

**Borough of West Reading  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**March 12, 2018**

**Committee Members Present**

Phil Wert, Nick Imbesi, Andrew Kearney, Christin Kelley, Dean Rohrbach, Mark Ratcliffe, Cathy Hoffman

**Committee Members Absent**

Aaron Gantz, Brett Bagenstose, Robin Horman

**Visitors Present**

None

**Call to Order**

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

**Public Comment**

None

**Approval of the Minutes**

**Moved** by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Mayor Kearney to approve the minutes of February 12, 2018. **Motion carried.**

**BID Status Update**

Mr. Ratcliffe reported that his meeting with business/property owners had gone well with 25 people in attendance. The general consensus is that they would be in agreement with a BID fee of between \$300 and \$1000 per year however the emphasis should be placed on development and marketing.

**Foreclosed & Blighted Residential Properties Update:**

- 411 Franklin – The property has been condemned.
- 520 Franklin – It appears as if a new furnace was installed. Codes will be contacted to see if a permit was pulled.
- 627 Franklin – A certificate of occupancy was issued in October.
- 214 Playground – Property has been condemned – unsafe structure.
- 234 Reading – Sheriff has sold it back to the bank.
- 246 S. Second – Listed for Sheriff Sale.
- 311 Spruce – The electricity has been shut off.
- 370 Sunset – Sheriff sold back to the bank.
- 306 Sycamore – The property has not been listed. The bank will be taking it back.

There was some discussion about how the Committee should proceed with the blighted and foreclosed properties and it was decided that a new action plan needs to be devised.

**Significant/Vacant West Reading Commercial Properties Update:**

- Narrow Fabrics Building – Apartments are being pre-leased; Rent is \$1200 for one bedroom and \$1575 for two bedrooms.
- VF Building – Construction is ongoing; a variance is required for the sign they intend to install.
- 301 Penn – Still available for lease.
- 707 Penn – Nothing new to report at this time.

**Strategic Planning Discussion and Committee Member Expansion**

The Committee was asked to provide a 5-year economic development plan and Mr. Ratcliffe, Mr. Rohrbach and Mr. Wert had provided their lists. Discussion ensued regarding the best way to move forward and Mr. Rohrbach recommended developing a tool kit for dealing with the vacant properties. He stated that there is grant funding available:

1. \$50,000 for the development of a strategic plan
2. \$50,000 for façades on Penn Avenue
3. \$250,000 for public improvements

As well, funds may be available from the Wyomissing Foundation to prepare a new grant application. Mr. Rohrbach and Mr. Wert spoke about the recently completed Pennsylvania Downtown Center and DCED assessment of the Elm Street program where they encouraged the CRF to apply for a 'hybrid' program with would involve both Elm Street and Main Street. This would be unprecedented, in the same way that West Reading was the first to be the recipient of a second Elm Street designation. The suggestion was to create a transition area, in particular Cherry Street with its mural gallery.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cathy Hoffman