

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

MAY 14, 2025

The Borough of West Reading Traffic & Infrastructure Committee met on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chairman Christopher Lincoln; Council Member Patrick Kaag; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Borough Manager Randall Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

Visitors:

Karen Livingood, Resident (via Zoom)	James Rogers, Resident
Helen & Michael Witmyer, Residents	Christina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner
Mark Dougherty, Business Owner & West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation President	

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Lincoln at 6:02 p.m.

Public Comment

Mr. Rogers provided an additional list of recommended parking revisions, dated May 14, 2025. He indicated that he forgot to add two potential new parking spaces on Obold Street in the vicinity of the parking lot for school staff. Also, he recommended prohibiting parking within the 500 and 600 Blocks of Cherry Street and Boot Alley that would pose an infraction to the right-of-way. Mr. Rogers' question was confirmed as to the changes in enforcement on the municipal parking lot along Franklin Street of four hours between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with the allowance of overnight parking.

Mr. Dougherty requested consideration of creating paid parking along Penn Avenue with the ParkMobile system. It was noted that 80% of businesses are in favor of the notion and he indicated that employees and tenants park on Penn Avenue and move their cars every three hours. The implementation expense of installing two kiosks per block was noted. Chief Tornielli did not feel that additional enforcement officers would be needed noting that a plate reading system could ease any staffing strains. Mr. Lincoln recommended that the shopping center parking lot be less expensive than on-street parking. On-street parking would be established as a separate zone from the parking lot through the ParkMobile system. It was noted that this may cause an influx of Penn Avenue parking onto adjacent residential streets. Feedback from Borough Council was recommended to determine a course of action.

Mr. Dougherty made a request to install one or two handicapped parking spaces along or near Penn Avenue noting difficulties experienced by visitors to find a space to drop off a disabled individual. Mr. Lincoln noted a new policy that had been enacted to support requests along Penn Avenue that would be reviewed for possible placements.

Ms. Shenk shared requests coming from the business meeting for a police presence on the avenue and refraining from parking enforcement after 7:00 p.m. as opposed to 8:00 p.m. It was noted that parking after 5:00 p.m. would not be ticketed in a three-hour parking zone. Ms. Shenk also requested leniency on parking over the line violations from the bumper to the tire as had been practiced in the past. Chief Tornielli shared that the ordinance states the entire vehicle must be parked within stall lines and when a bumper extends over the line it causes a staggering effect and difficulty in knowing which vehicle started the offset parking. Chief Tornielli and Mayor Kaag spoke of past practices that did not follow the regulations properly and the intent moving forward to follow the established regulations. Ms. Shenk requested reconfiguration of the large stall lines to provide additional parking spaces. It was noted that residential streets were planned to be reconfigured to add an additional parking space per block, including the creation of compact vehicle parking spaces. Constraints along Penn Avenue, such as the flow of traffic may warrant larger stalls to allow vehicles to quickly move out of the line of traffic.

Mayor Kaag addressed the police presence comment indicating that this is being reviewed. Ms. Sherk shared a text she received from a private investigator that claimed to be working with the school district and one of West Reading's Criminal Investigators that claims there is a gang in West Reading. Chief Tornielli assured Ms. Sherk that the Criminal Investigators are not working on a gang case, and stated a private investigator would not be working on a criminal investigation. Ms. Sherk spoke of past practices of a police presence on Penn Avenue and officers that rode bicycles. Mayor Kaag spoke of reallocating resources that included a recommendation to the Reading Hospital to hire a security guard to limit the amount of time officers are needed at the hospital, she offered this as an option to the business community as well. While two officers are training the remaining staff have been addressing the needs of the borough. Ms. Sherk noted following a change in regime the loss of a police presence on Penn Avenue. Chief Tornielli reported that the Penn Avenue car program had been pulled before he took the position of Chief of Police. The facts are the department is down two police officers while they are in field training. Once they are trained the department will have the ability to augment patrols on the street. These are operational plans that are not shared with the public. The accusation of no presence on Penn Avenue can be disproved by the incident and activity heat maps that are driven by incident and officer-initiated data. Perception does not always match data but there is a false narrative being spread that the police do not pay attention to Penn Avenue. Ms. Sherk reported that the community does not feel safe. Chief Tornielli indicated that the crime statistics and data do not suggest a crime problem in West Reading. Mr. Lincoln stated that this discussion has veered away from Traffic and Infrastructure, Mr. Dougherty offered to create a platform for further discussion on this topic.

Mr. Dougherty departed the meeting at 6:37 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee minutes of April 9, 2025. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Chief Tornielli. **Motion carried 6-0.**

New Business

Residential Public Trash Container – A resident visited a recent Borough Council meeting expressing concerns of trash being deposited on his property potentially from nearby business patrons, it was noted that the resident was not in attendance of this meeting. The Code Department Officer shared regulations that prohibit garbage containers from being placed on a porch or front yard except for regularly scheduled trash collection activity. Mr. Grassley noted a history of public garbage container placements being abused and ultimately were removed a number of years ago. The Code Department Officer expressed concern about an exception being made in this instance, that would negate the ability to enforce regulations borough wide. Mr. Lincoln indicated that trash ends up on his property too that he must clean up and is a part of living in an urban neighborhood. Chief Tornielli offered to communicate with the Code Department to determine if things have improved for this resident since his talk with the owner of one of the neighboring businesses.

Handicapped Parking Space Requests – Mr. Lincoln noted the recent adoption of a business district policy that allows one handicapped space designation per block that would not preclude the number of maximum residential designations. An application received from a business located in the 700 block of Penn Avenue was requested to accommodate clientele with mobility issues. The second space west of Seventh Avenue was requested. It was noted that there are currently no handicapped parking space designations within this block. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve a business district handicapped parking space designation in front of 705 Penn Avenue, second space west of Seventh Avenue, on the north side. **Moved** by Mr. Grassley and seconded by Chief Tornielli. **Motion carried 6-0.**

A residential application was received for a handicapped parking space to be located in the 200 block of Chestnut Street. Per the policy, there are three allowable spaces within this block, this would be the first designation. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve a residential handicapped parking space to be designated in front of 208 Chestnut Street, the second space west of Second Avenue, on the south side. **Moved** by Chief Tornielli and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

An additional residential application was received for a handicapped parking space to be located in the 500 block of Chestnut Street. Per the policy, there are three allowable spaces within this block, this would be the first designation. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve a residential handicapped parking space to be designated in front of 551 Chestnut Street, the second space east of Sixth Avenue, on the north side. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Grassley. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Old Business

Wayne Avenue and Lakeview Drive Intersection – Mr. Lincoln recapped recommendations from an intersection study performed by the Pennsylvania Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) that was requested following two crashes, including a rollover within the past year. The intersection does not meet the criteria for a four-way stop but instead recommended improving the line-of-sight distance by removing trees and parking spaces. Mr. Grassley offered to trim the Zelkova trees in question and noted plans for the Bartlett Tree Expert Company to evaluate the condition of the trees for the tree inventory in the near future; however, it was thought that the trunk of the tree is causing line-of-sight issues. Mr. Grassley indicated that if you stop at the stop bar while heading eastbound the line of sight is clear. Chief Tornielli noted that both crashes last year were caused by eastbound traffic and will provide crash data for the last two years since the LTAP report evaluates the five-year span of 2019 through 2023 that referenced two reportable crashes. This topic will be revisited next month.

433 Penn Avenue – A request has been received from a neighboring business to locate a dumpster within the proposed parking lot area, either behind their property or within the 433 Penn Avenue lot to ease space constraints for a multi-unit property with two businesses. Other options such as extending the sidewalk area into Court Street or vacating the street entirely were discussed. Chief Tornielli was in support of closing the roadway to eliminate illegal left turns onto Fifth Avenue, it was noted that there are no driveways or garage access along this section of Court Street. Space constraints were an issue on the 433 Penn Avenue lot. An easement agreement would be required and could spur additional similar requests that could be problematic. A decision could not be made until temporary plans have been established for the lot.

Mr. Miller provided a rough-to-scale drawing of parking lot plans that would have access from Tulpehocken Avenue near Penn Avenue with a flow of traffic out onto Court Street. The other access ramps would be removed, which will add a number of on-street parking spaces along Tulpehocken and Penn Avenues. A recommendation was made to create paid parking through the ParkMobile system as a separate zone with a rate similar to the shopping center. Mr. Grassley will look into the ability to hardwire the kiosk that is being removed from the Shopping Center lot that is in need of a new costly solar battery. Validation of parking was discussed as an option for restaurants as well as business rental of parking spaces for employee use, though the main purpose of the lot is to provide a viable parking

option for visitors. Mr. Lincoln is in favor of developing the lot into temporary parking spaces and recommended that the engineer provide a layout of the concept and recommended attention be given to site distances to access Tulpehocken Avenue.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to explore temporary parking on 433 Penn Avenue with the stipulation that the Borough Engineer fully design the layout of parking and flow of traffic. **Moved** by Mr. Grassley and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Towing Contract – Chief Torielli shared concerns expressed by officers of the current towing contractor that related to crash cleanup efforts and delayed response times. Chief Torielli’s main concern is the cost and convenience to residents. It was thought that negotiating rates with one towing and storage contractor was preferred to limit confusion. Chief Torielli plans to gather information to bring to the committee next month for consideration. It was noted that the towing and storage fee schedule should be established each year within the borough’s fee schedule.

Motorcycle / Compact Car Parking – Mr. Lincoln noted a previous discussion that pertained to the reduced parking stall length of seventeen feet for compact cars and a request to add a provision that would prohibit a motorcycle and car from sharing a parking space. The reference to a vehicle not permitted to share a parking space with a motorcycle was recommended to be revised for clarification purposes. As defined in the Vehicle Code, the broad definition of passenger cars was recommended.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve the supplement to Section 430-20 Vehicles to be parked within marked spaces and in same direction as flow of traffic to provide for motorcycle and compact vehicles to be parked in the borough. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Grassley.

Motion carried 6-0.

Delaney Circle Update – Mr. Grassley shared that the Delaney Memorial has been moved from the traffic circle to the park area, and landscaping was installed by New Castle Lawn & Landscape in time for the Fashionista 5K event that was held last weekend. Payment for New Castle Lawn & Landscape services will be addressed in the future. The family seemed pleased with the new location that is more visible and accessible to the public. Ms. Shenk asked if the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony would be moved. It was noted that the crosswalk through the circle and sidewalk within the grassy area of the circle will be removed to improve pedestrian safety prior to repaving and restriping later this year. The Tree Lighting event will remain in the circle that is safer to access when portions of the circle are closed to traffic.

Public Comment

Mr. Rogers recommended that additional parking spaces be added to the 500 block of Chestnut Street now that one of the spaces will be converted into a handicapped parking space.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m. by Chief Torielli and seconded by Mr. Kaag.

Motion carried 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary