

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

April 16, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, April 16, 2024 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Members Zanna Leiendecker, Denise Drobnick, and Bethany Bower; Solicitor Joan London; Fire Chief and Code Department Manager Chad Moyer; Chief of Police Richard Torielli; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Interim Borough Manager Richard Sichler; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Recreation Director Michael Esterly; Engineer Pamela Stevens; Junior Council Person Mark-Handy Phanor; Main Street Executive Director Nick Price; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Member Zachary Shaver and Mayor Samantha Kaag were unable to attend.

VISITORS:

James Rogers, Resident	Karen Livingood, Resident
Lance Parmer, Fire Police (via Zoom)	Caitlyn Marrella, Resident (via Zoom)
Tina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner	Michael Vind, FSL Public Finance, LLC
Michael Fitzgerald, Visitor	Levi Landis, Goggleworks (via Zoom)
Joseph Brennan, Resident	

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Lineaweaver reported that an executive session was held at 6:30 p.m. this evening to discuss personnel matters regarding the search for a Borough Manager and potential litigation.
3. **COMMENDATION:** The commendation has been delayed until next month.
4. **PRESENTATIONS:**
 - a. **General Obligation Bonds** – Managing Director of FSL Public Finance Michael Vind provided an overview of the financial services provided to the borough since 2004 with respect to outstanding debt. Tonight’s ordinance consideration is to fund a surface parking lot in the amount of \$1.25 million. Should the ordinance be approved tonight, the municipal tax-exempt rate would be locked-in next week. The borough’s current outstanding debt portfolio was reviewed noting that in 2021 bonds were issued at an all-time low fixed rate to refund various debt and fund capital projects. The 2024 bonds would be issued to fund \$1,250,000 of capital projects and be structured so that the annual debt service payments would be level through final maturity on October 1, 2036. Based on current market rates the annual debt service payments on the 2024 bonds is estimated to be approximately \$145,000. An estimated true interest cost on the 2024 bonds is 3.743%. Mr. Vind indicated that the bond structure, that is similar to a mortgage, is the most advantageous and beneficial structure available at this time. The borough’s S&P Global Rating should be received tomorrow. It was noted that the outlook is stable, and Mr. Vind did not expect the rating to be lowered.
 - b. **Gateway Project** – The President and Executive Director of Goggleworks Levi Landis expressed his gratefulness in being able to assist in the West Reading Borough Gateway railroad trestle improvement project. The German technique of postcards was offered as a colorful and eclectic way to capture the energy of downtown West Reading. The postcard image would provide

individual comprehensive scenes rendered by nine to fifteen local artists within the eleven letters of West Reading. Each letter would be attached to the 6' x 4' trestle panels with the commonly used, easily repaired and durable parachute cloth. It was noted that the eastbound trestle surface could be a duplicate of the westbound version or could be varied to spell Reading. Mr. Landis provided an overview of Goggleworks' mission to transform lives through unique interactions with art, and the staff that would be assisting in accomplishing this gateway project.

- c. **Fitzzy's Run** – Mr. Fitzgerald introduced himself, noting his wife as the owner of the Fleet Feet store here in West Reading, and shared the story of his daughter Lauren's battle with brain cancer who died in 2005 at the age of 20. The mission of Lauren's Foundation supports recreational and community programs for children, supports families battling brain tumors or serious illness, provides scholarships to students experiencing adversity, increases awareness of the organ donation process, and promotes brain tumor research and the search for a cure. The organization raises funds solely through an annual 5K event. The event has been held in Wyomissing for nineteen years, however Wyomissing Borough has denied permitting events for the remainder of the year. This year will be the 20th anniversary and Mr. Fitzgerald is seeking an alternate location to host the event. Lauren was born on Halloween therefore the Halloween themed event is held on the last Sunday of October. Last year there were 500 runners, which was expanded to include a kids run. He requested use of the West Reading playground as the staging area for local food trucks, 5K run/walk, kids trick or treat dash, costume contest, and health services fair.
5. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration to include a discussion with potential action taken to approve the Fitzzy's Run event. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Fitzgerald departed the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

6. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers provided an update on his research into Business Privilege Taxes and noted an increase in the list of delinquent accounts that have been found through his research with the code department. He indicated that \$245,000 had been budgeted in revenues for 2023, and that as of March 4th the prior Borough Manager indicated that \$341,748.75 had been collected, an increase of \$86,000.

7. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve the March 19, 2024, and March 26, 2024 meeting minutes. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

8. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Ordinance 1184 General Obligation Bonds** – Consideration was requested to adopt a series of General Obligation Bonds to acquire and provide Capital improvements to real property.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 1184 for the issuance of a series of 2024 General Obligation Bonds to acquire real property, the installation of various Capital improvements to the property and the payment of costs and expenses. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 5-0.** Mr. Wert abstained from this vote.

Mr. Vind departed the meeting at 7:49 p.m.

- b. **Resolution 2024-10 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – Consideration was requested to extend the local disaster emergency.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-10 extending the Proclamation of Local Disaster Emergency until the May 21, 2024 Borough Council meeting. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Resolution 2024-11 Diversity and Inclusion Reaffirmation** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted plans to read the resolution allowed during the potential flag raising ceremony that will be requested later in the agenda.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-11 reaffirming the support of community values and recognizing the dignity of all persons. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 6-0.**

9. **CONSULTANT'S REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Ms. London indicated that there was nothing new to report that is not otherwise covered on the agenda.

- b. **Engineer's Report** – Ms. Stevens reviewed the following items:

- The Commonwealth of PA Financing Authority (CFA) grant funded security camera upgrade project improvements to Borough Hall have begun. Chief Tornielli reported that Penn Avenue improvements are planned to begin concurrently on Penn Avenue later this week.
- The Ann Street Multi-Model Grant Application has been awarded in the amount of \$253,850 without matching funds for curb and sidewalk improvements. Specifications will be prepared and placed out for bid with plans to begin the project improvements in the spring of 2025.
- An ARLE program grant opportunity was reviewed with regards to the installation of an electronic rapid flashing pedestrian crossing beacon at the intersection of South Fifth Avenue and Pine Street, Ms. Stevens offered to assist in the application process that would be due at the end of the month. Mr. Kaag noted discussions during the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee to either contribute a percentage or notate the borough's funding of design and permitting for more favorable approval odds. Ms. Stevens requested authorization to assist in the review of options. Letters of support will be requested to be included in the application.
- A survey of the 500 block of Spruce Street water replacement project area was completed, and communication was made with the hospital to redirect water supply and flow of traffic during project construction.
- Ms. Stevens shared updates provided by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the existence of PFOS/PFOA in the environment and safe levels in drinking water. It was recommended to include information in the annual Consumer Confidence Report.

- Mr. Grassley indicated that the borough's leak detection was identified as a partial risk and noted efforts to listen to water mains to pinpoint potential leaks.

Ms. Leiendecker departed the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick.
Motion carried 5-0.

10. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:**

Mr. Lineaweaver stated that he has nothing new to report this month.

11. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Fitzzy's Run** – Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration to approve the Fitzzy's Run event pending approval of the Special Event Committee.

Motion to approve the proposed October 27, 2024 Fitzzy's Run event pending approval of the Special Event Committee. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- b. **Finance Committee Resignation** – Mr. Sichler requested consideration to accept the resignation of Allison Blair Snyder from the Finance Committee due to scheduling conflicts.

Motion to accept a letter of resignation from Allison Blair Snyder from the Finance Committee. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Ms. Stevens departed the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

- c. **Lead Service Line Inventory Contract** - Mr. Sichler requested consideration of extending Phase I of the Entech Engineering contract to assist in relaying an inventory of water service lines in the borough to the Department of Environmental Protection.

Motion to extend the Entech Engineering Lead Service Line Inventory Phase I contract from May 1, 2024 to August 1, 2024. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- d. **PennDOT West Shore Bypass Letter of Support** – Mr. Sichler shared a request from an agent for PennDOT requesting a letter of support to secure federal funding of a reconstruction project.

Motion to approve a letter of support to the Department of Transportation for the West Shore Bypass reconstruction and widening of US 422. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- e. **Kent Way Block Party** – Mr. Sichler requested consideration to approve a block party event on May 18, 2024 from 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Motion to approve a Kent Way block party event on May 18, 2024. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag.
Motion carried 5-0.

12. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** The Mayor was unable to attend the meeting.

13. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Tornielli noted preparations that are underway gearing up for the large events. Additional Parking Enforcement Officer candidate interviews are scheduled for later this week. The in-car cameras have been installed and are being tested by two officers. Policy updates should be finalized later this week with plans to deploy the program early next week. Hearing and eye protection for use during firearms training was purchased for all department members through funding received from a medical insurance provider grant found by Mrs. Rentschler.

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Mr. Wert recognized Police Department Secretary Tracie Milbut’s milestone 30th anniversary with the Police Department. He spoke with her earlier today and she noted plans to stay for another ten years. Mr. Lineaweaver noted the commendation has been delayed until next month.

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley referred to his report and offered to answer any questions. He reviewed quotes to purchase a new stump grinder but was unable locate comparable used stump grinders in the area. Mr. Sichler recommended writing a specification for the used equipment you are seeking, then advertising to receive sealed bids. Ms. London noted a procedure to follow when three comparable items are not available in a listing area to keep a memorandum on file; however, she recommended going through the motion of advertising for sealed bids.

Mr. Grassley shared that the new flooring and paint improvements to the Bicentennial House have increased revenues year-to-date that is comparable to revenues for an entire year.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his report and offered to answer any questions. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer referred to his written report and provided a progress report regarding the apartment building located at the corner of Second and Penn Avenue. An additional extension has been requested, and he is awaiting a response from the attorney. It was also noted that the Zoning Hearing Appeal for 400 Walnut Street is being withdrawn by the applicant.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – Mr. Price offered to answer any questions regarding his report and highlighted the following items:

- A positive, well-attended monthly business meeting was held.

- It was noted that a few designs were available for the Penn Avenue gateway project and was unsure why only one option was provided for consideration this evening. Mr. Price reviewed the DCED grant award and indicated that there are sufficient funds available to complete this project by the deadline of 2026.
- New Castle Lawn & Landscape's sponsorship of four vinyl traffic box covers on Penn Avenue was discussed during the Traffic & Infrastructure Committee meeting. There will be more to come on that subject in their report this evening.
- The Borough Manager and Mr. Price met last week to review the streetlight and speaker system grant. He noted the varied lighting intensity of the existing Penn Avenue fixtures and the receipt of two grants that should sufficiently cover expenses.
- The Swiftie event scheduled on April 20th is a marketing campaign seeking the approval of a mural of Taylor Swift.

Motion to accept the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

14. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Diversity Equity & Inclusion Taskforce** – Ms. Drobnick referred to the minutes and shared an action item requesting participation in a Pride Flag raising ceremony on May 31st. Ms. Drobnick asked if this could become a standing approval. Ms. London recommended approval each year since it is not a recognized holiday.

Motion to approve the participation in a Pride Flag raising ceremony on May 31, 2024. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Motion to accept the Diversity Equity & Inclusion Taskforce report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- b. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly referred to his written report and requested consideration of two action items this evening. Mr. Lineaweaver shared lifeguard and pool staffing ranging from \$10.25 to \$15 per hour, concession staffing ranging from \$10 to \$14 per hour, and two playground leaders at \$10.25 per hour.

Motion to approve the list of pool and playground seasonal staff hires. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Mr. Esterly requested consideration of approving a Riverfront Federal Credit Union Rubber Piggy Bank Derby fundraiser on May 4, 2024. The Special Event Committee has reviewed and recommended approval of the event.

Motion to approve the Riverfront Federal Credit Union Rubber Piggy Bank Derby fundraiser event on May 4, 2024. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Mr. Esterly shared information on the following events:

- The Fishing Rodeo event was held last weekend, and he expressed his gratitude towards Adam Ressler who volunteered to clean and filet the fish, and the Recreation Commission that worked behind the scenes.
- The Disc Golf Tournament was held last Sunday with a mediocre turnout.

- The Candyland Family Dance is planned this coming Saturday.
- Rides and Vibes will be held on Sunday.
- May 19th – Annual Vines & Vibes Concert in the Park with the local band Frog Holler, local food, and drink vendors.
- Zumba classes started last week.

Motion to accept the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- c. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted continued discussions with representatives of Derck & Edson on zoning amendments to create form-based code regulations. The signage portion of the contract should be addressed soon. An example skill game ordinance was provided as adopted by the Borough of Phoenixville for the borough's consideration. It was thought best to allow history to unfold prior to the borough adopting similar regulations.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- d. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert noted the lack of a quorum and workshop type discussions that were held on the vibrant changes along Penn Avenue.

Ms. London recommended Borough Council refrain from accepting minutes of a workshop meeting.

- e. **Environmental Advisory Council** – The March Environmental Advisory Council meeting was cancelled.

- f. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Kaag noted two action items stemming from this month's meeting, the first of which pertained to the installation of vinyl traffic box wraps. Mr. Price elaborated on the four large Penn Avenue traffic box wraps with an anti-graffiti coating that would be fully sponsored by New Castle Lawn & Landscape. The Art Plus Gallery would be requested to provide individual local artist renderings for each traffic box. The artwork would be presented to Borough Council for approval. Three QR codes would be included, one for New Castle Lawn & Landscape, one for a calendar of West Reading events, and one for a map of the area. The Traffic and Infrastructure Committee has made a recommendation to Borough Council to approve the concept with a maintenance agreement in place.

Motion to approve the installation of vinyl traffic box wraps on Penn Avenue subject to an agreement that coordinates maintenance, damage, and replacement. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Mr. Price departed the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Mr. Kaag shared the committee's recommendation to apply for an ARLE grant to install a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) at the pedestrian crossing intersection of South Fifth Avenue and Pine Street. The chairman of the committee recommended the borough to fund a portion of the project costs for engineering, design and permitting to be more favorable of approval. Borough Council approval was needed this evening to submit a pre-scoping form by the end of the month. The estimated cost of the project was \$50,000. Mr. Phanor requested clarification of the process to apply for this type of grant.

Motion to apply for an ARLE grant with the assistance of the Borough Engineer to install a RRFB at the pedestrian crossing of South Fifth Avenue and Pine Street, providing a 20% match towards engineering, design, and permitting expenses. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Mr. Kaag highlighted 20-minute parking space designation discussions for Penn Avenue. A collaborative effort between the Public Works Director and Chief of Police will review the 400 through 700 blocks of Penn Avenue to designate one space per block per side to be beneficial to the demographics and businesses within each block. Parking regulation options for the 300 block of South Seventh Avenue are being reviewed with hospital staff.

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

g. **Shade Tree Commission** – The April Shade Tree Commission meeting was cancelled.

h. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Sichler shared the committee’s review of a video on guarding and face shields.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

i. **Finance Committee** – The April Finance Committee meeting was cancelled.

j. **Pension Advisory Committee** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted the biannual review of pensions and the high returns on investments last year. Both pensions realized double digit returns elevating the total pension liability to a threshold above 70%.

Motion to accept the Pension Advisory Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Mrs. Livingood departed the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

15. **TREASURER’S REPORT:**

a. **Transfer of Funds** – Mrs. Rentschler requested consideration to transfer funds from the M&T Bank General Fund account to the PLGIT Prime account.

Motion to approve the transfer of \$400,000 from the M&T Bank account to the PLGIT Prime account. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

b. **Repayment of 2023 Sanitation Loan** – Mrs. Rentschler reminded Borough Council of the negative Sanitation Fund balance last year due to a delay in receipt of recycling grant funding and a loan that was made from the Sewer Fund to balance the Sanitation Fund. The recycling grant funding has been received and Mrs. Rentschler would like to repay the loan.

Motion to repay the Sewer Fund in the amount of \$40,000 from the Sanitation Fund. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

c. **Financial Statement Ending 3/31/2024** – There were no questions or comments.

d. **Payment Approval Report 3/20/24 to 4/11/24, and 4/12/24 to 4/16/24** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 3/31/2024, and Payment Approval Reports of 3/20/24 through 4/16/24. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

16. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Brennan shared his recent observance of a blind man crossing Penn Avenue and recommended Borough Council's consideration of a sound system on pedestrian crossing signals to aid in their safe crossing. He also recommended shortening the interval to cross Penn Avenue during the dinner rush to limit the number of people becoming impatient and crossing against the signal. Mr. Lineaweaver recommended that Mr. Brennan attend a Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting to discuss these options further, noting that PennDOT regulates Penn Avenue.

Mr. Rogers requested clarification on the status of progressing the Second and Penn Avenue structure that was heavily damaged by the R.M. Palmer explosion more than a year ago. Mr. Moyer noted delays by the owner's insurance company and attorney. Ample time had passed precipitating a notice of violation being sent for an unsafe structure requesting feedback as to their course of action. A 90-day extension period expired on April 1, 2024; the owner then requested an additional 90-day extension. A response was given requiring the submission of an engineering report that the structure is not in imminent danger of collapse in order to consider an additional extension. The engineer report is due by April 26, 2024.

17. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary