, in 2020 that is Riverside Drive behind the Riverfront Lofts before construction. On the right side of the screen it is a shot right from the middle of the Riverfront Lofts showing that basically, the project is sitting right on top of an eight-acre park. What they are trying to do is to create connectivity from the neighborhood to the natural assets of the city being Bucky Boyle Park and the Lehigh River. In addition to the improvements that are taking place and the initial rezoning, here he wants to show a few images and projects that have also been unanimously approved by the Planning Commission since the implementation of the amendment. Here you have Riverview Lofts II. This was unanimously approved by the Planning Commission back in June of this year. This project is in partnership with APA. They are now working through the closing and anticipate starting the construction. The demolition is complete and they are really looking at breaking ground on that later this year or early 2023. It is going to be a nice infill project for the city. It is actually going to have an indoor pool within the building. It is going to be a great product for the city. Here you have the Neuweiler Lofts project which was unanimously approved by the Planning Commission back in July of this year. On the left side of the screen is the existing conditions verses what the approved project is. They worked tremendously hard working with the community to gain feedback and what they did here is they kept the integrity and the historic features of the building. They kept the cap of the tower and that beautiful end. They reopened the building on the bottom floors for the connectivity for the pedestrian walkways. They are actually slated to start some demolition in November and break ground on that in December of this year. Really, this is going to be the catalyst of this entire Riverfront. It is probably one of the most important projects for Allentown Renaissance. They are getting a tremendous amount of momentum on this project and the commercial space. They have about 40,000 square feet, 65 percent is already leased up and he will be announcing those tenants shortly. Here you have the existing conditions from Riverside Drive facing the back of the Neuweiler Brewery verses the approved project. Once again, when we got the amendments approved the first time, there was no Riverside Drive. Now, this is becoming a very main commercial corridor and this project is really going to spearhead that and the proposed amendments in front of Council is a logical extension because the property being added from I-3 to B-5 is directly adjacent to the site to the right. He stated just to wrap it up here that this is a quick Riverfront Zoning Map to give an idea where to

projects are located that he was just discussing with them. If you look at the left side of the screen, it shows the Riverfront Lofts which is under construction. Directly adjacent to that is 249 the old Atillia Building which is a future development project. Directly adjacent to the right of that is the Neuweiler Lofts which he just showed Council images of that. On the top right, is what Riverview Lofts II is. Directly below that is Riverview Lofts I which was completed back in 2021 and the parts that they were adding into the B-5 from I-3 is here checkered on the bottom of your screen directly adjacent to the Neuweiler Lofts across Riverside Drive corridor. On the top right of your screen you will see the existing conditions of their lot. It is a blighted property in need of redevelopment and as he said it is a logical extension of the previous zoning and they look forward to working with the city to really create something really special on the Riverfront.

Mr. Ed Zucal asked why wasn't this your initiative in the beginning. Why are you bringing this to us now after you originally had the B-5?

Mr. John Palumbo stated that after the original zoning was approved, they got this under contract after they got the initial zoning approved. Once we got it under contract, then he proposed the amendment to add that parcel into the existing B-5 for development.

Mr. Ed Zucal asked was he talking just the one parcel, correct.

Mr. John Palumbo stated correct. He asked anybody else.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that the last time he was here, he talked about the importance of his develop projects impacting the community. She stated that she heard that he made statements that he has been speaking with the community. One of the letters that someone wrote that they are an employee or was an employee at some point. She wondered if he would be able to elaborate more on how and what he has done thus far and what you plan to do that would bring tangible benefits to the community. Not lift all boats and we will rise. Not that rhetoric, but tangible. How many jobs have been created in the community. If any workforce, you let be included and what parks. You had mentioned Bucky Boyle and maybe working with the city to make some improvements. She stated that she is just wondering and would like some updates on that.

Mr. John Palumbo stated first he will say they take an extremely local approach to hiring. If you look at the staff and the contractors who work for them, he would say 95 percent of them either live right in Allentown or live in the Lehigh Valley area. They are the type of guys who will give anybody an opportunity. All they ask is that you come to work with a positive mindset and that you work hard. A lot of the people who work for them weren't really

given a fair shake to get employment opportunities and they were willing to do so and they are greatly appreciative of that. They have also local job training programs that they are working through at 207 N. Front Street which they are building now. It is actually going to be the headquarters for the URP Job Training Program. They will be looking for strategic partnerships with the city or LCCC to essentially work together to create local jobs for the youth and provide opportunities. In terms of how many employment opportunities they have created, he would say by the time this thing is done, it is going to be thousands of jobs and it is not even an exaggeration. There are going to be thousands of jobs that are going to be created. Local jobs and ultimately it kind of gets lost in the sauce sometimes with the details of planning and people don't realize it. The most beneficial part of his day is that when he goes home, he knows that he gave people the opportunity to put food on the table for their family. That is what they do every single day. They are just regular guys who work very hard. He and his partner come from humble beginnings. His partner has been in this city for 10 years and slept on the grounds on a dilapidated brownstone when he was 21 and it took three years to rehab the buildings. That is what he comes from and what both of their passions are. Helping the community and engaging in the community. They also do local events for the community. They do a toy drive for Christmas. They are looking to do a Thanksgiving drive. Anywhere they can help, they will help.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked if there are any plans in terms of and she can see that it is right beside Bucky Boyle. She asked if there were any plans that the community shared with him on what they want in terms of Bucky Boyle improvements and what your role will be in that.

Mr. John Palumbo stated that if you look between where the Neuweiler development is at 249, there is a park space in between there. That has been his main focus in terms of revitalization of the park space. They meet with the community groups at least once a month. The community has been very satisfied because what happens is the biggest problem, they feel is that they are not being heard. He stated that when they come to a meeting and says here is a preliminary concept that we are trying to do. Give us your feedback and let us know what you think, and we can make tweaks and take it from there. We have an initial meeting and people are a little skeptical and after the second and third meeting they see that we are actually taking their ideas and try to implement them into the park and basically enhance the community. They have become very supportive and that's why you see the Petition from local residents. It was close to nearly 100 local residents. Literally, he would be walking on the street on N. Front Street and people will come up to him and say "hey, can I sign your Petition." "Can I sign your Petition." They say "thanks so much, we love what you are doing for the city." He stated that is very rewarding. In terms

of Bucky Boyle Park, they do have a vision for Bucky Boyle Park. They haven't got there yet in terms of working with the city to come up with an actual Comprehensive Plan. He stated that his thought was to get a smaller park up and running. Start gaining some momentum and then come up with an overall Comprehensive Plan for Bucky Boyle Park. He stated from an urban setting, there are not that many opportunities to redevelop an eight acre park on the Riverfront in a mid-sized city in this country. It is a tremendous opportunity. He stated that anything that he could do to help move that forward, he is willing to do it. Anybody that he can work with to get that done, he will be happy to work with them and what his though process is that the more momentum they get, the more likely it is to actually come to fruition. Everything can't be done in one day, but ultimately this is a 10 - year plan and over the course of 10 years and he goes back to his original statement that he believes that Allentown is going to be one of the best mid-sized cities in the country, period.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated thank you.

Mr. Ed Zucal asked if there were any other questions from Council. He thanked Mr. Palumbo and asked if they had any individuals from the public that are either opposed or in favor of that would like to speak. If so, come forward.

Ms. April Riddick, southside Allentown, stated that she has also been a person that has been at Bucky Boyle for 30 years coaching down there. She is here today assessing the signs hanging up and she came as a concern. She stated that she knows that they are trying to develop Allentown and there is a lot of developing going on. Some good. Some bad. She stated that she wants to make sure that the park stays intact. She stated that she is that community. She has been down there and there are other people down there for 40 years coaching. With the develop that is going on, they are just concerned that it stays intact and the development that happens benefits that community that is down there. People say that they are doing development here, but so far in the city the development that is happening has come and is causing a lot of people to be homeless. People can't afford the apartments. They can't even afford to shop at some of the stores. She is concerned that coming down to that area. She stated that she is not just a coach there, she grew up on Ridge Avenue and grew up on Second Street. She grew up on Fifth Street. She stated that she is an Allentonian. Born and raised here. It is nothing wrong with change, if change was cohesively with the community and everybody. There are no programs. They are dying little by little. A's been around and they fund everything strictly from their pockets. She stated that they are not the ones that get the grants and all that. They are an organization that makes sure they are there for the kids. She stated that their model there is it takes a

community. We believe in that. It is not just about sports with them, it is about that kid that is not doing well in school or whatever maybe the case. What can they do for Buck Boyle if they want to develop it? They can create a club house that has been promised to the community for many years down there and they keep getting overlooked. The city is taking it where they have to be a nonprofit. She stated that they are not a nonprofit because of the fact that most sports organizations aren't. They don't have a facility there. They have made the park smaller. There is no parking down there no more. There used to be a track that went around park. It is not there no more for the kids to jog around. She stated that her concern is that this development does not take from the park. She stated that is all she is asking. It is needed for these babies to continue to have, even when she is not there. She stated that is her concern. The traffic coming through is her concern. Right now, there is speeding down the street and there are no speed bumps down there. She stated that they asked them to put a stop light in before they finish, and they said that it was not enough data. The city was down there last week and they had a meeting with Parks and Recreation and they witnessed it for themselves. She stated that her concern is that will be a danger in the future. She asked if they do the development, they take into consideration that there are kids there outside of them there are events there. There are families there. She stated that they have to make sure that everything works cohesively before you do anything.

Mr. Ed Zucal thanked Ms. Riddick and made a suggestion that she sits down with Mr. Palumbo. He seems like a genuine guy.

Mr. John Palumbo stated that all you have to do is pass his number along to her and give him a call.

Ms. April Riddick stated that she is part of the Planning Commission Committee that is for that area too. She suggested that he reaches out to them as well. She stated that she will gladly give him her information. She will give him tons of parents to talk to.

Mr. John Palumbo stated that is awesome. He stated that he appreciates that.

Mr. Ed Zucal thanked Ms. Riddick and asked anyone else in reference to this Public Hearing?

Enactment No: 15844

ADJOURNED: 6:25 PM