

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

September 23, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its second monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Member Denise Drobnick; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Chief of Police Richard Torielli; Code Department Manager and Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Assistant Treasurer Helen Moyer; Recreation Director Michael Esterly; Borough Manager Randall Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Members Zachary Shaver, Zanna Leiendecker, Bethany Bower, and Mayor Samantha Kaag were unable to attend.

VISITORS:

James Rogers, Resident (arrived at 6:51 p.m.)
Ketty Christian, Resident

Karen Livingood, Resident
Suzanne Thompson, Resident (arrived at 6:51 p.m.)

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Ms. Christian shared her concerns regarding reckless motorized bicycle or scooter use on sidewalks and streets and the safety of pedestrians. Near-miss incidents have happened on a few recent occasions. She also shared parking difficulties that her mother experienced, who has mobility issues, while living on North Sixth Avenue. Chief Torielli noted recent guidance provided by PennDOT to govern the use of motorized vehicles and a review of the bicycle regulations to incorporate where these types of vehicles can be used. He noted that only Segways or bicycles, if the operator is under 10 years of age, may be ridden on sidewalks. Educational information will be provided to residents, and Ms. Christian has offered to assist in notifying the public. Chief Torielli requested that her mother visit the police department to determine if an application for a handicapped parking space may be an option for her.
3. **RESOLUTION 2025-27 ELECTRONIC REAL ESTATE TAX PAYMENTS:**
The ability to implement online tax collection services in accordance with the terms of the contract between the Berks County Treasurer’s office and AllPaid was considered. There would be no cost to the Borough for this service; the end user would be assessed a 3.25% processing fee.

Motion to establish online payments for Real Estate Taxes through the County Treasurer and AllPaid.
Moved by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 4-0.**
4. **BUDGET DISCUSSIONS:**
Mr. Miller stated that he prefers to review the budget from the spending aspect first. Mrs. Rentschler indicated that she has worked with the Code, Fire, Recreation, and Police Departments thus far. The following budget expenses, which exceed 3%, were reviewed.

Fire Department – Chief Moyer noted a 67% increase projected for **01-411-119 Fire Police** to incentivize financial assistance with public events. Due to the increased number of events being hosted each year, it is essential to ensure that sufficient funds are available. Chief Torielli noted that as the number of events increases and attendance grows, we need to rely on the assistance of Fire Police for pedestrian safety. He shared a modified traffic plan recommended by the Fire Police for the French Fry Festival that worked very well and is less expensive than hiring a company such as Flagger Force. Ms. Drobnick stated that the Fire Police did an excellent job last Saturday in managing chaos.

01-411-337 Vehicle Maintenance and Repair is projected to increase 13% due to increased costs associated with parts and labor. He noted that extensive repairs were carried out in the 2025 budget, resulting in this line item being exceeded by \$5,000.

01-411-354 Workman's Compensation Insurance Premium is projected to increase 45%. Mrs. Rentschler noted several claims filed following the Palmer incident that may be causing a drastic increase. Chief Moyer said that claims for all members have been filed to document the fine particulate asbestos exposure.

01-411-360 Utilities are projected to increase 5% based on expenses for heating, electricity, and water.

01-411-374 Computer Maintenance / Repair is projected to increase 8% to cover increased expenses associated with Solve IT.

30-411-000 Fire Capital Expenditure – Chief Moyer requested replacement of the final garage door, totaling \$63,000.

Code Department – Mr. Moyer noted that **01-413-354 Workman's Compensation Insurance Premium** is projected to increase 40%. The increased amount is \$300 for the year. Mrs. Rentschler stated that the reclassification of outdoor inspectors has contributed to the rate increase.

01-413-373 Property Maintenance is projected to increase by 100%, noting that this is a line item drawn upon to enforce property maintenance issues before restitution or reimbursement is received.

01-413-374 Equipment Repairs / Maintenance is projected to increase 66% to match 2025 expenses associated with an older copier.

01-413-415 State Fee Building Permit is projected to increase 19%. A \$4.50 fee is assessed on all permits and passed onto the state education fund.

01-413-460 Education / Training is projected to increase 15% based on Andrew Weber's desire to obtain additional certifications. Additional residential building certifications would reduce the reliance on consultant services.

01-413-132 Code and Zoning Manager – Mr. Moyer requested consideration of increasing his raise above 3.25% for his efforts in fulfilling his responsibilities.

01-419-542 Animal Control Services – Mr. Moyer noted that Safety Net Sanctuary is not proposing an increase in costs in 2026. A meeting has been scheduled with the Animal Rescue League to discuss their pilot program for smaller boroughs, which aims to determine if it is a good fit for us.

Recreation Department – Mr. Esterly noted a single **30-450-000 Capital Expenditure** request, to replace the pool vacuum, estimated at \$7,000.

90-451-121 Travel / Class for Recreation Director is projected to increase from \$500 to \$1,000 to accommodate attendance at the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society conference next year.

90-451-110 Halloween Haunted Hayride Expenses were projected to increase from \$1,200 to \$2,000 to add more to the hayride to make it more appealing.

90-452-181 Pool Wages were requested to be increased for lifeguards to offset certification expenses and reward returning employees. Mr. Grassley suggested reducing the number of lifeguards staffed at all times from seven to six to offset increased hourly rates. Mr. Esterly has some suggestions for increasing revenues. Mr. Wert asked that the asset of a pool amenity be preserved and that the onus of the expense

be lessened on taxpayers. Ms. Drobnick expressed her appreciation for removing the money pit of a snack bar by outsourcing the service. Mr. Esterly noted that thoughts should be given to modifying future concession stand agreements by sharing expenses for items such as propane and water. Mr. Lineaweaver said his review of neighboring pool staff rates found that the West Reading pool staff were the lowest paid. Mr. Esterly stated that the current staff were creative and even used their own money for activities.

90-452-370 Building Repair, Maintenance, and Supplies increased expenses in 2025 were associated with I-beam improvements to the pool house. The amount budgeted for 2026 was \$20,000.

90-452-531 Pool Chemicals were considerably less this year. The amount budgeted for 2026 was \$17,000.

Mr. Rogers and Ms. Thompson joined the meeting at 6:51 p.m.

90-453-180 Playground Uniforms were lowered from \$450 to \$0 for 2026.

Mrs. Livingood inquired as to the use of the handicapped chair at the pool. Mr. Esterly noted that the battery had run out of power. It was suggested that the battery be replaced to assist people with disabilities in getting in and out of the pool.

Police Department – Chief Tornielli noted that **01-410-135 Shift Differential / Field Training Officer** has been lowered by 31.4% now that the two new officers have been trained.

01-410-174 Overtime for Special Events increased by 3.25% due to an increase in the number of events needing a police presence. The amount budgeted for 2026 was \$34,393.

01-410-194 Hiring Cost for Full-Time Officers was budgeted to cover the Police Academy expenses for one officer should an officer choose to retire next year.

01-410-305 Canine Program medical insurance expense increased to \$3,800 in 2026.

01-410-314 Legal Services exceeded the budget in 2025; therefore, the budget was increased to \$10,000 for 2026.

01-410-336 Vehicle Replacements was noted that 38-8 is scheduled for replacement next year. However, two vehicle lease payments will be paid off next year. The leasing option is working out well to maintain the current fleet. The amount budgeted in 2026 was \$65,669.

01-410-460 Education / Training was increased from \$14,000 to \$16,500 to cover the required annual tactical training costs associated with two new officers.

01-410-740 Major Equipment Purchases increased to \$18,000 to purchase nine ballistic vests in 2026. A portion of these expenses could be reimbursed through grant funding.

30-410-000 Police Capital Expenditure of \$35,000 was proposed to continue the four-year replacement plan of five radios.

Chief Tornielli referred to the 2026 Proposed Capital Budget Projects listing of ballistic shields, protective equipment, face shields, gas masks, and video safety system cameras at the Fifth Avenue and Chestnut Street intersection to provide a more comprehensive view of the Borough Hall building.

Mrs. Rentschler shared the creation of a new code, 01-434-020, for Police Grants, intended to cover expenses associated with the five-year strategic plan.

Administration Department – The Personnel Committee will discuss variations to the standard 3.25% wage increase before recommending additional increases.

01-400-300 General Expense – Mr. Miller stated that the new website design is nearing completion, and the fees associated with CivicPlus will be eliminated next year. It was recommended to decrease this line item, which is shared with other expenses, by \$7,000 to \$12,500.

01-400-313 Engineering Services experienced a dramatic increase this year. The recommended 2026 budget was \$40,000. Mr. Miller discussed plans to collaborate with the engineer next year on developing layers of Geographic Information System (GIS) technology.

01-400-325 Postage expenses climb each year. The 2026 budget was increased by 15% to \$4,000.

01-400-406 Training expenses were proposed to increase by 60% to \$4,000 in 2026. Mr. Miller noted attendance at the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB) conferences throughout the year; he was unsure if this practice had been observed in the past.

Mr. Miller stated that the Administration expenses are proposed to increase \$66,000 over current expenditures.

Tax Collector Expenses – Mr. Miller indicated that overall costs were reduced by 28.32%.

Insurance and Pension Expenses – Mr. Miller stated that all policies are increasing by roughly 8%. Ms. Drobnick recommended a higher deductible to lower expenses.

Mr. Wert inquired about the inclusion of \$42,000 in the 2026 budget for **01-465-300 West Reading Main Street Operating Expense**. Mr. Miller stated this is under review, and Mr. Grassley noted that the Main Street program was to be self-funded within five years. Mr. Wert noted that, in light of the untimely death of Mr. Dean Rohrbach, this borough-wide program could not be self-funded. He said that the annual operating expense initially began at \$100,000 and has been reduced to \$42,000. This program is the only economic development the borough has pursued in twenty-five years. Without a foundation, significant events would not occur. Mr. Miller requested that \$42,000 be added as an expense in 2026.

Capital Expenditures – Mr. Grassley plans to replace windows in Council Chambers this year. **30-409-000 Buildings Capital Expenditure** was requested to remain at \$28,000 for 2026 to replace older heating units for better efficiency. The **30-430-000 Highways Capital Expenditure** was requested to remain the same at \$475,000 for 2026.

Public Works Expenses – 01-430-181 Uniform Allowance was requested to increase from \$2,000 to \$2,500 to replace jackets in 2026.

01-431-374 Vehicle Maintenance and Repairs was requested to increase from \$5,000 to \$8,000 in 2026 to maintain the aging street sweeper.

06-400-336 Vehicle Replacements – It was noted that the budgeted 10-ton dump truck was not purchased this year, and he would like to make this purchase next year with \$70,000 allocated from each of the water, sewer, and trash funds. Mr. Grassley also noted that the Mack Truck was not purchased this year as planned. He may use these funds as a match to purchase a skid loader through DEP grant funding; negotiations are still underway.

08-400-370 System Maintenance and Repairs – An increase from \$27,000 to \$35,000 was requested in 2026 to have a backup pump for the pump station at the garage.

06-400-416 Training Expense was lowered from \$2,500 to \$1,500 in 2026.

30-430-00 Highway Capital Expense – Mr. Grassley requested to carry over the unused funds to the following year's budget.

Mr. Miller requested that staff be allowed to incorporate this information into the budget to determine where revenues need to be moving forward.

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

A one-year extension agreement has been received from Safety Net Sanctuary, with no increase in cost. Mr. Lineaweaver noted that the Center for Excellence in Local Government talks have not progressed, nor has a county-level program been developed. Additionally, Spring Township's plans have encountered a technical issue and have not progressed accordingly. A meeting has been scheduled with representatives of the Animal Rescue League to discuss their pilot program for small municipalities. Mr. Lineaweaver noted Safety Net Sanctuary's requirement of a ninety-day notification of agreement renewal. It was decided to table this discussion until information can be gathered from the Animal Rescue League.

6. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers spoke about the fishing dock located in the borough and the removal of trash. Mr. Kaag reported that the borough-wide cleanup event did not include this area due to the sheer volume of trash. A more comprehensive cleanup is needed in the fishing dock area. Mr. Grassley noted a meeting scheduled between the City of Reading, Cumru Township, and representatives of Borough Council to discuss efforts to address the ongoing issue and expense of trash cleanup in this triangulated municipal area.

7. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary