

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

August 27, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its second monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, August 27, 2024 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Members Denise Drobnick, Zachary Shaver, and Bethany Bower; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Code Department Manager & Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Assistant Treasurer Helen Moyer; Borough Manager Randall P. Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Vice President Philip Wert and Council Member Zanna Leienhecker were unable to attend.

VISITORS: Karen Livingood, Resident James Rogers, Resident (arrived 8:16 p.m.)

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** There were no amendments to the agenda.
3. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**
There were no public comments.
4. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**
 - a. **Resolution 2024-26 Act 120 Certification Requirement Removal** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted that this resolution is a work in progress between the borough solicitor and the Chief of Police. Chief Tornielli provided an explanation as to the Civil Service Commission’s intent to:
 - Increase the minimum age to apply for an entry level police officer position from eighteen to twenty-one.
 - Increase the probationary period from twelve months to eighteen months to maintain a twelve-month evaluation period following completion of the six-month training certification course.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-26 pending solicitor and Chief of Police review. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

5. **BUDGET DISCUSSIONS:**
 - a. **Administration Department**

Mr. Miller noted a condensed version of information being provided this budget season and indicated that most expenses are predicated on increases in rates that have been established through contract or standard payroll increases. Health and life insurances are presented as a place holder at an increase of 5%.

Ms. Drobnick questioned the need to continue to provide \$42,000 to the Main Street Operating Expense 01-465-300, noting the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF) monthly financial reports appear to be sufficient to self-sustain this program. Mr. Miller is scheduling a meeting with Nick Price to discuss the WRCRF’s abilities to fund this program in the future. It was noted that the borough is reimbursing the WRCRF for expenses associated with water, sewer, electricity, salary, etc. It was thought that

funding could be decreased in the coming year(s). It was noted that the WRCRF has not been designated as a Main Street since the passing of Dean Rohrbach. Mr. Miller reported that an agreement between the borough and the WRCRF has not been renewed annually for several years, he intends to resurrect that agreement. Mr. Lineaweaver suggested ideas on how to lower in-kind services/expenses in lieu of lowering the operating expense, such as moving the Farmers' Market to the shopping center or newly purchased borough property at 433 Penn Avenue to avoid overtime expenses associated with closing and opening lanes by the Public Works Department. Mrs. Moyer reported that funding of the operating expense in 2013 was \$72,000, lowered to \$58,000 in 2014, and \$42,000 in 2015.

01-445-300 Parking Meter Kiosk Expense – Mr. Kaag inquired as to repayment of the two kiosk machines. Mrs. Rentschler reported that the kiosk machines have been paid for in full, the budgeted amount of \$15,000 is for maintenance expenses that are now shared with the owner of the property, and credit card processing fees.

01-400-196 Health and Accident Insurance – Mr. Lineaweaver inquired as to the estimated 2024 health and accident insurance expense being roughly \$9,000 under budget. Mrs. Rentschler indicated that the year-end estimate may be amiss based on the prior seven months that did not fully include Mr. Murray's insurance expenses.

01-400-314 Legal Services – Mr. Lineaweaver asked for comments on keeping legal services budgeted at \$75,000 in 2025 with the 2024-year end estimate of \$51,447. There were no recommended changes to the proposed budget.

01-487-151 Pension/State Aid – Mr. Lineaweaver noted the annual \$150,000 increase each year. Mrs. Rentschler shared the standard 5% contribution for non-uniformed staff and a higher minimum municipal obligation for uniformed staff.

01-419-542 Animal Control Services – Mayor Kaag inquired as to thoughts of retaining Safety Net Sanctuary in the coming year. An anticipated increase of \$1,500 can be expected next year while Safety Net Sanctuary moves to a per capita fee in 2025.

b. **Code Department**

Mr. Moyer outlined the following deviations in revenues this year:

01-362-410 Building Permits – Mr. Moyer reported that building permit revenue exceeds the 2024 budget due to items such as the demolition of R.M. Palmer's Building #5 on Franklin Street. The 2025 budget was increased slightly to \$90,000.

01-362-100 Fire Code Inspections – Mr. Moyer is hopeful that at the end of summer things will slow down enough to allow him to focus on moving the fire inspection program forward. This year revenues are down, the amount budgeted for 2025 was \$15,000.

Due to a recent construction street closure incident Mayor Kaag inquired as to changes that may be necessary to the policy that had been adopted by resolution. An ordinance may be warranted for enforcement purposes.

Mr. Moyer noted the typical payroll and insurance expense increases. Legal service fees are tracking below budget for both codes and zoning legal services. Zoning legal fees for 2025 were increased from \$12,000 to \$20,000 to accommodate fees associated with amending the zoning ordinance to include form-based codes. Computer maintenance year end estimate

was lowered from \$28,000 to \$21,000 for fees primarily associated with support of the Caselle software program. Based on year-end projections of revenues versus expenses it appears that the code department will end the year at a deficit of \$90,000.

c. Fire Department

01-411-220 Administrative Expenses – Chief Moyer shared a year-end estimate for administrative expenses that exceeds the budget by \$4,500 primarily to upgrade the reporting/management software that would not be supported in 2025. The proposed 2025 budget was increased to \$9,000 to support the new software program.

01-411-329 Communication – Chief Moyer spoke of a year-end estimate that exceeds the budget by \$2,000 for dispatch fees, phones, iPad connectivity, and monthly computer maintenance fees associated with Solve IT Solutions. Information Technology (IT) services is a new substantial expense for the fire department that will be separated in the future to 01-411-374 Computer Maintenance/Repair with a budget of \$6,500 in 2025. It was noted that \$4,500 would be for IT services and \$2,000 would replace two computer stations that are at the end of life for Windows updates. The 2025 budget for communication was thereby lowered from \$26,000 to \$21,000.

01-411-373 Building Maintenance – A year-end overage of \$6,000 is anticipated due to replacement of an HVAC unit. Chief Moyer shared a recommendation from an HVAC technician to retain existing units that are in need of minor repairs.

30-411-00 Capital Expense – Chief Moyer shared plans to transfer use of Utility 64, a 2015 Ford F-250 to the Fire Police while auctioning Traffic 64 vehicle, a 2009 Chevy box truck. Earmarked bond savings of \$90,000 held in Special Reserve would be used to replace Utility 64.

01-411-120 Daytime Staffers – Chief Moyer stated that the daytime staffing program has been phenomenal in covering daytime calls for service. The biggest issue in volunteer service is a loss of members that either moved out of the borough or enlist in military service. Chief Moyer reported that seven volunteers were lost this year and the difficulty to replace members with years of training and experience. These losses ultimately place more demand on the remaining members. A conceptual member incentivization program, modeled after the Township of Spring, was presented with a budget of \$10,000. A stipend program based on earned points would provide financial compensation to volunteer members. Criteria would be set such as a minimum of fifty points earned and a cap of \$599 in earnings each year. The accumulation of points earned would determine the monetary value of each point with stipends issued in December. Members participating in the staffing program would not accrue any points. A model of compensation, based on 2023 volunteer member service, would have provided a total compensation of \$7,500. Eventually Chief Moyer foresees a need to expand the staffing program based on the continual decrease in volunteer members and increase in number of calls for service. There were 899 calls for service responded to in 2023 and 2024 is on par to meet or exceed that demand.

d. Police Department

Chief Tornielli reviewed the following revenues:

01-331-110 Vehicle Code Violations DJ – Revenues are up significantly exceeding the budget by \$10,000. The 2025 budget was increased to \$65,000.

01-331-300 Parking Tickets – Likewise, revenues are up significantly exceeding the budget by \$20,000. The 2025 budget was increased to \$100,000.

Chief Tornielli noted a reduction in revenue totals between 2024 and 2025 are due to 2024 revenues associated with PCCD and LSA grant funds.

Mr. Kaag inquired as to a reduction in revenue associated with 01-331-120 Violations Ordinances and Statutes. Chief Tornielli reported that these violations are primarily complaint driven for instances such as disorderly conduct, noise, and arrests in the park for overnight activity.

Mr. Lineaweaver inquired as to revenue associated with a grant application to reimburse expenses associated with Act 120 training for entry level police officers. Chief Tornielli noted preparation of a grant application that would reimburse the cost to train two officers totaling \$13,510. It was recommended to add this revenue to the 2025 budget.

Chief Tornielli reviewed the following expenses:

01-410-135 Shift Differential – The year-end estimate of \$9,624 is below budget primarily due to not hiring an officer as planned. The amount budgeted for 2025 was increased slightly to accommodate two new hires totaling \$14,000.

01-410-174 Overtime for Special Events & 01-410-175 Overtime for Court Cases – Chief Tornielli reported that both are anticipated to exceed the budget, court cases being most significant. Day shift officers are scheduled to attend court on a regular shift where night shift officers are required to attend court at an overtime rate. The increase in overnight traffic enforcement has increased this expense. The 2025 budget numbers have been increased based on factoring the same level of enforcement efforts.

01-410-252 Technology Fees – Chief Tornielli reported that a PCCD grant funded cloud storage for the in-car and body-worn camera data storage. Next year the borough will be funding this expense proposed at \$105,000.

01-410-319 Telephone Expenses – Changes in telephone expenses increased roughly \$5,000 this year, this amount is being carried into the 2025 budget.

01-410-327 Computer Maintenance – A portion of the PCCD grant replaced most of the computers in the police department. The 2024 year-end estimate of \$2,000 is significantly below the budgeted amount of \$11,200. Based on most of the computers being under warranty next year the budgeted amount for 2025 was \$2,000.

01-410-336 Vehicle Replacements – Chief Tornielli is awaiting a quote from the Ford dealer to purchase a vehicle to cycle a fleet vehicle to replace a parking enforcement vehicle. Mrs. Rentschler noted that currently three vehicles are being leased through First National Bank with a final payment next year totaling \$46,750, one additional annual vehicle lease payment totals \$15,000. The addition of one vehicle lease estimated at roughly \$16,000 per year for four years would bring the 2025 budget for five leases to \$78,201.

30-410-000 Police Capital Expense – Chief Tornielli proposed the replacement of five police radios next year totaling \$35,000.

Mr. Lineaweaver inquired as to an increase in holiday pay this year when there were less officers. Mrs. Rentschler offered to recalculate this information that is based on the number of officers working on any given holiday at a rate of 2.5% of their pay rate.

Ms. Drobnick inquired as to the actual services that were provided to the borough by the animal control officer. It was noted that during the first half of the year four dogs were rescued by Safety Net Sanctuary, three of which were returned to their owners, one of which is still in their care. Chief Tornielli reported that two dogs were transported by officers to the Safety Net Sanctuary facility in Fleetwood. Chief Tornielli indicated that the ideal situation would be the ability to place a call to request transportation by the animal control officer. He noted an area established at the borough garage that would temporarily contain stray animals. Ms. Drobnick recommended the creation of a committee that could address these issues.

6. BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:

Reopening South Second Avenue – Mr. Miller requested consideration of reopening South Second Avenue.

Motion to authorize the reopening of South Second Avenue contingent upon the completion of construction projects. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 5-0.**

MS4 Best Management Practices Requirement – Mr. Miller requested consideration of entering into an engineering work order agreement with Johnson Environmental Engineering for Best Management Practices (BMP) pertaining to MS4 conveyance of stormwater requirements.

Motion to authorize an engineering work agreement with Johnson Environmental Engineering for 2024 – 2025 MS4 Best Management Practices. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Gateway Project – Mr. Miller shared Norfolk Southern's requirements of entering into an agreement to pay up to \$20,000 in costs associated with bridge beautification for the borough's gateway project. To move forward with this project authorization was requested to draft a letter agreeing to reimburse costs incurred by Norfolk Southern that are associated with borough project plans. Mr. Miller explained that attaching items to the bridge would incur additional engineering and production costs. Therefore, it was recommended to revise plans to simply repainting the bridge. Subtracting Norfolk Southern's fees from grant funds it was estimated that \$88,500 would remain for painting and traffic control expenses. Mr. Lineaweaver recommended exploring actual costs associated with the project to fully understand funding needs. It was thought that an agreement should not be entered into with Goggleworks based on expenses that could not be substantiated for items such as contest advertising and artists. Action was tabled at this time.

Borough Secretary Stipend – Mr. Miller requested consideration of authorizing a stipend for the Borough Secretary for time spent without a Borough Manager on staff.

Motion to authorize a \$2,500 stipend to the Borough Secretary for efforts in the absence of a Borough Manager. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Special Event Street Closure – Mr. Miller requested consideration to ratify approval of a special event street closure that took place last weekend. It was unsure if the request was lost in email or if it was an attempt to circumvent requirements. As a one-time courtesy, the applicant was requested to accomplish tasks in a short period of time to be granted permission to close the road. Mr. Lineaweaver noted the process that was taken to grant approval prior to the event and the applicant's payment of fees associated with services provided.

Motion to ratify the approval of a special event street closure of a portion of Court Street on Saturday, August 24, 2024. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mrs. Livingood noted over the course of 54 years as a resident of the borough the number of committees she and her husband have served on and her eagerness to get younger people to become involved. Mrs. Livingood singled out Chief Tornielli for taking the time to explain Act 120 to the Civil Service Commission.

Mr. Rogers joined the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Mr. Rogers provided an update on his Business Privilege Tax review and indicated that as of today 186 of 811 accounts have not been paid.

8. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary