

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

June 11, 2018

Committee Members Present

Phil Wert, Andrew Kearney, Christin Kelley, Robin Horman, Dean Rohrbach, Cathy Hoffman, Aaron Gantz
(left at 7:55pm)

Committee Members Absent

Brett Bagenstose, Nick Imbesi (attending a conference)

Visitors Present

John Woodward	Property/Business owner
Ben LaManna	Property/Business owner
Joseph Nunez	Realtor

Call to Order

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

Public Comment

John Woodward was in attendance to share some of the economic development that he has been involved in with the Borough of Wyomissing and to learn more about the possibility of joining the Committee. Discussion followed regarding the changes to the Business Privilege Tax that have been proposed by the Wyomissing Area School District and how the tax may have been inappropriately collected in the past by Wilson School District. Mr. Woodward stated that Wyomissing's Economic Development Committee meets on the 4th Thursday at 8:00 a.m. and Mr. Wert indicated that he would attend. Mr. Woodward then left the meeting.

Approval of the Minutes

Moved by Mayor Kearney and seconded by Ms. Horman to approve the minutes of May 14, 2018.
Motion carried.

BID Status Update

Mr. Wert reported that a meeting has been scheduled with the PDC to discuss the process that is ongoing. He noted that all of the discussion with property owners so far has been very positive.

Foreclosed & Blighted Residential Properties Update:

There are no blighted or foreclosed residential properties for discussion at this time.

Significant/Vacant West Reading Commercial Properties Update:

- Narrow Fabrics Building – The first leasing phase of construction is complete with 40 residential units having been completed and leased.
- VF Building – Construction continues with the upper floors being prepared for Reading Hospital as well as VF Corporate offices.
- 301 Penn – The property may have been leased – Ms. Kelley will look into it further.
- 707 Penn – No permits for renovation have been issued although there appears to be some activity within the property.

- 501 Penn – Plans have been submitted for the addition and the owners have met with the Planning Commission regarding land development. The plans submitted unfortunately were not complete therefore approval will be delayed.
- 166 Franklin – The property continues to be vacant.
- 711 Penn – Dolce de Zabala has vacated the property and there are no future plans as yet.
- 728 Penn – Wyomissing Persian Rug Gallery is terminating their business.
- 23 S. 6th – Fandangled has left the premises and the property is available for rent.
- 548/550 Franklin – The corner first floor property is available for rent.

Strategic Planning Discussion and Committee Member Expansion

Mr. Rohrbach gave a report concerning the advertised rents that have recently been reported. He will continue to track this information and provide an update at each monthly meeting.

The Committee discussed strategies to attract investors for projects that are important such as Delaney Circle/Buttonwood Street and the entrance into the Borough, including the 200 block of Penn Avenue. It was noted that a corporate fundraising campaign had been implemented in the past however the funds raised were insufficient to finance larger projects. It was suggested that it may take the involvement of more affluent proponents of the Borough to attract substantial funding.

Regarding the expansion of the committee, it was recommended that two business/property owners be appointed by Council. **Moved** by Mr. Rohrbach and seconded by Ms. Kelley to recommend to Council that Mr. LaManna and Mr. Woodward be appointed to the Economic Development Committee. **Motion carried.**

Old & New Business

- Buttonwood Street/Circle Enhancements – The proposed plans for this area have been sitting idle since 2016 so gaining interest and propelling the project forward should now be a priority.
- Joint Comp Plan – The process is almost complete. Next meeting is June 20th at 5:30, Wyomissing Borough Hall.
- Residential properties in the Commercial District – Existing residential properties on Penn Avenue were discussed and it was recommended that the property owners be approached to determine if utilizing the space as retail has been considered. The three properties between 5th and Tulpehocken were discussed as well as 444 Penn and residential properties in the 600 block of Penn Avenue. This also will become an issue with the implementation of the BID – a decision will have to be made whether these properties will be included or excluded. It was recommended that a letter be prepared for the owners of these under-utilized properties.
- Railroad Bridge – Updating the bridge was briefly discussed with suggestions for the lighting and type of signage. Ardmore's bridge sign was recommended as an example.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Hoffman