

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

September 16, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, September 16, 2025 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Members Denise Drobnick, Bethany Bower, and Zanna Leiendecker; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Solicitor Joan London; Sergeant Wayne Holben; Code Department Manager & Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Recreation Director Michael Esterly; Main Street Executive Director Nick Price; Engineer Pamela Stevens; Borough Manager Randall Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Member Zachary Shaver was unable to attend.

VISITORS:

James Rogers, Resident

Christina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner

Anthony Verrecchio, Resident

Helen Moyer, Resident

John Jablowski, M&T Bank (via Zoom)

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 this past month.
3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** An amendment to the agenda was requested to also include a conversation on applying for a Local Share Account (LSA) grant to design and build a parking garage at Sixth and Reading Avenues under the Borough Manager's report. Moved by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**
4. **PRESENTATION:** Mr. Jablowski encouraged Borough Council to take advantage of an automated investment sweep service that links the borough's government checking account with an investment sweep. Each business day, any positive collected funds that exist in excess of the target balance would automatically be invested in either a US Treasury or US Government money market fund. It was thought that proceeds would outweigh costs and could earn an additional \$1,500 per month; the current rate is 3.8%. Mr. Miller noted that his previous employer took advantage of this program and benefited from it. Rates will fluctuate; it was said that the forecast indicates rates will continue to decrease. Mayor Kaag recommended that the Finance Committee review this program to make a recommendation to Borough Council. Bond investments are sound but could fluctuate in a downward motion. A decision to end the program could be achieved via an email from the Borough Manager. Mr. Jablowski was requested to attend the Finance Committee meeting in October to answer any questions the committee members may have.

Mr. Jablowski departed the meeting at 7:18 p.m.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Verrecchio provided an update on the excessive noise emanating from the Italian-American Club located across the street from his home on Chestnut Street, noting that Chief Tornielli got him in touch with the Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement. A noise log had been shared with

his neighbors. Mr. Verrecchio indicated that the noise has decreased and that he will continue to monitor the situation until it is resolved.

Mr. Verrecchio departed the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Mr. Rogers provided an update on Business Privilege Tax collection efforts by Berkheimer, noting a total of 764 accounts and 337 that remain on the delinquent list. He named a few of the delinquent business accounts.

6. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve August 19, 2025, regular meeting minutes. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

7. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Resolution 2025-25 Civil Service Commission Alternate Member** – A letter of interest was received to fill the alternate member vacancy.

Motion to appoint Kevin Hefty as an Alternate Member of the Civil Service Commission. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Resolution 2025-26 Fee Schedule Amendment** – This amendment would add fees for meeting room use and concrete barricades for special events. The cost of cones would be lowered, a service rate for Parking Enforcement Officer would be added, and the service rates for Administration and Public Works would be adjusted.

Motion to approve the noted amendments to the fee schedule. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Ordinance – Vehicles and Traffic Amendment** – An authorization to advertise was requested to remove the first parking space on the west side of Lakeview Drive north of Wayne Avenue, and the removal of the two-hour parking restriction on the east side of the 000 block of South Second Avenue. In addition to amending handicapped parking space designations in the 200 and 500 blocks of Chestnut Street, adding a handicapped parking space on the north side of Wayne Avenue nearest Lakeview Drive, and amending the payment of ticketing fines to 72 hours.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of noted amendments to the Vehicles and Traffic Chapter. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

8. **CONSULTANTS' REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Ms. London indicated that there was nothing new to report that is not otherwise covered on the agenda.

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

- **DCED Green Light-Go Year 8 Grant – Fifth Avenue and Museum Road Corridor** – Final Payment Application No. 4 has been received for \$20,248.49, which reflects the release of retainage.

Motion to approve Final Payment Application No. 4 to C.M. High, Inc. for the Green Light-Go Year 8 project for \$20,248.49. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **2025 Road Projects**

- **Contract B Ann Street** – A compensating change order was received providing a credit of \$8,007.81 for a revised total contract amount of \$25,972.79. A final payment application was received in the amount of \$25,972.79. Approval is recommended, subject to receipt of all required closeout paperwork.

Motion to approve Contract B Ann Street Compensating Change Order No. 1 for \$8,007.81 to Ronnie Folk Paving, Inc. for a revised total contract amount of \$25,972.79. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to approve Contract B Ann Street Final Payment Application No. 1 for \$25,972.79 to Ronnie Folk Paving, Inc., conditioned upon receipt of all required closeout documentation. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **Contract C Spruce Street** – A compensating change order was received providing a credit of \$7,815.80 for a revised total contract amount of \$50,097.25. A final payment application was received for \$50,097.25. Approval is recommended, subject to receipt of all required closeout paperwork.

Motion to approve Contract C Spruce Street Compensating Change Order No. 1 for \$7,815.80 to Ronnie Folk, Paving, Inc., for a revised contract amount of \$50,097.25. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to approve Contract C Spruce Street Final Payment Application No. 1 for \$50,097.25 to Ronnie Folk Paving, Inc., conditioned upon receipt of all required closeout documentation. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **Important Dates** – Ms. Stevens provided a reminder as to the approaching expiration date of September 17th for the maintenance period of the security camera project on Penn Avenue and the Police Department.
- **Tank Closure Report** – Ms. Stevens noted the inclusion of the 433 Penn Avenue tank closure report as a reference for Borough Council.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

Mr. Lineaweaver spoke of his trip to State College last week to meet with the 2026 Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB) Conference Committee and plans for a more positive presentation on the work that council members undertake to alleviate financial burdens. He also plans to attend the fall conference at State College.

Motion to accept the Council President's report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

Mr. Miller reviewed the following:

- **Business Privilege Tax Collector (BPT)** – Mr. Miller noted the approaching automatic three-year renewal of an agreement with Berkheimer to collect BPT. The few clients of Berks Earned Income Tax (EIT) were queried for their experience with Berks EIT. Even though Berks EIT is working to collect delinquent accounts, the amount collected has been minuscule in comparison to what Berkheimer has collected for West Reading Borough. It was recommended that the contract with Berkheimer be extended for another three years.

Motion to approve a three-year renewal of an agreement with Berkheimer as the Business Privilege Tax Collector. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick.
Motion carried 6-0.

- **Parking Garage Grant Application(s)** – Mr. Miller spoke of an opportunity that recently became available through the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) to build a parking garage with grant funding. The grant requires that a line item be included in the Governor's budget for the municipality. West Reading Borough has a line item within the Governor's budget of \$10 million for redevelopment assistance of this nature. Berks County has \$19 million available, and the Redevelopment Authority has \$5 million available. The shopping center parcel, owned by a single owner, is devoid of storefronts. The owner has attempted, on three occasions, to redevelop this property into a mixed-use, residential, commercial development. Businesses would front Penn Avenue with three stories of residential use above. The off-street parking requirements of 250 parking spaces have proven to be cost-prohibitive. It was noted that the cost per parking space is roughly \$43,000. An on-site meeting with the offices of the State Representative and Senator is planned for later this week. It was noted that an RACP grant would require a 50% match, which the Borough, the property owner, or a consortium of developers and private investors could be responsible for bearing. The first step is applying for grant funding. The cost estimate to build a garage, based on the footprint and number of parking spaces, is \$12,700,000. Mr. Miller recommended applying for \$6 million in grant funding. The long-term benefits of this project would include 108 additional residential units and increased tax revenues. A recommendation has been made by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to seek the maximum amount through a state-wide Local Share Account (LSA) grant application of \$1 million because there are aspects of the RACP grant that will not be covered, such as solar panels, electric charging stations, or civic spaces. The LSA grant cannot be used as the match. The RACP grant application deadline is September 23rd.

Mr. Wert noted previous attempts to redevelop the property through Tax Increment Financing (TIF) that would have been privately owned. The borough's efforts to fund the development of a parking garage would require negotiations with the property owner to create public access.

Motion to approve applications for grant funding through the RACP and LSA programs to design and build a parking garage at Sixth and Reading Avenues. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **Sweep Account** – This topic is tabled for review by the Finance Committee.
- **Active Transportation Planning Grant Award** – Mr. Miller noted the process of the WalkWorks capacity planning grant, where we applied for and received a grant of \$33,000. The intent is to concentrate on “Safe Routes to School”. A Request for Proposal (RFP) resulted in one proposal that could meet the required deadlines. Bowman, an associate of Derck & Edson, provided a proposal for \$43,890. The scope of work could be modified to align consultants' fees with grant funding.

Motion to accept the proposal from Bowman to incorporate the five major crossings on Penn Avenue and Delaney Circle, not to exceed \$43,890. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Borough Manager’s report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Ms. Stevens departed the meeting at 7:57 p.m.

11. **MAYOR’S REPORT:**

Mayor Kaag referred to her report and noted her attendance at the Second Friday event, where two new businesses were welcomed to the community. On August 28th, the first Community Connect Tent Series event took place, which was well attended. Mayor Kaag plans to take part in the Voices of Leadership Shaping Local Government panel in Erie on October 3rd, representing West Reading. Department photos are being updated, and the two new officers will be introduced next month.

Motion to accept the Mayor’s report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

12. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Sergeant Holben highlighted department activities such as 453 calls for service, 699 officer-initiated activities, and 46 foot patrols. The well-attended French Fry Festival had no reportable incidents. Feedback from residents was requested at the Community Connect Tent Series to initiate follow-ups to resident concerns. Upgrades are underway to the Report Management System (RMS), which is expected to be fully deployed in November. Policy updates are being drafted to regulate the use of artificial intelligence in law enforcement and to document better when de-escalation techniques were used to resolve incidents.

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley offered to answer any questions about his report and referred to two action items:

- **Municipal Recycling Program Grant Funding** – Options to utilize grant funds that will expire in three months are being explored. Options available for purchasing a dump truck were either unavailable or too costly. The purchase of a skid loader and/or recycling bins is being reviewed by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The purchase price of a skid loader is \$80,000, with a trade-in value of the 20-year-old skid loader of \$13,000. Grant funding could fund 50 to 70% of the remaining balance. Funds could be used from the existing budget to fund the remaining balance.

Permission was requested to potentially purchase a skid loader with Municipal Recycling Program grant funding from DEP. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **Part-Time Laborer** – Mr. Grassley requested consideration of hiring a part-time laborer through November to assist with sidewalk replacements. This year, Public Works handled several additional projects, including I-beam work at the pool, the installation of streetlights on Penn Avenue, gas station improvements such as paving the parking lot and replacing sidewalk panels, tree removal, and painting of Delaney Circle. Funds are available within the budget.

Authorization to advertise, interview, and hire a part-time laborer for the period through November to assist with concrete sidewalk improvements. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his written report and added that the week of October 6th is fire prevention week and reminded everyone to check the batteries in their smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. He also noted the annual open house at the fire department on Wednesday, October 8th, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer referred to his report and drew attention to the skill games ordinance. Hamburg Borough recently adopted an ordinance that requires an annual permit to be issued each year for each Game of Skill Device. The borough currently has an amusement ordinance that focuses primarily on pinball machines, video games, and coin-operated electronic bowling machines, and not on Games of Skill Devices. Mr. Moyer is in the process of drafting an ordinance amendment that focuses on Games of Skill Devices. Mr. Becker is reviewing an amusement tax. The initial draft of changes to the Nuisance ordinance for Quality of Life violations is under review by the Planning Commission.

Consideration was requested to ratify the Zoning Officer's decision to revoke Zoning Permit #23-0076 issued to Prime Tobacco Zone due to the business allegedly engaging in the illegal sale of drugs and associated illegal activity, and approval for the Zoning Officer to institute appropriate actions or proceedings to prevent the business from conducting further unlawful acts. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – Mr. Price provided the following highlights from his report:

- Fall Fest is this Saturday, and preparations are underway.
- The French Fry Festival was successful with over 18,000 people in attendance. Once all numbers have been received, a check will be presented to the Recreation Department. There is room to grow this event by closing another block if Borough Council so chooses.
- The Second Friday events have been successful this year. There have been more promotions and more businesses staying open later.
- The new Local Love night on the third Thursday of the month is geared towards retail establishments, while the Second Friday events are geared towards restaurants. The October Local Love event will include College Night.

Motion to accept the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Price departed the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

13. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly reported the Pups at the Pool event closed out the pool season, raising \$145 for the Humane Society. It was a rainy, cool summer with good, innovative staff. Upcoming events included the Haunted House and Hayride Weekend on October 10-11, Dungeons & Dragons Night at the Bicentennial House on November 25, and the Tree Lighting Event on December 5. It was noted that Bicentennial House rentals are going strong, and the field was rented more than usual this past summer. Ms. Drobnick stated that the Karaoke Battle took place over Labor Day Weekend with a great show of community support. The event raised \$1,900, a record breaker so far. The battle with Muhlenberg Township has been postponed while the details are being worked out to ensure a successful event.

Motion to accept the Recreation Director's report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted review of impervious coverage, stormwater, and civic space design standards with consultants from Derck & Edson, Systems Design Engineering, and Johnson Environmental. Additional research is needed, as well as possible amendments to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. Innovative regulations are being discussed to meet increasingly stringent restrictions.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – The September Economic Development Committee meeting was canceled.

- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag referred to the August minutes and shared plans for a Fall Borough Cleanup event on September 21st from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., meeting at the pavilion. On the following weekend, September 28th, a free market will be held at the pavilion from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Lineaweaver spoke about Artificial Intelligence Data Centers and expressed concern that the Western Berks Water Authority has not addressed the significant amounts of water required for cooling purposes. It may be prudent for us to ensure they address concerns about local water supplies.

Motion to accept the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Kaag referred to the minutes and noted a discussion about the installation of another mid-block crosswalk near the Doctor's Office Building, and regulations on Low-Speed Micromobility Vehicles. Safety concerns for pedestrians crossing the Third and Penn Avenue intersection were discussed. Mayor Kaag reported that a petition for a safer and quieter Penn Avenue had been submitted, which encouraged the borough to prioritize enforcement of existing speed limits and traffic instructions on Penn Avenue between Route 422 and Fourth Avenue, as well as promote enhanced pedestrian visibility and safety in this area. She assured Borough Council that this is the most monitored crosswalk in the borough and that there is a need to balance efforts across the borough. A recommendation from the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) was to remove the crosswalks, although residents expressed safety concerns and requested that the crosswalks remain. Alternative options are being reviewed for the challenging elevation that causes line-of-sight issues. The committee discussed the removal of the eastbound crosswalk. It was recommended that pedestrians cross at the intersection of Fourth and Penn Avenue.

Mr. Grassley spoke of the towing contract discussions that took place partially while he stepped out to meet with the paving contractor. He understands that only two contracts were considered due to the availability of a wrecker and suggested considering the cost of services to residents, rather than the rare occasion when a wrecker is needed. Mayor Kaag recommended that all three quotes be presented at next month's meeting for the committee's consideration. Chief Moyer noted the risk of secondary incidents that could occur while waiting for a tow truck or wrecker.

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – The September Shade Tree Commission meeting was canceled.
- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted a visit from Assured Partners to provide the yearly required safety committee training. The topics of discussion were the purpose and function of the Safety Committee, hazard identification and inspection, accident investigation, and substance abuse awareness. Also, a free flu shot clinic is scheduled in October.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Ms. Shenk departed the meeting at 8:38 p.m.

h. **Finance Committee** – The September Finance Committee meeting was canceled.

14. **TREASURER’S REPORT:**

a. **Transfer of Funds** – Consideration was requested for approving the transfer of \$800,000 from PLGIT Prime to the M&T General Fund account. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

b. **2026 Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) Pension Plan** – Mrs. Rentschler reported that only one choice was provided for the police pension plan of \$543,580. Mrs. Rentschler noted a pension plan meeting that is scheduled for Monday, October 20th at 3:30 p.m. with representatives from PSAB, Thomas Anderson, and Morgan Stanley. The frozen non-uniform pension plan funding adjustment is \$107,215. However, the MMO is \$0. The Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System (PMRS) MMO is \$81,032.00. There are no choices to be made; only approval of the MMOs is required.

Motion to approve the MMO 2026 budget for Uniform and Non-Uniform Pension plans. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

c. **Financial Statement Ending 8/31/2025** – There were no questions or comments.

d. **Payment Approval Report 8/20/25 to 9/12/25 and 9/13/25 to 9/16/25** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 8/31/2025, and Payment Approval Reports of 8/20/25 through 9/16/25. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Treasurer’s report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

15. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers inquired about a tree stump near his home for almost a year. Mr. Grassley indicated that the stump will be ground out during this year’s sidewalk replacement project. He also noted a right-to-know request for paid business privilege licensing names and addresses that returned minimal information. He was disheartened that he could receive a list of unpaid property taxes; however, he could not receive a list of paid business privilege licenses. Ms. London indicated that the business license is tied to earnings, but property taxes are not.

16. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary