

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

**September 17, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.**

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, September 17, 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; 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  
Lance Parmer, Fire Police (via Zoom)  
Priscilla Hogue, Resident  
Eric Longacre, Resident (via Zoom)  
Barbara Moyer, Resident  
Josh Brown, Resident  
Carlos Santillan, Resident

Michael Plank, Resident  
Dustin Plank, Resident  
Gloria Guerrero, Resident  
Christina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner  
Andrew Moletress, Resident  
Andrew Schaeffer, Resident

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** There were no executive sessions held.
3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** There were no amendments to the agenda.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Moletress shared his thoughts on restricting parking on Grape Street and recommended that warnings be issued prior to ticketing new regulations. He noted that most of the homes along the 500 block of Grape Street have garages or off-street parking amenities. It was questioned why a decision had been made to restrict parking on Grape Street when both Cherry Street and Grape Street measure 16' wide. The recent Public Works activity that reviewed the 500 block of Franklin Street to determine if additional parking spaces can be created by reducing the length of parking stalls and setbacks from intersections raised concern in supporting full length pickup truck parking and a sufficient minimum turning radius. Mr. Moletress questioned the legality of parking in front of a garage structure while the vehicle encroaches the roadway, and the legality of parking in front of his driveway entrance on Franklin Street. Mr. Grassley shared the 2' rights-of-way on either side of Grape Street that reduces the width of the travel lane and the importance of being able to access structures quickly in the event of an emergency. The borough is actively seeking opportunities to create additional parking spaces. Chief Tornielli noted that the experimental regulations can be enforced immediately, though typically warnings are issued for a period of time. Most citations that were issued were based on complaints that were received.

Mr. Plank applauded Borough Council in their decision to restrict parking on Grape Street noting that the roadway is too narrow to support parking. He has a parking pad and frequently has issues accessing or exiting the space due to vehicles parked across the street. He believes the restrictions may have slowed the flow of traffic and should make snow removal efforts easier in the future. He noted a few garages that have recently been emptied to allow parking a vehicle in the garage.

Mrs. Barbara Moyer shared her frustrations with the acorns and branches falling from an Oak tree located in front of her home that cause liability concerns as well as vehicle and home damage during her 52-year residency on Oak Terrace. She takes pride in her community and is working to maintain her property and requested consideration of removing the tree. It was recommended that she attend the Shade Tree Commission meeting on the first Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

Mrs. Guerrero shared the difficulties experienced by her family to find parking near her home on Franklin Street with the new parking restrictions on Grape Street and provided a letter from her daughter urging Borough Council to reconsider. She noted that Penn Avenue business employees park on Franklin Street for extended lengths of time and the difficult time frames of overnight and weekends to find available parking. Mrs. Guerrero indicated that parking was not a problem for twenty-three years, now it is difficult every day, and emergencies only occur occasionally. Mrs. Guerrero also shared her frustration in transporting yard waste to the borough garage during the specified timeframes.

Ms. Hogue spoke of difficulty experienced by a disabled family member that recently visited and could not find a parking space nearby for a van with a ramp.

Mr. Lineaweaver expressed the difficult decision elected officials made to implement parking prohibitions on Grape Street, that are based on the greater interest of health and safety of members of the community. Funding of an overall permit parking study is planned next year.

Mr. Rogers spoke of a letter he forwarded to all of Borough Council last week regarding the initial concept of Penn Avenue, from the railroad bridge to the Wyomissing Borough line, where curbing and sidewalks had been created in a uniform color. The recent sidewalk panel replacements performed by UGI Utilities, Inc. along Penn Avenue have created a checkerboard effect. Mr. Wert reported that the initial color selection had been discontinued and the difficulty experienced in finding a match. The original concrete color has faded over time and more than likely all sidewalks and curbing will not be replaced at the same time in the near future. It was thought that over time the color should blend with curing and foot traffic.

Mr. Rogers inquired as to the ability to park overnight at the municipal parking lot located on the 600 block of Franklin Street. It was unclear as to these restrictions that would need to be reviewed at a later time.

Mr. Longacre expressed his frustration with a woman and an antique vehicle that has been regularly parked on Sunset Road and Fifth Avenue dependent on street cleaning days. He questioned why multiple tickets are not issued for this vehicle that is parked without a parking permit. Chief Tornielli indicated that homeless assistance is being sought for this person and the issuance of multiple parking tickets would not improve the situation. It is not illegal to be homeless or to live in a car. The borough is aware of the issue and is trying to find solutions for this individual and will follow up with Mr. Longacre in a week or two.

5. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve the August 20, 2024 and August 27, 2024 meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

6. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Ordinance – Parking Prohibited at All Times** – Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration to authorize advertisement of the experimental parking regulations. The prohibition of parking along Grape Street to address public safety concerns is being followed with efforts to find alternative parking solutions. Advertisement of an amendment provides an additional 30 days to make changes prior to adoption.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of amendments to Section 430-21 Parking Prohibited at All Times. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Resolution 2024-27 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – Consideration was requested to extend the local disaster emergency while a portion of Cherry Street is still closed.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-27 extending the Proclamation of Local Disaster Emergency until the October 16, 2024 Borough Council meeting. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

7. **CONSULTANT'S REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker did not have anything new to report.
- b. **Engineer's Report** – Ms. Stevens reviewed the following items:

- **2025 Road Project** – A preliminary budget is being prepared for the 2025 road work projects.
- **Green Light-Go Year 8 Traffic Signal Upgrades** – Four bids were submitted to PennBID and reviewed on September 11, 2024. The lowest qualified bidder was C.M. High, Inc. with a bid price of \$183,600, below the grant amount of \$209,975.60.

Motion to award a contract to C.M. High, Inc. for the traffic signal upgrade project in the amount of \$183,600. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Security Camera Upgrade Project** – A final payment was recommended to Berkshire Systems Design Group, Inc. for security camera upgrades to Penn Avenue and Borough Hall to close out this project. Coordination of reimbursement will provide a payment to the borough in the amount of \$264,750.

Motion to provide a final payment to Berkshire Systems Group, Inc. in the amount of \$14,210 to close out the Security Upgrade Grant Project through Commonwealth of PA Financing Authority. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Ann Street Multi-Model Grant** – A preconstruction meeting is scheduled tomorrow with Forino. It was recommended to alert residents along this street of parking restrictions during construction activity only.
- **Seventh Avenue Paving Repairs** – Ms. Stevens inquired as to a decision made last month to table this project and plans to reject the bids that were received on August 19, 2024. Mr. Lineaweaver queried Council Members to determine their thoughts on proceeding with this project this year. There was no interest expressed. A motion was made to amend the

agenda to reject bids for the Seventh Avenue paving repairs. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

**Public Comment** – There were no comments as to the Seventh Avenue paving repair project.

Motion to reject the Seventh Avenue paving repair bids received on August 19, 2024. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mrs. Guerrero departed the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

- **Phase I Environmental Assessment** – Ms. Stevens intends to have this assessment completed in time for the October Borough Council meeting.
- **Pump Station Flow Monitoring** – Ms. Stevens will be working with the Borough Manager and Public Works Director to assess and create a corrective action plan to address the instances when both pump stations exceeded the design flow per hour.
- **500 Block of Spruce Street Water Line Replacement** – The preconstruction meeting is planned next month.
- **Sixth Avenue Water Line Replacement** – The LSA Grant Application is being finalized for submission before the September 30<sup>th</sup> deadline.

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

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

Mr. Lineaweaver reported that Mr. Wert and himself joined a Reading Planning Commission special meeting to assist in their downtown master plan. Mr. Wert shared plans to meet every other month to continue these discussions.

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

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

Mr. Miller reviewed the following action items:

- **433 Penn Avenue Transfer of Tank Ownership** – Due to time constraints a request was made to ratify an agreement with Hafer Equipment to transfer ownership of the PA DEP tank registration, tag out and removal of the tanks and pumps in the amount of \$5,200. Transfer of ownership would provide state funding should onsite remediation be needed.

Motion to ratify an agreement with Hafer Equipment to transfer tank ownership and removal of underground tanks and pumps at 433 Penn Avenue. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Gateway Project** – Mr. Miller requested authorization to draft a letter to Norfolk Southern to incur costs associated with the gateway trestle. This would authorize Norfolk Southern's engineering department to incur and bill costs associated with specifications and bidding improvements to their bridge. The grant amount for this project will primarily be used for engineering and bid specifications. Due to added costs associated with the Goggleworks

proposal to attach letters to the trestle it has been decided to pursue repainting of the bridge.

Motion to authorize a letter to Norfolk Southern to incur costs up to \$20,000 associated with gateway trestle improvements. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker.

**Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Water Pressure Gauge** – Mr. Miller noted a meeting with Western Berks Water Authority (WBWA) to discuss the water hammer instance and his main concern regarding open communication. The task WBWA was trying to accomplish was to isolate, drain, inspect and clean an underground tank. They failed to perform checks on the pressure regulating valves in the pit where the isolation was to occur. When the valve was closed the entire pressure of the system was distributed to all piping. The result on our system increased pressure from the normal 90 pounds per square inch to 130 pounds per square inch causing leaks to occur. WBWA was unaware of the effect on the borough, once notified they reversed the isolation, and reactivated the tank to relieve the increased pressure. WBWA will be replacing the meter and pressure regulating valves in the pit. The purchase of a water pressure gauge would provide an alert to high- or low-pressure instances.

Mr. Longacre departed the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

Mr. Grassley thanked Mr. Miller for his efforts in opening communication with WBWA. They have communicated plans to perform this type of isolation again within the next two months, therefore, Mr. Grassley requested permission to purchase the pressure gauge this year. Should a similar incident arise Mr. Grassley noted the ability to terminate WBWA service and activate service from the Reading Area Water Authority. Chief Moyer noted from a fire protection standpoint there were three water alarms triggered during the water hammer incident, any decrease in the amount of time to receive notification would be beneficial. The cost of the gauge is roughly \$3,200.

Motion to purchase a water pressure gauge not to exceed \$3,200. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Downtown Zoning Ordinance Amendments** – Consideration of authorizing an additional service contract with Derck & Edson, LLC to complete ordinance refinement and adoption services was requested.

Motion to enter into an agreement with Derck and Edson, LLC to complete the Downtown Zoning Ordinance amendments. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver.

**Motion carried 7-0.**

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

Ms. Stevens departed the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

10. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Kaag provided a verbal report this month noting the following:

- Reading Skate Park officially opened this past month that was spearheaded by our long-term West Reading business, Holistic Skateshop.

- She and Councilman Kaag attended a Barn Group meeting for additional ideas for the Environmental Advisory Council to pursue.
- The Performance Toyota donations of electric vehicle immobilizers has been received by the fire department, and a \$2,500 check was received by the police department for the K-9 program.
- The upcoming events noted were Fall Fest this Saturday, Reading Hospital Road Run on October 20<sup>th</sup>, and Fitzzy's Run on October 27<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers are needed for Fitzzy's Run.
- The police department is in the process of hiring police officers.

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

#### 11. DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Tornielli noted a different look to his report this month that has transitioned over to the new reporting system. The system now tracks officer-initiated activities such as traffic enforcement, and security and business checks to provide better transparency. A part of the new analytics program provides heat maps that indicates an overlap to incident and officer-initiated activities. The graph depicting incident and time of day should and does overlap that assists the department in directing patrols. The reportable incident graph indicates a spike during daytime hours. Similarly, the officer-initiated activity should increase during these times. These two patterns are tracking in that manner.

Chief Tornielli shared a community engagement event planned next Thursday at the West Reading Fire Department to answer any questions or concerns from the community. The police department has prepared for this weekend's Fall Fest event and entry level police officer applications are being accepted until October 4<sup>th</sup>. Civil Service testing will be conducted on October 12<sup>th</sup>, successful applicants without Act 120 training would be entered into the academy in January. A grant application has been submitted to hopefully offset the cost of training.

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

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. There were no questions or comments.

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

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his written report and did not have anything to add at this time. Mayor Kaag recognized Councilman Shaver's efforts last month in having the highest percentage of responses to calls for service.

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

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer referred to his written report and noted a project of interest that arose after drafting his report that pertains to UGI Utilities, Inc. replacing the gas main on Obold Street. Mayor Kaag encouraged Mr. Moyer to approach the Environmental Advisory Council for

assistance to elderly residents to maintain their properties. Mr. Moyer noted a few properties owned by elderly people on fixed incomes who are physically and financially unable to maintain their yards. A committee or group of volunteers would be helpful in these types of situations.

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

e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF)** – In Mr. Price’s absence, Mr. Lineaweaver provided highlights of this report noting the following:

- The WRCRF is working with the borough on the lighting grant scope of work and gateway improvements with Norfolk Southern.
- Attended the September business meeting with representatives from the Kutztown Small Business Development Center.
- Hosted the first college night on September 12<sup>th</sup> with students attending from Penn State Berks, Alvernia, RACC, Drexel and the Reading Hospital School of Nursing. It was noted that twenty-five businesses offered discounts to students with identification.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday event with planned events such as a ribbon cutting ceremony at Los Arrieros, an ice cream social with the PA Americana Region at Sweet Ride, vintage car display, live music, and meet the artists at Art Plus of the traffic box designs.
- Continued work on the Fall Fest event that includes a waiting list of roughly thirty vendors.
- Mr. Price is attending a new manager workshop tomorrow in Honesdale, which is why he couldn’t attend tonight’s meeting. The workshop is a requirement to maintain the Pennsylvania Downtown Center Main Street designation.
- An additional workshop attendance is planned early next month through the Berks County Planning Commission with guest speakers from Main Street’s outside of Berks County.

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

## 12. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Diversity Equity & Inclusion Taskforce** – The August Diversity Equity & Inclusion Taskforce meeting was cancelled.
- b. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly reported that the pool has closed for the season, and the Pups at the Pool event raised \$135 for the Humane Society. A few pool members took advantage of the new off-season pool chair storage service. Preparations are underway for the annual Haunted House and Harvest Hayride events planned the weekend of October 11<sup>th</sup>. The Mocktail party hosted at the Bicentennial House had a decent number of attendees. The 2025 Calendar of Events is being prepared by the commission.

Ms. Drobnick shared that a different community bike ride event will be hosted by Rides & Vibes on Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. in front of B-2 Bistro that will take a bike tour of the public art in the City of Reading.

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

- c. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted continued work on zoning amendments. A large portion has been completed that will need review by the solicitor and Berks County Planning Commission. Focus has now been shifted to the sign ordinance portion of the update. If all goes well, the amendment could be adopted early next year.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert noted Avenue discussions such as the opening of Los Arrieros, and a few available spaces. FastBridge Fiber plans to install fiber optics in the borough soon. The Wyomissing Borough update shared a potential new buyer of the Berkshire Mall, and Wawa has been listed for sale.

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

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

- f. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Kaag noted review of the Grape Street parking prohibition, and the Local Share Account (LSA) Streetlight Grant scope of work with possible energy savings. Mr. Lineaweaver reviewed the following two action items:

- LSA Streetlight Grant Scope of Work – The Wyomissing Foundation provided an additional \$60,000 in funding of improvements to Penn Avenue streetlights. Mr. Miller noted there are 113 streetlights of which 72 would be improved at a cost of \$2,365 each bringing the total cost to \$170,280. An electric savings should be realized at roughly 55%. The light head installations will be performed by the Public Works Department.

Motion to approve the scope of work for the LSA Streetlight grant project. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Wert shared with Mr. Rogers that this grant was secured through the WRCRF that works on many levels to try to improve the borough.

- Central Business District Planters – An agreement has been drafted to establish parameters as to placement and maintenance of planters within the business district to help beautify Penn Avenue.

Motion to enter into an agreement with the WRCRF regarding placement and maintenance of planters. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- g. **Shade Tree Commission** – The September Shade Tree Commission meeting was cancelled.

- h. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted review of a video on preventing fatigue in the workplace and scheduling of free flu shots through Tower Health.

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

- i. **Finance Committee** – The September Finance Committee meeting was cancelled due to the lack of a quorum. Mr. Lineaweaver noted that a quorum is needed to vote on a committee chairperson.

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. Mrs. Rentschler noted that tax revenues have slowed at this time of year.

Motion to transfer \$700,000 from the PLGIT Prime account to the M&T Bank General Fund account. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **2025 Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) Pension Plan** – Mr. Lineaweaver shared a request to lower the Police Pension MMO from \$612,904 to \$508,221 until the 2025 budget preparation process is further along to determine availability of funds.

Motion to modify the 2025 Police Pension MMO to \$508,221. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Department of Auditor General, Liquid Fuels Tax Fund** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted two findings within the audit of January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2023 of a duplicate payment of invoices that provided a credit on the account, and payment of sales tax. Mrs. Rentschler indicated that a request for refund of sales tax is being pursued totaling roughly \$1,700.

Motion to accept the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund Audit from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2023. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Financial Statement Ending 8/31/2024** – There were no questions or comments.

- e. **Payment Approval Report 8/21/24 to 9/13/24 and 9/14/24 to 9/17/24** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 8/31/2024, and Payment Approval Reports of 8/12/24 through 9/17/24. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

14. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Ms. Shenk inquired as to talks of performing another costly parking study. It was noted that this study would be for an overall permit parking program that would benefit all residents. Grant funding opportunities will be pursued to offset this expense.

Mr. Moletress spoke of a homeless person near the bridge that has created a lot of trash. Ms. Bower noted that this is what happens when housing options are limited, and homeless shelters are full.

Mr. Rogers noted a homeless person sleeping at a bus stop at Second and Penn Avenue.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary