

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

August 14, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held a special meeting and zoning amendment hearing at the West Reading Fire Department on Thursday, August 14, 2025 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Members Zanna Leiendecker, Denise Drobnick, and Zachary Shaver; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Zoning Officer Chad Moyer; Planning Commission Members Daniel Horman and Cody Rhoads; Borough Manager Randall Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Member Bethany Bower was unable to attend.

VISITORS:

James Rogers, Resident	Suzanne Thompson, Resident
Jean Witmer, Resident	Karen Livingood, Resident
Robin Horman, Resident & Business Owner	Samuel Goldberg, Resident
Mark Shearer, Resident & Business Owner	Nathaniel Spang, Resident
Brett Rottmann, Resident	Mark Evans, Derck & Edson
Bruce Albrecht, Property & Business Owner	Thomas Trainer, Business Owner
Charles Aden, Resident	Doug McClatchie, Property & Business Owner
Ashley Dietrich, Property & Business Owner	Ralph Rosenbaum, Property & Business Owner
Christina Shenk, Property & Business Owner	Michael Clark, Resident
Ralph Nunez, Property Owner	Joel Snyder, Property & Business Owner
Jennifer Inners, Property & Business Owner	Christopher Griffith, Business Owner
Deion Adams, Business Owner	Vincente Gonzalez, Resident
Joseph Berardi, Resident	Christopher Wary, Resident

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** There were no amendments to the agenda.
3. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no public comments.
4. **ZONING AMENDMENT HEARING:**
Mr. Becker entered the following procedural exhibits associated with the public hearing:
 1. Copy of proposed ordinance and map amendments.
 2. Berks County Planning Commission comment letter dated July 7, 2025.
 3. Borough of West Reading Planning Commission minutes recommending Borough Council to schedule a hearing to adopt the proposed zoning amendments, dated May 7, 2025.
 4. Hearing notice of intent to enact comprehensive amendments to the zoning ordinance and map in West Reading.
 5. Proposed ordinance amendment delivered to the Law Library on July 10, 2025.
 6. Notice of public hearing submitted to the Reading Eagle on July 10, 2025.
 7. Proof of advertisement of the hearing on July 30, 2025, and August 6, 2025.
 8. Affidavit of publication in the Reading Eagle dated August 6, 2025.
 9. Affidavit of posting the notice at Borough Hall and the borough website on August 1, 2025.
 10. Affidavit of posting the notice throughout the borough on August 1, 2025, including a map of postings.

11. A current version of the zoning ordinance.

There were no questions regarding the exhibits. The exhibits were moved into evidence.

Mr. Moyer provided an overview of the proposed zoning amendments, noting the following:

- The creation of a Downtown Overlay District that encompasses the commercial districts north of Spruce Street but not including any residential districts.
- The Downtown Overlay District creates six frontage types, requires civic spaces for redevelopment larger than 10,000 square feet, and establishes a Retail Overlay and Office Frontage Overlay that dictates permitted uses in the first twenty feet of the structures first floor.
- Removal of the General Business District Overlay from the 300 and 700 blocks of Penn Avenue.
- A new Gateway District that encompasses Buttonwood Street properties and rezones portions of the existing Light Industrial and Institutional Districts.
- Rezoning the southside of the 700 block of Reading Avenue from General Business District to Central Business District, opening these parcels to new uses and eliminating the need for additional off-street parking for new businesses on the first floor of structures.
- Modifications to the sign ordinance for ease in determining which signs are permitted. Various sign regulation changes were made to better align with the comprehensive plan.
- Changes were made to remove commercial uses from individual districts and place them in an easy-to-ready table. Various use changes were made to include previously undefined uses and to ensure that uses are best aligned with the districts that they are located with adequate approval process for uses that may have an increased impact on the surrounding community.
- Off-street parking requirements were adjusted throughout all districts. The new regulations focus on factors like duration of stay at restaurants, number of bedrooms in residential properties, and square footage of commercial properties to better align requirements with current parking standards.
- Renumbering of the existing zoning ordinance to create space for new sections and better continuity throughout the ordinance.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Goldberg of 103 N. Third Avenue read aloud a prepared comment and asked that Borough Council not interject during his comment. He noted that his family chose to live in West Reading based on the walkability of the town and noted the ability to walk or bicycle anywhere in the borough within fifteen minutes. He expressed a fear of increased expenses associated with redevelopment and population increase that will cause the need for increased parking amenities that landowners are not required to provide. As a result, he foresees the need to implement paid or permit parking regulations. Mr. Goldberg recommended disallowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) and recommended provisions that would allow for a grocery store in the borough. Questions arose regarding civic space access and maintenance as well as the allowed height of structures that may tower over surrounding homes. Mr. Goldberg thanked Borough Council for listening to his comments.

Mr. Spang of 310 Reading Avenue noted that change is always scary. He was unsure of the objective to these amendments, and thought that an increase in tax base might be the reason.

Mr. Wert indicated that tax base was not part of the discussions that took place over the course of two years. He noted that twenty-five years ago the borough decided to invest in the main street area which was scary. This ordinance levers the natural strengths of the borough with the incorporation of form-based codes to regulate redevelopment in our community. He encouraged everyone to join the public Planning Commission meetings that are held on the first Wednesday of the month at Borough Hall.

Mr. Spang agreed with Mr. Goldberg's concerns regarding ADUs potentially becoming short-term rentals and the height of buildings. Mr. Moyer noted that the maximum height of buildings in the Central Business District remain unchanged at sixty-five feet, the caveat is the implementation of a step back of ten feet at an elevation above forty-five feet. Mr. Moyer read the definition of ADU and stated the permitted use would be allowed in the Central and General Business Districts, and the Residential Professional District. ADU specifications limit the height of a structure to twenty feet while maintaining the frontage type setbacks. Mr. Spang expressed concern about the need for increased parking and flow of traffic through the Gateway District. Ms. Leiendecker noted that zoning amendments may be needed following PennDOT improvements to the bypass and potential passenger railway. Mr. Spang stated that he prefers the quirky Penn Avenue structures. Mr. Wert noted the ability to create a historic district and encouraged those conversations.

Mr. Adams of 416 Reading Avenue represented Morris Pace Personal Care Home, which is currently owned by his father. He noted an expansion to Lebanon and plans to renovate the West Reading facility in the next four to five years. Mr. Adams respectfully requested to protect their ability to continue operating as a personal care home.

Mr. Shearer of 727 Penn Avenue has resided at this location for twenty-five years noting that it was a subdued block that has evolved into oversized trash containers. Mr. Shearer was concerned that the new regulations may allow conditions to worsen.

Mrs. Dietrich of 732 Penn Avenue asked not to be zoned out as an auto repair business at this location. She asked if the business or property would be sold could this use be allowed to continue, as well as the first and second floor residential uses at 730 Penn Avenue. Mr. Moyer stated any use or structure that is currently permitted would be classified as a non-conforming use or structure. The property or business could be sold and continue to operate. Caveats to that include a pause in operation of one year or more that could threaten the non-conforming status or an expansion to the structure, which may not exceed twenty-five percent of the existing area, that would require a special exception hearing. Mr. Moyer also noted that rebuilding from fire or natural disaster could be reestablished as a non-conforming use within one year.

Ms. Witmer of 388 Oak Terrace requested that the parking issue be tackled first and recommended building a parking garage.

Mr. Rottmann of 500 Penn Avenue promotes development and growth but expressed concern about the non-conforming classification introducing financial hardships. Clarification was requested on the fee in lieu of civic space for projects that exceed allowable impervious coverages. Mr. Moyer indicated that the fee has not yet been established and once it has been established it will be set by a resolution. The civic space fee would be used by the borough to create a community civic space.

Ms. Sherk of 400 Penn Avenue questioned how and when the civic space fees will be established. Mr. Lineaweaver explained the ordinance versus resolution process and the requirement to discuss changes in a public meeting prior to adoption. Mr. Moyer shared that if your parcel currently exceeds 10,000 square feet you would not be required to create a civic space. However, redevelopment plans exceeding 10,000 square feet would trigger regulations for civic spaces. Ms. Sherk requested clarification on parking requirements. Mr. Evans noted assistance from Walker Parking consultants that recalibrated requirements that reflect today's norms or demands with sensitivity to allow the borough to remain walkable.

Mr. Rogers of 414 Reading Avenue questioned the ability of large gas stations or convenience stores to locate on Penn or Reading Avenues. Mr. Wert confirmed that this would only be an allowable use in the Light Industrial District. Mr. Evans shared that building frontages must be met along the street with glass, blank walls would not be allowed.

Mr. Trainer of 340 Buttonwood Street noted that in 1998 Mailroom Systems was approved as a mail processing and courier service center and inquired as to the ability to continue to conduct this type of business at this location and wondered if there would be a change in tax rates. Mr. Moyer indicated that the business could continue to operate as it is in the current use, and tax rates would be based on the milage set for the borough.

Mr. Nunez of 615 Reading Avenue commended the board for a job well done on the proposed zoning amendments. He believes that the parking issues will take care of themselves.

A motion was made to recess into an executive session at 7:08 p.m. to deliberate a decision. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

A motion was made to reconvene the public hearing and adjourn the public hearing at 7:21 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

A motion was made to reconvene the special meeting at 7:21 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to adopt amendments to the zoning ordinance as presented. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mayor Kaag thanked Borough Council and the Planning Commission for their dedication the past two years and for members of the community sharing their thoughts.

Mr. Lineaweaver encouraged residents to join the public meetings that help shape policy.

6. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 p.m. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary