

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

**November 19, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.**

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, November 19, 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 Torielli (via Zoom); 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	Michael Witmyer, Resident
Justin Choate, Resident (via Zoom)	Robin Horman, Resident & Business Owner
Allison Shannon, Business Owner	Diane Price, Armed Forces Day Parade Chair
Lance Parmer, Fire Police (via Zoom)	Michael McLaughlin, Pickleball Association
Anthony Tucci, Western Berks Ambulance (via Zoom)	Melissa Dean, Mayor of Wernersville Borough
Andrew Bornaman, Wilson School District	Julia & Chris Trickett, Wilson School District
Rebekah Marconi, Wilson School District	Nathan Zielinski, Wilson School District
Tyler Rutt, Wilson School District	

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** An executive session was held at 6:30 p.m. tonight to discuss litigation and acquisition of real property.
3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** There were no amendments to the agenda.
4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Diane Price introduced herself as the volunteer Chair of the Berks County Armed Forces Advisory Committee that hosts the Armed Forces Day Parade each year. Certificates of Appreciation were presented to the Fire Chief, Police Chief, Mayor, and Public Works Director for their hospitality and cooperation efforts in preparing for and hosting the 76<sup>th</sup> annual parade earlier this year. Next year's event is planned for May 17, 2025, the appropriate paperwork will be submitted early next year.

Ms. Price departed the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Julia Trickett introduced herself as a member of the student-run Wilson High School Mini-THON club that is dedicated to raising money for the Four Diamonds Foundation in support of families affected by pediatric cancer. Ms. Trickett apologized for the short order of the request to the Pickleball Association and the Borough of West Reading to host a Mini-THON Pickleball Tournament this weekend. To address concerns raised by the borough Ms. Trickett assured Borough Council that the porta-potty facilities would remain sanitary, and the trash removed to avoid added costs or manpower needs. Two courts would remain accessible to the public. Eight courts have been reserved through the Pickleball Association on Sunday, November 24, 2024 between the hours of noon to 5:00 p.m. Borough Council did not have any questions or comments on the proposed event. Motion to approve the

Wilson Mini-THON Pickleball Tournament event on Sunday, November 24, 2024. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Members of the Wilson School District and Mr. McLaughlin departed the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

Melissa Dean, Mayor of the Borough of Wernersville introduced herself and spoke of the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) crisis. The obligation to provide these services falls to local government units, and she noted that six out of seventeen municipalities are funding their EMS in Berks County. West Reading Borough is funding housing for EMS but was also encouraged to consider a financial donation to Western Berks Ambulance to continue to provide services in the future. It was noted that Kutztown Ambulance closed their doors last summer. A per parcel tax in West Reading of \$45 would generate \$81,000 to assist in EMS operating costs. Mayor Dean intends to lobby for longer term legislative and regulatory solutions at the state level.

James Rogers provided an update to his research on Business Privilege Tax indicating that 178 delinquent accounts are being pursued by Berkheimer Tax Innovation. He noted that the borough budgeted \$260,000 in revenue for 2024 and has increased revenues to \$350,000 in 2025 now that a firm has been hired that pursues delinquent accounts.

On behalf of the businesses along Penn Avenue, Robin Horman formally invited everyone to Small Business Saturday on November 30, 2024. Additional activities are planned this year such as live music all day, a merchandise tent on North Sixth Avenue and a family fun zone on South Sixth Avenue.

Mrs. Horman and Ms. Shannon departed the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

Michael Witmyer expressed concerns about the multiple water main breaks, proposed increase to water rates, and the EPA requiring water service line replacements. Mr. Grassley indicated that ramifications of the water hammer phenomenon last July are still being found on areas of weak piping.

5. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve October 15, 2024 and November 2, 2024 meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

6. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Ordinance - Environmental Advisory Council Composition** – Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration to remove the Borough Manager as a member of this committee while increasing the number of residents from six to seven members.

Motion to authorize advertisement for the removal of the Borough Manager from the Environmental Advisory Council. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Resolution 2024-29 Police Pension Contribution** – Consideration was requested to approve the existing contributions by the Police Pension Plan members for the year 2025.

Motion to approve the existing 8% contributions by the Police Pension Plan members for the year 2025. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Resolution 2024-30 Main Street Matters Planning Grant Application** – Consideration of designating signatories of a grant application for a Penn Avenue Corridor Parking Study from Reading Avenue to Franklin Street between Third Avenue and Eighth Avenue.

Motion to designate the Council President and Borough Secretary as the signatories of a Main Street Matters Program Planning Grant Application from the Commonwealth Financing Authority for a Penn Avenue Corridor Parking Study. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Resolution 2024-31 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 an extension to the Proclamation of Local Disaster Emergency until the December 17, 2024 Borough Council meeting. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **Resolution 2024-32 Olive Street Water Main Replacement Grant Application** – Consideration of designating signatories of a grant application in the amount of \$465,225 for replacement of the Olive Street water main. Mr. Wert inquired as to funds to repave Olive Street. Ms. Stevens was confident that bids should be under budget affording the repaving of Olive Street.

Motion to designate the Council President and Borough Secretary as the signatories of a Local Share Account Statewide Program Grant to replace the water main on Olive Street from Elm Street to Buttonwood Street. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

## 7. CONSULTANTS' REPORT:

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker did not have anything new to report.

- b. **Engineer's Report** – Ms. Stevens reviewed the following items:

- **Green Light-Go Year 8 Traffic Signal Upgrades** – The notice to proceed has been issued for work to begin on Fifth Avenue and Museum Road traffic signals. The contractor is required to notify the hospital of construction activity due to lane closures.
- **Green Light-Go Year 9 Traffic Signal Upgrades** – This grant has been awarded without ADA improvements. The grant liaison has instructed the borough to apply for a Green Light-Go Year 10 pre-scoping application to include ADA improvements to the intersections of Seventh Avenue and Parkside Drive North, Seventh Avenue and Reading Avenue, Eighth Avenue and Hill Avenue and Reading Avenue. The grant application is due November 22, 2024.

Motion to authorize the submission of a Green Light-Go Year 10 pre-scoping application for ADA improvements in the amount of \$228,404 with a 20% match of \$57,101. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Ann Street Multi-Modal Grant** – This project has been completed and Forino has submitted Payment Application No. 1 in the amount of \$111,461.52. Ms. Stevens recommended Borough Council to approve the payment application with the potential to close out the project with a final payment application next month.

Motion to approve Payment Application No. 1 to Forino in the amount of \$111,461.52 for the Ann Street Multi-Modal curbing, sidewalk, and ADA improvements. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Phase II Environmental Assessment** – The Borough Manager is working with Systems Design Engineering to gather all proposals needed for professional services. Ms. Stevens requested an additional month to gather the best proposals for work to be performed at 433 Penn Avenue.

- **500 Block of Spruce Street Water Line Replacement** – This project has been completed and Payment Application No. 1 has been submitted in the amount of \$180,349.98. The close out and release of retainage is anticipated next month. Ms. Stevens intends to discuss with the grant liaison additional acceptable uses for grant funds that exceeded anticipated project costs including repavement of this block.

Motion to approve Payment Application No. 1 to Barrasso Excavation, Inc. in the amount of \$180,349.98 for the 500 Block Spruce Street Water Line Replacement project. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver 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:

- **Economic Development Committee** – A letter of interest has been received from Justin Choate to fill a vacancy on the Economic Development Committee. Mr. Choate thanked Borough Council for their consideration.

Motion to appoint Justin Choate to the Economic Development Committee. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Choate departed the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

- **433 Penn Avenue** – Mr. Miller requested consideration to award a contract to Hafer Equipment in the amount of \$19,400 to remove the underground tanks and fuel pumps. There were two proposals received, both of which were under the bidding threshold, Hafer Equipment was the lowest proposal. A thirty-day notice must be provided to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) prior to the start of work. Systems Design Engineering will be submitting a proposal at a later date for a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment to coordinate soil sampling efforts with tank removal.

Motion to enter a contract with Hafer Equipment to remove underground fuel tanks and pumps at 433 Penn Avenue not to exceed \$19,400. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Main Street Matters Business Capital Improvement Grant** – Mr. Miller requested to ratify his letter of support for the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation's application for the business capital improvement grant in the amount of \$100,000.

Motion to ratify a letter of support for the Main Street Matters Business Capital Improvement grant application submitted by the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Service Line Inventory Phase 2** – Entech Engineering assisted in the first phase of this project. The second phase would include a three-year contract to host the inventory database, a GIS dashboard and any remaining consulting/professional services billed on a time and expense basis. It was noted that the first contract with Entech Engineering was billed at time and

expense and came in below estimate. Should the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations or goals change in the coming year, it was thought that the Phase 2 contract could be renegotiated.

Motion to enter a Phase 2 Service Line Inventory contract with Entech Engineering to meet the continued requirements of the EPA's Lead and Copper Rule. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Tower Health Exemption Appeals** – Mr. Becker noted that a settlement has been reached between the school district and the hospital, therefore the appeal hearings have ended. A formal Borough Council consent was requested to discontinue exemption appeals against Tower Health.

Motion to provide written consent to the Wyomissing Area School District School Board to discontinue Exemption Appeals against Tower Health. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Trash & Recycling Hauler Bond** – Mr. Miller noted per the hauler's contract the ability to seek a reduction to their Performance Bond. A request has been received to decrease the bond amount from \$1,093,500 to \$729,000. The remaining contract spans two years with two possible one-year extensions. It was recommended that no further reductions be made until the final possible year of the contract.

Motion to decrease Hollenbaugh's Trash & Recycling LLC bond amount to \$729,000 based on the portion of the contract that has been fulfilled. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Ms. Stevens and Ms. Sherk departed the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

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

10. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Kaag reviewed her report noting the following:

- Continued efforts are being made towards streamlining the event permit process while advocating for a 30-day submission to ensure all applications are complete before Borough Council's review. These actions aim to improve efficiency and reduce last-minute challenges.
- A second Parking Enforcement Officer was sworn-in this past month.
- The Mayor attended and supported the West Reading Pumpkin Palooza, Grit & Grace ribbon cutting ceremony and demystifying politics.
- Collaborated with the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation and the Farmers' Market for planned street closures for the upcoming Small Business Saturday and expanded Farmers' Market events.
- The new community garden site was visited in preparation of relocating the shed. Community feedback is being gathered in preparation for the setup to begin next spring.
- Progress is being made on the park system projects that include the Veterans Memorial and Delaney's Memorial to honor those that have served and contribute to preserving our community's history.

- A five-year plan is being developed with the West Reading Police Department to establish clear goals and provide ongoing support for officers and administrative staff to remain well-resourced and effective.

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

11. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Tornielli referred to his written report and added that grant award notification has been received from the Mayors Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) in the amount of \$13,510 to offset the entry level police officer hiring and Act 120 training expenses. The entry level police officer oral interviews will be conducted later this week. The background investigators are nearing completion of their reviews. The Civil Service Commission will meet again on November 26<sup>th</sup> to certify the oral exam results, and again on December 17<sup>th</sup> to certify the background investigation and eligibility results. Conditional offers of employment should go out at that time.

Mr. Lineaweaver noted the superhuman dispatch response times this past month that were dispatched within 1.1 minutes of receipt, and the West Reading Police Department arrival on location in less than one minute of being dispatched.

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

Mr. Tucci departed the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. Due to short staffing during the month of December, Mr. Grassley requested consideration to reactivate one seasonal staff member. Funding of the additional seasonal staff member is available within the current budget.

Motion to reactivate a Public Works seasonal staff member for the month of December. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his written report and noted the annual Kiddie Christmas party scheduled on December 14<sup>th</sup> at the firehouse for children ages ten and under.

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

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer referred to his written report and noted that 416 Penn Avenue has recently changed ownership. An active permit has been issued to the Motor Club to install restrooms on the third floor to extend uses to that space. Also, the Italian American Club has reopened at 243 Chestnut Street after a commercial occupancy inspection.

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

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

- Met with new owners of the Motor Club today for a tour and noted their excitement to become involved in the community.
- The October Second Friday event had a pink theme in honor of breast cancer awareness month with acoustic musicians along the Avenue.
- The November Second Friday event was a kickoff to a month long can food drive for Hope Rescue Mission. There are over twenty businesses collecting food.
- On Veteran's Day roughly twelve business owners volunteered their time to the women's shelter by establishing a make-shift clothing store and donation location.
- Dates have been established for large events next year that would require the closing of Penn Avenue. The French Fry event in August would only require the closure of two blocks.
- Small Business Saturday plans are under way, live music and DJ's will be onsite throughout the day.

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

Mr. Price departed the meeting at 8:11 p.m.

## 12. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. He reviewed the following two action items:

- Commission Member Resignation – Member Rafael Torres no longer resides in the borough.

Motion to accept the resignation of Rafael Torres from the Recreation Commission. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony Road Closures – Partial road closures as practiced in the past were requested.

Motion to allow partial road closures of Delaney Circle, Reading Avenue, and Fifth Avenue for the Holiday Tree Lighting event on Friday, December 6, 2024 with a rain date of Monday, December 9, 2024. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Esterly reported that Aurora Lighting will be handling the lighting of the tree again this year. The Holiday Home Decorating Contest will take place December 20<sup>th</sup> through December 22<sup>nd</sup>. The grant-funded security camera has been installed at the firehouse providing additional security coverage to the park area. The pavilion has been winterized for the season, and the calendar of events is being established for next year with the potential for newly added events.

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

- b. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted the end of a long journey in reviewing draft zoning changes with the intent to seek approval to forward the proposed changes to the solicitor's office for review. Additional items produced from zoning discussions will be reviewed in the coming months such as civic spaces and pervious versus impervious coverages.

Motion to forward the draft zoning changes to the solicitor for review. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – The November Economic Development Committee meeting had been cancelled.
- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag shared highlights of the workshop discussions regarding placement of the shed at the new community garden area, the winterization efforts at the memorial garden and various neighborhood projects.

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

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – The November Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting had been cancelled.
- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – The November Shade Tree Commission meeting had been cancelled.
- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted review of a video on winter safety.

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 meeting was held last night to discuss the budgeting process that resulted in water and tax rate increases.

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

### 13. TREASURER'S REPORT:

- a. **Transfer of Funds** – A request was made to reinvest \$1,500,000 for a period of one year in a PLGIT Term account. Mrs. Rentschler noted that the rate is a bit lower now that interest rates are falling.

Motion to reinvest \$1,500,000 for 365 days in a PLGIT Term account. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Financial Statement Ending 10/31/2024** – There were no questions or comments.
- c. **Payment Approval Report 10/16/24 to 11/15/24 and 11/16/24 to 11/19/24** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 10/31/2024, and Payment Approval Reports of 10/16/24 through 11/19/24. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

### 14. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Rogers has been reviewing the borough and making lists of twenty potential parking spaces and numerous streetlight outages that have been shared with the Code Department.

Mr. Rogers shared information he found through a right-to-know request of expenses associated with the recent Fall Fest event where police officers paid in overtime rates were provided meals. It was thought that a lunch break should be taken and food purchased by the officer from the numerous vendors onsite. Mr. Lineaweaver indicated that most of those workers are contracted through a

Collective Bargaining Agreement. Mayor Kaag indicated that police officers are supplied with coupons to obtain free food from the vendors and possibly this was missed this year by the new Main Street Director. She will be sure to communicate with both the Chief of Police and Main Street Director to ensure coupons are provided for future events.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary