

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

October 15, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, October 15, 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; Assistant Treasurer Helen Moyer; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Engineer Pamela Stevens; Recreation Director Michael Esterly; Main Street Executive Director Nick Price; Borough Manager Randall Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS:

James Rogers, Resident

Christina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner

Suzanne Thompson, Resident

Jean Witmer, Resident

Karen Livingood, Resident (via Zoom)

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. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** There were no executive sessions held.

3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration to include a discussion under the Treasurer's report to transfer funds between the PLGIT Prime and M&T Bank accounts. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers thanked whoever was responsible for removing election signs from the cloverleaf area. Mr. Lineaweaver reported that PennDOT had removed the signs. Mr. Rogers recommended removing only one of the three parking spaces within the 400 block of Grape Street to accommodate access to a private garage. Mr. Grassley indicated that all three spaces would be removed for ease of emergency vehicle access. Mr. Rogers then asked if we would enforce parking for school pick up within this block. Chief Tornielli noted the school's plan that is in place to limit traffic flows on surrounding roadways. A standing vehicle that is temporarily stopped to receive or discharge passengers can be moved quickly in an emergency which differs from a parked vehicle that would require towing or knocking on doors to find the operator.

Ms. Witmer thanked Mr. Moyer for his ongoing efforts to clean up a blighted property on her block. Mr. Moyer indicated that a plan had been established in conjunction with the Environmental Advisory Council, the Mayor and the property owner.

5. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve September 17, 2024 and September 24, 2024 meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

6. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

a. **Ordinance 1186 Parking Prohibited at All Times** – Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration to adopt an amendment that would include the prohibition of parking along Grape Street to address public safety concerns. The Traffic and Infrastructure Committee is actively seeking other potential parking spaces within the area to lessen parking constraints.

Motion to adopt amendments to Section 430-21 Parking Prohibited at All Times. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Resolution 2024-28 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – Consideration was requested to extend the local disaster emergency while a portion of Cherry Street remains closed.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-28 extending the Proclamation of Local Disaster Emergency until the November 19, 2024 Borough Council meeting. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

7. **CONSULTANTS' REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker did not have anything new to report. He shared Dean Murray's regards to Borough Council.

- 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 that includes a strategy to take advantage of grant funds and water funds to complete a number of paving improvements next year.
- **Green Light-Go Year 8 Traffic Signal Upgrades** – The agreements were signed this evening, a notice to proceed should follow soon for work to begin on Fifth Avenue and Museum Road traffic signals.
- **Ann Street Multi-Model Grant** – Forino submitted a Change Order in the amount of \$28,918 to replace the ADA ramps on Sunset Road, existing service walks, and installing tree plates at locations of small caliper street trees. There are sufficient grant funds to include these improvements within this project. The remaining grant fund balance of \$42,520 is anticipated for use in paving restoration in 2025.

Motion to approve a Change Order to Forino in the amount of \$28,918 to improve ADA ramps on Sunset Road, replace existing service walks, install tree plates and authorize the Borough Manager to execute the Change Order. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Phase I Environmental Assessment** – The Borough Manager met with a representative of Systems Design Engineering to gain access to the interior of the building at 433 Penn Avenue. Mr. Miller reported that Hafer Equipment provided a quote to remove the tanks and fuel pumps at a cost ranging from \$30,000 to \$50,000. There are two issues with the quote in that an exact amount is needed to award a contract and the project amount exceeds the bidding threshold. Mr. Grassley has been seeking additional quotes for a revised scope of work that would allow the Public Works Department to perform certain tasks in-house to avoid a formal bidding process. A Phase II study would be performed after the tanks have been removed.

Mr. Moyer located documentation from the removal of the original tanks in 1997 that appears to be devoid of soil contamination. A fire department response incident occurred in 2017 when an above ground oil tank malfunctioned and leaked oil across the parking lot onto Tulpehocken Avenue towards the traffic circle.

- **FEMA Community Self-Assessment Form** – Ms. Stevens indicated that Systems Design Engineering has completed their portion of the assessment form.
- **Main Street Matters Grant** – A planning grant opportunity with a 20% match may align with a parking study along Penn Avenue and the parallel blocks. The scope of the study would be from Reading Avenue to Franklin Street. Mr. Miller indicated that receipt of a grant of this nature would dovetail nicely with the WalkWorks planning grant.

Motion to apply for a Main Street Matters grant application. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Pump Station Flow Monitoring** – Ms. Stevens and Mr. Grassley met to review the anomalies when both pump stations exceeded the design flow per hour and provided the information to PA DEP. In the future these types of events will be documented to include in the annual MS4 reports.
- **500 Block of Spruce Street Water Line Replacement** – The preconstruction meeting was held with plans to begin work in November. Remaining grant funds of roughly \$50,000 could be used towards paving restoration in 2025.
- **Sixth Avenue Water Line Replacement** – The LSA grant application has been submitted.

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

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

Mr. Lineaweaver had nothing new to report.

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

Mr. Miller reviewed the following items:

- **Shade Tree Commission Resignation** – A letter of resignation has been received from Carol Leiendecker. Based on a conflict of interest, Ms. Leiendecker abstained from this vote.

Motion to accept the resignation of Carol Leiendecker from the Shade Tree Commission. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **Shade Tree Commission Appointment** – A letter of interest was received from Jean Witmer to join the Shade Tree Commission. Ms. Witmer is looking forward to serving on the commission now that she is retired.

Motion to appoint Jean Witmer to the Shade Tree Commission with a term to expire on December 31, 2026. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **National Park Service Agreement** – Mr. Miller requested consideration to amend a project agreement with the National Park Service to utilize the Strawbridge Land Bank for replacement land of the converted tot lot at Bicentennial Park.

Motion to amend the project agreement with the National Park Service to replace park land converted to a tot lot. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Annual Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Report** – Consideration was requested to accept the annual MS4 report. Activities such as street sweeping and marking inlets contribute towards the overall annual goals.

Motion to accept the annual MS4 status report for July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Street Sweeping** – Mr. Miller requested consideration to suspend street sweeping on Chestnut Street on election day to accommodate the increased parking needs at Borough Hall.

Motion to suspend street sweeping activities on Chestnut Street on Election Day, November 5, 2024. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **433 Penn Avenue** – Mr. Miller requested to table any action on the removal of underground tanks until additional quotes are received.

Motion to accept the Borough Manager’s report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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

- The Reading Skate Park official opening took place last Saturday. The owner of Holistic Skateshop here in West Reading is looking for volunteers to maintain the grounds.
- As mentioned during public comment, PennDOT is adhering to their regulations by removing signs placed within the cloverleaf public property.
- Fund raising opportunities are being reviewed by the Wyomissing Area School District for Delaney’s memorial garden in the park.
- The police department is running smoothly as the entry level police officer candidates complete the written and physical agility tests.
- Funding improvements for the new community garden area near the firehouse was reviewed and progressing forward with plans to open next spring.

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 7:28 p.m.

11. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Torielli noted the written and physical agility tests for entry level police officers that were conducted last Saturday. Results should become available later this week. Background investigations would commence in November to stay on track to begin the police academy in January. The new Parking Enforcement Officer will start next Monday and will train for a couple of weeks prior to being on his own. On October 1st all supervisors attended a webinar hosted by the International Chiefs of Police Association dealing with civil unrest, and protest events, both planned and unplanned to maintain public safety while maintaining constitutional rights. All officers are going through annual control tactics training.

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

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. He met with UGI Utilities, Inc. and their contractor regarding the recent Penn Avenue paving deficiencies. He also met with a representative of Telco, Inc. to review light poles and banners that have not been lit for quite some time.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **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 noted her attendance to the well-attended open house and thanked Chief Moyer for his efforts in communicating with area schools and hosting the event.

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

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer referred to his written report and did not have anything to add at this time. There were no questions or comments.

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

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF)** – Mr. Price offered to answer any questions regarding his report and provided the following highlights:

- The Fall Fest event had a record number of attendees on a beautiful weather day.
- The 2nd Friday event was well attended with ten acoustic musicians along the Avenue providing an eclectic feel.
- Small Business Saturday marketing is ramping up with sponsored billboards.
- Mr. Price intends to meet with the Borough Manager to coordinate efforts in applying for a Main Street Matters grant.
- Things are slowly getting back to normal on the Avenue now that UGI Utilities, Inc. has completed their project and repaved Penn Avenue.

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

12. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly spoke of a well-attended haunted house and hayride event last weekend. He thanked all the volunteers, the Recreation Commission and Public Works Department members that helped make this event a success. The pool was winterized today, and the tree lighting ceremony is the next planned event.

Ms. Drobnick thanked Mr. Esterly for his hard work creating the haunted house, and the hard-working Recreation Commission. The commission is currently creating a schedule of events for next year. A repeat community bike ride event will be hosted by Rides & Vibes on Saturday, October 26th to tour public art in the City of Reading.

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

Mr. Price departed the meeting at 7:38 p.m.

- b. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted continued work on zoning amendments this past month with focus on the sign ordinance.

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

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – The October Economic Development Committee meeting had been cancelled.
- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag shared highlights of discussions to add a dog waste station near the intersection of Pine Street and Third Avenue. Feedback has been requested from neighboring residents. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Kaag requested consideration of the following two action items:

- Trial Sidewalk Replacement Program – Mr. Moyer prepared a report depicting before and after images of the panels of sidewalk that were replaced where borough trees had been removed. The program improves pedestrian safety and was well received by residents. Mr. Kaag reported 41 sidewalk panels were replaced at ten different properties with a total material cost of \$4,500.

Motion to continue the trial borough tree damaged sidewalk repair program in 2025. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- Road Closure Policy – Mayor Kaag shared a policy that had been created and implemented while Sergeant Chad Marks was Officer in Charge to better communicate and coordinate street closures. It has been recommended to convert the policy into an ordinance for enforcement purposes.

Motion to request the solicitor to formalize the road closure policy into an ordinance. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Wert inquired about a timeline for the FastBridge Fiber installation. A timespan of early to mid-next year had been provided.

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

- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – Mr. Kaag encouraged Borough Council to approve an increase of \$10,000 to the Shade Tree Commission 2025 budget to maintain borough trees with a proactive approach. This will be discussed during an upcoming budget meeting. There were no questions or comments.

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

- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted review of a video on confined spaces, and the announcement of grant funding of roughly \$1,500 to purchase a magnetic manhole lifter and three eyewash stations.

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

- h. **Finance Committee** – Mr. Lineaweaver reported that a quorum was present of all four members to conduct a meeting this month. Mr. Lineaweaver was elected as the chairperson, Mr. Shaver was elected as the vice chairperson, and Mr. Miller was elected as the secretary. The Liquid Fuels Audit was reviewed as well as the current draft of the 2025 budget, and the 2025 Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO). Approval of the last meeting minutes from November 2019 is needed next month.

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

- i. **Pension Advisory Committee** – The committee met with representatives to review the police and non-uniform pension plans, both plans are doing well. Even with the slowing economy there were no fears of slipping into a recession. It was noted that state aid will be increasing 7.9% next year.

Motion to accept the Pension Advisory Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

13. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Transfer of Funds** – A request was made to transfer funds from the PLGIT Prime account to the M&T General Fund account.

Motion to transfer \$400,000 from the PLGIT Prime account to the M&T Bank General Fund account. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Financial Statement Ending 9/30/2024** – There were no questions or comments.

- c. **Payment Approval Report 9/18/24 to 10/11/24 and 10/12/24 to 10/15/24** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 9/30/2024, and Payment Approval Reports of 9/18/24 through 10/15/24. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

14. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers inquired about the land grant motion earlier this evening to replace acreage near the fire house. Mr. Miller reported that the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) located offsetting property in Chester County at no cost to the borough.

- 15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary