

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
TRAFFIC & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**

SEPTEMBER 11, 2024

The Borough of West Reading Traffic & Infrastructure Committee met on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chairman Christopher Lincoln; Council Member Patrick Kaag; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Borough Manager Randall P. Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

Visitors:

Karen Livingood, Resident
Mary Napoli, Resident
Andrew Schaeffer, Resident
Josh Brown, Resident

James Rogers, Resident
Michael & Helen Witmyer, Residents
John Arthur, Resident

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Lincoln at 6:00 p.m.

Public Comment

Mr. Witmyer inquired as to when the Penn Avenue gas main project nightmare would end. Mr. Grassley and Chief Tornielli indicated that crews plan to pull off the job on Friday, September 20th, before the Fall Fest event that's scheduled for September 21st. Mr. Witmyer noted the traffic signal at Fourth and Penn Avenue that was flashing one evening and recommended that temporary stop signs be installed at these busy intersections.

Mr. Rogers shared the following comments regarding parking:

- The 400 block of Grape Street currently has three marked parking spaces near Fifth Avenue. He recommended only removing the one space that encroaches access to a garage.
- The 500 and 600 blocks of Cherry Street appear to have cars parking within the right-of-way.
- A single parking space could be established on Franklin Street near Fifth Avenue in front of the sandwich shop.
- Penn Avenue within the 600 block on the north side has an area where an additional parking space could be established. This space is currently supporting a parked construction vehicle.
- North Sixth Avenue on the east side near Penn Avenue has two spaces that could be created. It was also recommended to limit the loading zone area to daytime hours such as 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. to allow evening and overnight use of these spaces.
- South Fourth Avenue on the west side near Penn Avenue. Mr. Lincoln noted that this intersection requires additional space for a turning radius.
- An additional space could be established on South Fourth Avenue on the east side near Penn Avenue.
- A parking space could be established on the west side of North Seventh Avenue near Penn Avenue, although the installation of planters within the planting strip prohibits egress from a parked vehicle. Mr. Lincoln indicated a review of this intersection took place prior to granting approval for planter placement. State regulations restrict placement of parking spaces any closer to this intersection.
- Additional spaces could be established on the south side of Chestnut Street near Fifth Avenue and Sixth Avenue.
- Fifth Avenue on the east side near Penn Avenue has the potential to create three additional parking spaces.

Ms. Napoli shared her experiences as a crossing guard at the Fifth and Penn Avenue intersection. She indicated that drivers on Fifth Avenue are not expecting the inability to turn left at this intersection and recommended installing additional signage or lighting to prevent accidents. Staff noted receipt of a WalkWorks grant that will study and create safer transportation plans.

Mr. Brown stated that he and a few neighbors are present to discuss the newly implemented parking restrictions on Grape Street. He inquired as to the issuance of parking tickets during an experimental timeframe and confusion as to whether the ticket he received had been waived until receipt of a citation and a hearing date. Chief Tornielli indicated that initial violations are issued a warning, while subsequent violations are issued tickets. Mr. Brown indicated that he did not receive a warning. He also indicated that no parking signs have only been posted on one side of the 500 block of Grape Street. Mr. Grassley noted the difficulty in locating areas to post signs that would not interfere with access to off-street parking amenities such as garages and driveways.

Mr. Lincoln provided a background as to how the experimental regulations came into effect, noting that larger emergency vehicles would not be able to traverse certain alleys throughout the borough while vehicles are parked within right-of-way areas. This committee made a recommendation to Borough Council to implement no parking within certain alleys. Borough Council chose to implement the proposed changes through an experimental 90-day period prior to going through the expense and steps required for adoption. This method allows an extended period for residents to provide feedback and to adjust regulations accordingly. Residents were encouraged to attend next week's Borough Council meeting to share their concerns or recommendations.

Mr. Arthur noted that door hangers were provided to alert residents to changes in parking regulations along Grape Street and shared some confusion as to which meeting to attend to provide feedback. He also shared confusion as to whether the regulations were temporary or permanent based on which staff member he asked. Mr. Arthur requested consideration as to creating additional parking spaces on the south side of the 500 block of Chestnut Street near Sixth Avenue. Mr. Lincoln indicated that this subject is on the agenda for discussion later this evening.

Mr. Schaeffer estimated approximately 30 vehicles that park on Grape Street between Yarnell Street to Sixth Avenue will need to find alternative parking. It was noted that the municipal parking lot in the 600 block of Franklin Street is quite a distance away from the affected residents that park on Grape Street.

Ms. Napoli, Mr. Brown, Mr. Arthur and Mr. Schaeffer departed the meeting at 6:21 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee minutes of July 10, 2024. **Moved** by Mayor Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

New Business

LSA Streetlight Grant Scope of Work – This grant was procured through the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF) to replace 113 streetlight heads along Penn Avenue and the first blocks of North and South Fifth Avenue. It was discovered that grant funding would not cover improvements to all streetlights and an adjustment to the scope of work is needed to proceed. Mr. Miller shared the news of the Wyomissing Foundation providing \$60,000 in grant funding to help cover some additional costs. An overhead map that identified 72 streetlights along Penn Avenue between Third and Sixth Avenues, and one block of South Fifth Avenue was provided. It was noted that several existing streetlights have been converted to LED by the Public Works Department. The new streetlight

heads are similar but will not match the existing fixtures due to compliance with regulations established by the state. A cost of \$2,365 per LED head brings the cost to \$170,280 with installation by the Public Works Department. Streetlight heads are available to order and should arrive in short order. Mr. Miller indicated that the accumulation of electricity savings estimated at roughly 55% could yield funding to purchase the remaining 41 streetlight heads block by block. It was recommended to relocate the upgraded LED heads to poles outside of the scope of work.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve the LSA Streetlight Grant scope of work to replace 72 streetlight head fixtures as identified on the plan. **Moved** by Chief Torielli and seconded by Mr. Grassley. **Motion carried.**

500 Block Chestnut Street Additional Parking Spaces – Mr. Lincoln referred to the restricted parking area east of the entrance only access to the Child Development Center parking lot near Sixth Avenue. It was noted that sight distance would not be a concern which would allow the creation of three parking spaces. This area is currently listed in the section of ordinances that prohibits parking at all times.

Motion to remove the designation of prohibited parking on Chestnut Street from Sixth Avenue to a point 130 feet eastwardly thereof. **Moved** by Mr. Grassley and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

Fifth Avenue and Spruce Street Pedestrian Safety – Chief Torielli noted receipt of a few complaints from hospital staff about pedestrian crossing safety within this intersection. He intends to reach out to hospital representatives to determine their ability to assist in making improvements such as signage and/or lighting. Mr. Lincoln noted visibility challenges that are associated with changes in elevation and tree encroachments that limit the street lighting of pedestrians. Installation of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) would prove challenging based on the hill that would require a costly overhead mast arm. It was noted that a recent application for RRFB at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Pine Street was estimated to cost \$80,000. That project had been denied funding based on the limited number of pedestrian accidents or fatalities. Mr. Grassley offered to paint the roadway to alert motorists to the pedestrian crossing ahead. It was thought that fluorescent yellow pedestrian crossing signs could be installed on either side of the street at the intersection and prior to the intersection announcing the distance to the crosswalk. Mr. Miller indicated that eventually the WalkWorks grant funding could concentrate planning efforts on intersections like this. He also stressed the importance of creating partnerships with the hospital, schools, and churches for more grant funding opportunities.

Mr. Grassley excused himself to assist the Borough of Wyomissing with multiple water main breaks at 6:59 p.m.

Penn Avenue Beautification Agreement – Mr. Miller noted the intent of the WRCRF to add planters to Penn Avenue, within the borough's right-of-way. An agreement was drafted for both parties to adhere to parameters such as placement and maintenance. The WRCRF requested one change to the agreement to extend the period to remove planters upon request from seven days to thirty days.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve the language of the Penn Avenue Beautification Agreement between the Borough of West Reading and the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation. **Moved** by Chief Torielli and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

Old Business

Experimental Parking Regulations - Parking Prohibited at All Times – It was noted that changes were made throughout this section to match current day regulations on the street. Other changes such as

restrictions along the full length of Grape Street would be delineated to allow Borough Council to approve the amendments.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve the listed amendments to Section 430-21 Parking Prohibited at All Times. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Chief Torielli. **Motion carried.**

Reading and Sixth Avenues Traffic Study Update – Mr. Lincoln suggested tabling this conversation until next month when Mr. Grassley can be included in this discussion.

Delaney Circle Update – Mayor Kaag reported that the Wyomissing Area School District is interested in donating towards expenses associated with Delaney’s memorial improvements. Chief Torielli shared a brief conversation he had with Delaney’s mom as to the temporary storage of memorial items until a garden can be established, he intends to share additional details such as storage location and timing following the outcome of discussions this evening. Mr. Lincoln would like to implement a newly painted traffic flow within the circle this year. It was unclear as to when funding may be available and if winter weather would cause delays in creating a garden. As an alternative to storing the frog, Mr. Kaag suggested placing the frog in strategic locations along the corridor of movement from the traffic circle to the park area. The front lawn of Borough Hall was thought to be a safe temporary location. Verification was requested to be made with Mr. Grassley prior to contacting Delaney’s mom.

Trial Sidewalk Replacement Program Update – Mr. Kaag indicated that all funds have been used and the program seems to be going well. Hopefully additional funds can be budgeted next year to make improvements.

Public Comment

Mr. Rogers asked for clarification on the confusion as to parking restrictions on Yarnell Street. It was noted that no restrictions are proposed for Yarnell Street and that possibly confusion was caused while listing restrictions on Grape Street from Yarnell Street to Third Avenue. He also questioned the issuance of tickets during an experimental timeframe. Mr. Lincoln reported that regulations are in effect via resolution, the experimental aspect allows Borough Council to adjust regulations if needed prior to adoption.

Mr. Miller shared information regarding PennDOT’s project to widen the 422 Bypass noting plans to place the project out for bid in 2027, award a contract in 2027 and construction to begin in 2028. The phase of the project would extend from Lancaster Avenue to Buttonwood Street for a period of eight years.

Mr. Miller announced that FastBridge Fiber will be coming to the borough.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m. by Chief Torielli and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary