

BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
July 16, 2021

West Reading Borough Council held a special meeting at Borough Hall on Friday, July 16, 2021 with the following persons present: Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Jennifer Bressler, Patrick Kaag, Samantha Kaag, and Ryan Lineaweaver (via Zoom); Solicitor Daniel Becker; Recreation Director Christine Boud; Assistant Treasurer Helen Moyer; Main Street Manager Mark Ratcliffe; Chief of Police Glenn Granitz; Interim Borough Manager Dean Murray; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council President Jack Gombach, Council Vice President Philip Wert, and Mayor Andrew Kearney were unable to attend.

VISITORS Karen Livingood, Resident
 Nathalie Kulesa, Chair of Recreation Commission

CALL TO ORDER

Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m., which was followed by Roll Call.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mrs. Kulesa noted that revisions to the tennis court area had been completed without an agreement in place between Mr. Shields and the Borough. A brief presentation was provided by Mr. Shields to Borough Council last fall where it was highly recommended to fully convert the existing tennis courts into pickleball courts since as he stated there are a number of tennis courts available to residents within a one-mile radius. To date the Borough has been unable to secure an agreement with another tennis facility that would allow West Reading residents to have access. Mr. Lincoln noted that he recommended retaining one tennis court and only agreed to converting all courts to pickleball following the assurance that tennis courts were available in the area. Mrs. Kulesa reminded Council members that the Recreation Commission made a recommendation for Council to approve the construction of eight pickleball courts and one tennis court.

Mr. Becker indicated that an agreement should have been in place prior to construction. Details within the agreement are being negotiated and should come to a close within a week or two. Additional items that were recommended to be included in the agreement were:

- Maintenance of the courts;
- Resident discount for clinics, lessons, and tournaments;
- The availability of courts during lessons or clinics;
- Schedule established one year in advance to reserve courts for tournaments or large events.

Mrs. Kulesa expressed her concerns in allowing a beer garden within the park area where children are at play and the image that would be set, she asked if an increased police presence would be available. Chief Granitz recommended steering Council away from providing a standard police presence as this may bring additional liability to the Borough.

Mrs. Livingood inquired as to liability insurance, including liquor liability for this weekend's event. It was confirmed that certificates of insurance have been received listing the Borough as an additional insured.

Mrs. Livingood inquired as to the City of Reading restricting the use of alcohol in park lands. Mrs. Moyer described an amendment to the Parks and Recreation ordinance in 2018 that allows alcoholic beverages within the limits of the park with specific permission granted by Borough Council. Mrs. Livingood asked that Mrs. Moyer be included in conversations moving forward to ensure that the Recreation Department is involved with the decision-making process.

Mrs. Kulesa expressed her concern of regular tournament type events that would include beer gardens and the attraction of large crowds to the parklands. Mr. Becker assured Mrs. Kulesa that Council would need to grant specific permission to allow alcohol during any given event. It was unclear as to how many large tournament events would be planned each year. Mrs. Moyer indicated that fundraising events may be needed to proceed through the various planned phases of improvements to the area. Phase 2 plans to address the bank areas with elevated block walls to prevent erosion.

Mrs. Livingood thanked Mr. Lincoln for voicing his opinion earlier and requested the individual opinions of the rest of Council.

Ms. Kaag agreed that a contract should have been in place prior to construction. As a member of the Recreation Commission, she agrees with Mr. Lincoln that Mr. Shields pressed the theory of a very large demand for pickleball and that is why she voted to approve the ten-court conversion. It does appear that all of the courts have been in use, and Mr. Shields has made an investment that benefits the Borough as a whole.

Mr. Kaag stated that he supported the pickleball court conversion based on the sport being a good workout for a large range of age groups, including individuals with adaptive needs. He has been receiving only positive feedback from members of the community since the courts have been open to the public. The deteriorating court improvements have been fully donated by Mr. Shields. Mr. Kaag indicated that fundraisers could help offset future maintenance needs for the court area. He expressed the importance of establishing an agreement with Mr. Shields as soon as possible to avoid liability issues and to ensure that the details of the agreement benefit Borough residents.

Mrs. Bressler expressed her confidence in her vote for the pickleball facility but is disappointed that a contract is not currently in place guaranteeing benefits for our residents. We need to ensure that we have access to the facilities and the capability to perform fundraising events to keep the facility open for our residents and visitors alike, some of which have reported driving two-hours to play and then enjoy dinner in our downtown area.

It was noted that this has been a learning experience where multiple factors have gotten us to where we are today. Based on the local sponsorship of the grand opening event this weekend it would not have been in the Borough's best interest to deny the event based on the lack of an agreement. Mr. Becker confirmed that Mr. Shields is aware that following this weekend's grand opening event the courts would only be open to the public until an agreement has been fully executed.

Mrs. Kulesa asked that it be on record that she is not against the pickleball courts, she is however disappointed in how the process has been handled.

Chief Granitz requested provisions for traffic control during larger events. Mrs. Moyer noted the use of nearby parking lots and an increase to pedestrian traffic. Mr. Becker indicated that these aspects would be addressed in the individual event permit requirements.

PICKLEBALL GRAND OPENING BEER GARDEN

Motion to allow a beer garden during the Pickleball Grand Opening event on Friday, July 16, 2021 from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Saturday, July 17, 2021 from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:57 p.m. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary