

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

**August 20, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.**

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, August 20, 2024 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Members Denise Drobnick, Zachary Shaver, Bethany Bower, and Zanna Leiendecker; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Solicitor Daniel Becker, Code Department Manager & Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler (via Zoom); Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Engineer Pamela Stevens; Recreation Director Michael Esterly; Borough Manager Randall P. Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

**VISITORS:**

James Rogers, Resident	Karen Livingood, Resident
Lance Parmer, Fire Police (via Zoom)	Suzanne Thompson, Resident
Kristal Hummel, Resident	Jean Witmer, Resident
Caitlyn Marrella, Resident (via Zoom)	Christina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner
Charles Aden, Resident & State Representative	Constituent Services Advisor

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:03 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 relating to the Parking Enforcement Officer position, additional compensation for a member of Administration, potential litigation pertaining to a liquor license transfer, and negotiations with the Police Bargaining Unit.
3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** Consideration was requested to amend the agenda to include a discussion under the Borough Manager's report of a special event application for a Cigars and Cars proposed event on September 15, 2024. Motion to approve a special event application discussion. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**
4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Ms. Hummel shared her thoughts on the frequency of trash collection, lack of yard waste collection, and selective material collection by the trash hauler. Her suggestion was to reduce the number of trash collection days to once per week while offering a yard waste collection service. Ms. Hummel also noted that the trash hauler continues to reach over her fence to remove recyclable materials on trash collection days. It was noted that repurposing yard waste eliminates a considerable amount of tipping fees and provides opportunities for grant funding. Ms. Hummel questioned the need to perform street cleaning during rainy days. It was noted that the street sweeping program provides credit towards MS4 stormwater runoff requirements. Mayor Kaag shared a program created by the Environmental Advisory Council to collect yard waste for elderly residents or residents whose schedule does not allow them to visit the borough garage during the specified hours.

Mr. Rogers inquired as to when South Second Avenue will be reopened. It was noted that a contractor working in the vicinity requested an additional week to complete sidewalk repairs. Action may be taken to reopen this roadway during next week's budget meeting.

Mr. Rogers shared that the 2024 budget for Business Privilege Tax revenues totaled \$260,000 and the previous Borough Manager's report in March listed a total amount collected of \$341,748.75. Mr.

Rogers indicated that his homework has generated an additional \$81,748.75. He also shared, based upon his conversations with a representative of Berkheimer Tax Innovations that there are currently 811 accounts, up from the 566 accounts on record in 2022.

Ms. Witmer inquired as to the grace period for businesses to pay their Business Privilege Taxes and what actions can be taken to encourage payment of taxes. Ms. Thompson and Mr. Rogers provided their feedback.

Mr. Aden provided a quick reminder to direct residents in need of state-related services to the State Representative's office located at 1111 Penn Avenue Wyomissing. He noted that the deadline has been extended for the 2023 property tax/rent rebate applications.

5. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve the July 16, 2024 and July 23, 2024 meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

6. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

a. **Resolution 2024-22 Green Light-Go Project Authorized Signatory** – Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration to designate the Borough Manager as the authorized signatory of applications for the Green Light-Go project.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-22 appointing the Borough Manager as the authorized signatory of applications associated with the Green Light-Go project. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

b. **Resolution 2024-23 WalkWorks Program Authorized Signatory** – Adoption of this resolution would appoint the Council President as the authorized signatory on documents pertaining to the WalkWorks Capacity Building Grant.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-23 designating the Council President as authorized signatory for documents pertaining to the WalkWorks Active Transportation grant opportunity. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

c. **Resolution 2024-24 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – Consideration was requested to extend the local disaster emergency while roads are still closed. An additional extension may be needed until Cherry Street can be reopened.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-24 extending the Proclamation of Local Disaster Emergency until the September 17, 2024 Borough Council meeting. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

d. **Resolution 2024-25 Sixth Avenue Water Line Replacement Grant Application** – Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration of authorizing Systems Design Engineering, Inc. to submit a grant application to replace a water main along South Sixth Avenue.

Motion to authorize Systems Design Engineering, Inc. to submit a Local Share Account grant application in the amount of \$423,071 to replace the Sixth Avenue water main from Penn Avenue to Franklin Street. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

7. **CONSULTANT'S REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker provided a brief update on the liquor license transfer request for the Third & Spruce Café where borough officials had concerns about the applicant for that license. The concerns were addressed with the applicant and have progressed to a proposed conditional licensing agreement. This agreement has been submitted in conjunction with the applicant to the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB) for their review and approval. Borough Council, if so inclined, could take action tonight to withdraw the intervention or involvement in the opposition of the transfer upon the execution of the Condition Licensing Agreement (CLA) by the PLCB and applicant.

Motion to withdraw the intervention on the Third & Spruce Café liquor license transfer. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Engineer's Report** – Ms. Stevens reviewed the following grant items outlined in a spreadsheet for tracking purposes:

- **Ann Street Multi-Model Grant** – Ms. Stevens shared the bid opening results from earlier today. The amount of the grant award was \$253,850 and that apparent lowest qualified bid that was received from Forino was \$182,411.70. Ms. Stevens intends to inquire with the grant liaison to determine if the remaining \$71,000 could be used towards repaving in 2025.

Motion to award a contract to the apparent low bidder in the amount of \$182,411.70 for the Ann Street sidewalk, curbing, and accessible ramp improvement project conditioned upon the solicitor's review and approval of bid documents. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **MORE Grant** – Ms. Stevens announced receipt of the maximum grant award of \$50,000 to perform Level 2 Commercial Energy Audits to identify energy conservation measures needed for the Borough Hall, Fire House and Bicentennial House. Authorization is needed to appoint borough representatives to complete the appropriate paperwork.

Motion to authorize borough representatives to complete the appropriate paperwork for the energy audits. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Seventh Avenue Paving Repairs** – Ms. Stevens shared bid opening results from yesterday where the apparent lowest qualified bid was \$52,590.26 from H&K Group, Inc. The two areas in need of repairs following water main breaks last month are located near Spruce Street and Wayne Avenue. Ms. Leiendecker inquired as to comments from Western Berks Water Authority (WBWA) on the water hammer, Mr. Miller confirmed that no comments have been received though it was noted that the board did not meet in August. Mr. Lineaweaver inquired with Mr. Grassley as to a cost savings in delaying repairs until next year's paving projects. Mr. Grassley indicated that roughly \$10,000 to \$12,000 could be saved and that repairs could wait until next year. It was decided to table action at this time while awaiting feedback from WBWA.
- **Spruce Street Water Line Replacement Grant** – Ms. Stevens shared bid opening results from earlier today. The amount of the grant award is \$269,520 and the apparent lowest qualified bid that was received from Barrasso Excavation, Inc. was \$218,955. Ms. Stevens

intends to inquire with the grant liaison to determine if the remaining \$50,000 could be used towards repaving in 2025.

Motion to award a contract to the apparent lowest bidder in the amount of \$218,955 for the 500 Block Spruce Street Water Line Replacement project conditioned upon the solicitor's review and approval of bid documents. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **DCED Green Light-Go Year 8 Application** – Ms. Stevens indicated that a request for bids has been advertised and there should be a recommendation to award a contract next month.
- **DCED Green Light-Go Year 9 Application** – Ms. Stevens shared the recent award announcement of \$193,521.20 for traffic signal repairs along Reading Avenue.
- **Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Financing Authority Security Camera Upgrade Grant** – Ms. Stevens announced that the process has begun to request reimbursement of \$264,750 to close out the grant funding of security camera upgrades to Penn Avenue and Borough Hall.
- **DCED Park & Recreation Security Grant** – Ms. Stevens announced that Berkshire Systems Group, Inc. can furnish and install cameras without going through the bidding process as a COSTARS vendor.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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

Mr. Lineaweaver stated that he had nothing new to report at this time.

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

Mr. Miller reviewed the following items:

- **Cigars & Cars Special Event** – Mr. Miller shared a recent request for a classic car showing on September 15, 2024. The Special Event Committee requests submission of a completed street closure application and petition form signed by 75% of all occupied properties, a diagram of the proposed event site, and a certificate of insurance. It was unclear as to whether they are requesting a complete or partial closure of North Sixth Avenue.

Motion to approve the Cigars & Cars event contingent upon the submission of a completed street closure application, diagram of proposed event site, and certificate of insurance by September 6, 2024. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **WalkWorks Capacity Planning Grant** – Mr. Miller shared receipt of \$3,000 in grant funding and efforts being made to move forward.
- **Right-to-Know Requests** – Staff have responded to thirteen right-to-know requests this past month.
- **Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) Study** – Mr. Miller shared plans to perform an ESA study of the recently acquired parcel known as 433 Penn Avenue. A cost proposal of \$3,500 was submitted by Systems Design Engineering, Inc. to perform this study. There may be a need for a Phase II study that would encompass the removal of the tanks and pumps. Phase I study would delineate the history of the site while Phase II would indicate if there is

any contamination onsite. Ms. Stevens indicated that the Phase I study should be completed within 30-60 days. Mr. Miller noted a meeting that was held this morning onsite with Hafer Equipment to discuss the removal of underground fuel tanks and fuel pumps. Hafer Equipment will be assisting the borough in transferring the facility license to meet requirements for insurance should an issue arise.

Motion to enlist the services of Systems Design Engineering, Inc. to perform a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Study of 433 Penn Avenue. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

10. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Kaag provided a verbal report this month expressing her honor in being a part of the recent Kamala Harris event near Philadelphia. She is currently organizing donations for the Police and Fire Departments from a local organization that should be solidified by the end of the month. Likewise, funding is being sought to relocate the Delaney Memorial from the traffic circle to the parkland. Mayor Kaag has been collaborating with other local mayors and Governor Shapiro's office and offered to assist or recognize community members in anyway.

Motion to accept the Mayor's report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Ms. Stevens departed the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

11. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Tornielli provided a verbal K-9 report noting in addition to regularly scheduled training Officer Breitenstein and Zea participated in a K-9 Operational Medicine course where he learned advanced training on how to treat Zea should she become injured in the line of duty. Two deployments this past month were to assist another township during a traffic stop and to provide a demonstration for the Playground Summer Program.

The department recently completed the setup of a crime mapping and analytics program within the Crimewatch program. The upgrade provides two benefits to the department and community by providing detailed analysis of police incidents and their proactive efforts. The program provides crime mapping, hotspot mapping, date/time analysis of incidents, as well as other details. Data analysis will assist the department in directing patrols. He noted that the calls for service data have been increasing dramatically due to the logging of proactive efforts such as business checks, traffic checks, security checks, and patrols. This data provides better tracking to overlay crime/crash maps to ensure that officers are in the right places at the right time. The program provides a public facing mapping system that shows where incidents are occurring and where the department is conducting proactive activities. This new system provides an improved transparency as to what the department is doing to address issues.

Ms. Leiendecker inquired as to how much detail is provided on the crime mapping tool. Chief Tornielli reported that the mapping provides a block indicator, not a specific address.

Mayor Kaag and Chief Tornielli are finalizing a Pennsylvania Commission on Crime Delinquency (PCCD) grant application for funding to offset the cost of Act 120 training of new hires.

The retirement of Officer Hawn elicited a request to consider the initiation of the Civil Service process to hire entry level police officers to be able to start the Act 120 certification program in January.

Motion to authorize the initiation of the Civil Service process to hire entry level police officers. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Consideration was requested to accept a letter of resignation from Parking Enforcement Officer Rivera who recently resigned.

Motion to accept the resignation of Parking Enforcement Officer Sandra Rivera. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Consideration was requested to provide a conditional offer of employment to a candidate that was previously interviewed for the Parking Enforcement Officer position. Should this individual not accept the position consideration was requested to reopen the search for a candidate.

Motion to provide a conditional offer of employment to an individual to fill a Parking Enforcement Officer position, should the individual decline such offer, authorization to reopen the search. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley offered to answer any questions regarding his report and noted two additional sidewalk panel replacement locations scheduled later this week as well as double line painting and curb painting efforts. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Grassley departed the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his written report and noted the following:

- The second of three bay door replacements has been installed.
- The Office of the State Fire Commissioner (OSFC) \$20,000 grant funded replacement turnout gear has been received.
- The West Reading hosted regional FEMA grant application has been selected for award. Grant funds will replace existing Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) for West Reading Fire Department, Township of Spring Fire & Rescue, Leesport Fire Department, and Central Berks Fire Department. The borough's portion of the grant is \$233,000.
- The Mayor acquired \$2,000 in donations from Performance Toyota for the purchase of electric vehicle immobilizers. These devices would be used when an electric vehicle is in an accident to safeguard emergency responders.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer referred to his written report and noted the following:

- Sidewalk repairs along Penn Avenue are slated to begin on August 26<sup>th</sup>.
- The structure known as R.M. Palmer Building #5 has been leveled, sitework is currently being performed to complete the project.
- Contact has been made with a Norfolk Southern staff member to address the overgrown vegetation behind the east side of South Second Avenue.
- An update on the progress of clearing vegetative growth from an Oak Terrace property indicated that a family member addressed the growth that was impeding Beaver Alley. Mr. Moyer's contact with First Energy's Forestry Department indicates there are plans to trim vegetation from the power lines, however the lines would need to be deenergized that feeds a large portion of the Reading Hospital.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF)** – Mr. Price shared highlights of his report noting the following:

- Mr. Price participated in a two-day tour of businesses along Penn Avenue with local teachers through the Better Berks Business Coalition. He indicated that he learned a lot about local businesses on this tour and thought it would provide a beneficial insight to students.
- The August 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday event was cancelled due to the weather. The September 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday event has a vintage theme with vintage cars on display from McGinty Motorcars. Closure of Sixth Avenue for this event may be requested. An ice cream social is planned with representatives of Pennsylvania's Americana Region to promote tourism. A meet and greet with artists who designed the vinyl traffic box wraps will take place at the Art Plus Gallery. Also, a ribbon cutting ceremony will take place at the Los Arrieros Restaurant.
- Fall Fest registration is on a wait list for non-West Reading vendors to allow local registrations to take place first. PennDOT approval to close Penn Avenue was received today. Mr. Miller noted that the PennDOT paving contractor plans to add Sunday night paving in hopes of being completed before the Fall Fest event.
- Mr. Price is working with Mr. Miller on the Gateway project, which is moving forward slowly.
- The first college night has been scheduled for Thursday, September 12<sup>th</sup>. Penn State University Berks Campus, Alvernia University, and Reading Area Community College will be bringing students from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Kaag inquired as to plans for the Hope Rescue Mission to continue cleaning Penn Avenue. Mr. Price was hopeful that funding of this program would continue year-round.

Motion to accept the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Price departed the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

12. **COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:**

- a. **Diversity Equity & Inclusion Taskforce** – The July Diversity Equity & Inclusion Taskforce meeting was cancelled.
- b. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly reported that the Playground Program ended on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the pool is scheduled to close after the Pups at the Pool event on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. A portion of the Pups at the Pool proceeds were planned to be shared with the Berks Humane Society. Mr. Lineaweaver noted that Berks Humane Society donated a chip scanner to the borough. Preparations are underway for the Haunted House and Hayride events.

Mr. Esterly requested consideration of offering an off-season pool chair storage service.

Motion to authorize an off-season pool chair storage program. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Planning Commission** – The August Planning Commission meeting was cancelled.
- d. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert noted a slow time of year on the Avenue and hopes that the Fall Fest event and Penn Avenue paving will reenergize Penn Avenue for the holiday shopping season. Vacancy levels remain low with businesses opening and closing. Ms. Leiendecker expressed concern over the potential closing of Rite-Aid, it was noted that the lease was recently restructured to a shorter term.

Motion to accept the Economic Development Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **Environmental Advisory Council** – The July Environmental Advisory Council meeting was cancelled.
- f. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – The August Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting was cancelled.
- g. **Shade Tree Commission** – The August Shade Tree Commission meeting was cancelled.
- h. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Miller noted review of a video on electrical safety and stated that there were no accidents or injuries reported this past month.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- i. **Finance Committee** – The August Finance Committee meeting was cancelled.
- j. **Personnel Committee** – Mr. Lineaweaver provided a recap of discussions at the August 12, 2024 meeting to discuss the resignation and potential hiring of a new Parking Enforcement Officer.

Motion to accept the Personnel Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

13. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Transfer of Funds** – Mr. Lineaweaver shared a request to transfer funds from the PLGIT account to the M&T General Fund account.

Motion to transfer \$300,000 from the PLGIT Prime account to the M&T Bank General Fund account. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **2025 Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) Pension Plan** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted that the annual review of financial requirement and MMO based upon market value of assets reflects that the uniform MMO for 2025 is \$612,904, and the non-uniform remains at \$0.

Motion to approve the 2025 MMO for Uniform and Non-Uniform Pension plans. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Financial Statement Ending 7/31/2024** – There were no questions or comments.
- d. **Payment Approval Report 7/17/24 to 8/16/24 and 8/17/24 to 8/20/24** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 7/31/2024, and Payment Approval Reports of 7/19/24 through 8/20/24. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mayor Kaag reminded everyone of budget season meetings that are approaching and recommended placing a reminder on their calendars.

14. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Ms. Shenk inquired as to the status of the Reading Motor Club. Mayor Kaag indicated that the family is considering keeping this property in the family at this time.

Mr. Rogers noted that a call he placed to the police department to report vehicles parked within the 500 block of Grape Street resulted in a representative of county radio answering the call. Chief Tornielli explained that if staff are unable to answer a call during business hours or calls that are received after hours are transferred to the county dispatch.

Mr. Rogers reported a vehicle parked against the flow of traffic, Chief Tornielli noted that unless prohibited by ordinance a vehicle can park in any direction.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary