

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

October 28, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its second monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, October 28, 2025, with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweafer; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Member Denise Drobnick and Bethany Bower; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; 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 and Zanna Leiendecker were unable to attend.

VISITORS:

Karen Livingood, Resident

David Walker, Wyomissing Public Library

Colleen Stamm, Wyomissing Public Library

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweafer 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. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Wyomissing Public Library** – Mr. Walker, President of the Board of Trustees, addressed a letter to Borough Council last week. He summarized the request for the Borough of West Reading to help fund the library. West Reading residents account for 17% of the library's cardholders and 12% of the library's summer reading program and general library use. A contribution equal to 10% of the Borough of Wyomissing's contribution was requested, totaling \$21,000. Mr. Wert inquired about the number of West Reading residents who have expressed an interest in serving on the board. Mr. Walker indicated that one resident has inquired. There are currently 15 voting board members. Mrs. Rentschler asked why the library is not associated with the Berks County Library system. Mr. Walker indicated that a shared bridge has been established with the county. Ms. Stamm reported that this option had been explored in the past; however, the Wyomissing Library is not struggling for funding. Most municipalities provide \$1 per capita; Wyomissing Borough provides \$19 per capita, which accounts for 60% of its budget. This enables the board to make its own policies that impact the community.

Mrs. Livingood asked if the Borough of West Reading chooses not to provide funding, would West Reading residents be allowed to apply for memberships? It was confirmed that they would be allowed to have memberships with the same privileges as Wyomissing Borough residents, including access to electronic collections such as audiobooks, music, and movies. Mayor Kaag asked whether any other municipalities contribute. It was noted that other communities have their own public libraries. A formal arrangement would require an agreement with the state and a \$5 per capita contribution from the borough. Mr. Walker and Ms. Stamm were willing to explore this option.

Mr. Wert inquired about the borough's ability to contribute an amount less than \$21,000; this was considered acceptable.

Mrs. Livingood spoke of a time when West Reading residents were not allowed to obtain library membership cards at the Wyomissing Library and values the ability to have a library membership.

Mr. Walker and Ms. Stamm departed the meeting at 6:12 p.m.

5. 2026 BUDGET DISCUSSIONS:

Mr. Miller reviewed highlights of his budget report, noting a current General Fund deficit of \$772,156, primarily due to transfers to the Capital Reserves Fund. The proposed budget includes a 14.6% increase over the 2025 budget. The majority of capital expenditures are to cover the Bond principal and interest. With the removal of the \$567,228 from fund totals, the General Fund has a 7.7% increase. The major contributors to this increase are medical benefits and insurance premiums. There were no recommended changes to the medical benefits in 2026, noting that contract negotiations will take place next year.

Department Leaders were requested to minimize expenses or increase revenues to help balance the budget. The following aspects were discussed.

Public Works Department

01-409-375 Maintenance & Repairs Garage - Repairs were high in 2025 due to problems with the gas pumps. A \$5,000 reduction was proposed, bringing the total to \$10,500.

01-430-300 General Expense – The cost savings from purchasing our own Airgas cylinders resulted in a \$2,000 reduction, lowering the total to \$10,000.

01-430-740 Major Equipment Purchases – Various municipalities are sharing minimally used equipment to reduce costs and storage. A \$11,000 reduction was proposed, bringing the total to \$10,000.

01-438-370 General Maintenance & Repairs – Mr. Grassley was comfortable reducing this expense \$5,000 since we have never maxed out this line item. The proposed 2026 expense was \$15,000.

01-455-376 Tree Trimming – Mr. Grassley reported that we are doing well with tree trimming; if needed, trees can be trimmed in-house or reach out for help. A \$5,000 reduction brought the proposed budget to \$35,000. It was noted that once the tree inventory is completed next year, the 2027 budget expenses would be lowered.

06-400-338 & 08-400-338 Gasoline – Mr. Grassley was comfortable reducing these expenses by \$1,500, bringing the proposed budget items to \$5,250 and \$2,500, respectively.

06-400-370 System Maintenance & Repairs – After stocking up in 2024, while dealing with water main issues, Mr. Grassley was comfortable reducing the proposed budget by \$4,000, bringing the total to \$23,000.

06-481-800 Capital Project – Following some discussion, it was decided to perform water main repairs to Playground Drive in-house, reducing the cost by \$30,000. The 2026 proposed budget was \$70,000. It was noted that a grant application has been submitted to replace the curbing and sidewalk.

08-400-740 Major Equipment Purchase – Cheaper alternatives were found, reducing the proposed budget by \$17,100 to \$15,000.

08-481-800 Capital Sewer Project – Mr. Grassley thought this could be reduced by videotaping only during in-house repairs and plans to rebuild pump station pumps to have a backup on hand when needed. The proposed budget was reduced by \$30,000, bringing the total to \$70,000.

The sum of these changes reduced expenses by \$112,100.

Mr. Grassley stated that a spare truck stored at the garage could be sold if needed. This truck would sell for roughly \$10,000. He plans to replace a small dump truck in approximately a year or two. A grant opportunity was shared that would replace older-model diesel trucks, which would help fund this purchase.

Mr. Miller stated that the majority of expenses associated with the Water, Sewer, and Sanitation Funds are for manpower and equipment. Over the last two years, these expenses have increased by 3.25% based on cost-of-living payroll increases. A recommendation was made to transfer \$864,000 from the Water Fund to cover manpower expenditures, \$838,000 from the Sewer Fund, and \$194,000 from the Sanitation Fund. Additionally, a recommendation was made to increase sewer and sanitation rates, as well as the Fire and Road taxes, to balance the budget. Mr. Miller stated that these actions would lower the deficit to \$230,466, while Mrs. Rentschler's more conservative calculation was \$321,008.

Administration Department

01-363-210 Parking Meter Revenue – Mr. Lineaweaver inquired about increasing this revenue based on the proposed additional 19 paid parking spaces to be created at 433 Penn Avenue. The full \$1.25 rate would be applied to borough revenues rather than being shared with the owner of the shopping center lot. It was considered to increase the parking rate from \$1.25 to \$1.50 per hour. Other ideas to raise additional revenue include creating paid parking in the shopping center's business parking spaces after businesses close or offering a voucher validation system with the property owner's approval. The proposed 2026 revenues were increased \$12,000, bringing the total to \$52,000. It was recommended to review the Off-Street Metered Parking ordinance section through the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee and to implement items that could frequently change via resolution.

01-445-400 Parking Lot Revenue Split – An additional \$4,000 in revenue was proposed, bringing the total to \$26,000.

It was reported that, as of today, the owner of the shopping center parking lot has granted the Farmers' Market permission to operate there during the winter months. This would lower overtime expenses within the Public Works Department budget.

01-359-100 Reading Hospital – Mr. Miller noted that a meeting date has been set in November with Reading Hospital to discuss an extension to the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT).

01-310-800 Business Privilege Tax – Mr. Wert inquired about the reasons for this year's underperformance. It was thought that economic factors could be a cause. Thankfully, collection practices have improved, thereby minimizing the shortage of \$109,000. The proposed 2026 budget remained unchanged at \$240,000.

09-363-300 Resident Disposal Fees – Mr. Lineaweaver inquired why this fee is projected to increase by \$105,000 to \$800,000 next year. Mrs. Rentschler noted the recommendation to increase the sanitation fee \$15 per unit per quarter. It was decided to lower the increase to \$5 per unit per quarter, bringing the proposed 2026 revenue to \$729,748.

09-492-300 Transfer to Capital Fund – Mr. Lineaweaver clarified plans to transfer \$75,000 to the Capital Fund to pave alleyways, provided funds were available in the Sanitation Fund. To lessen the increase in resident disposal fees, \$75,000 was removed from the proposed budget. It was noted that the 2025 planned alley paving project, which was not completed this year, is scheduled to carry 2025 funds over to 2026 for repaving next year.

01-310-500 Local Services Tax – Mr. Wert inquired about the reason for a jump in revenue over the last two years, which equates to an additional 576 employees in the borough. The hospital may be a significant contributing factor. He was open to increasing the proposed 2026 budget. Mrs. Rentschler noted a projection from Berks Earned Income Tax to budget \$397,615 in 2026, \$40,000 less than the 2025 year-end estimated revenues. The proposed 2026 budget remained unchanged at \$437,612.

Recreation Department

Ms. Drobnick inquired about including roughly \$6,000 in additional revenue within the Recreation budget, based on the French Fry Festival's plans to donate to the Recreation Department. It was noted that roughly \$9,000 is being donated this year. **90-380-100 Miscellaneous Recreation Revenue** would be used to house these types of donations. The 2025 year-end estimate was increased to \$8,826 with a proposed 2026 budget amount of \$8,500. These funds would be expended from **90-451-431 Community Special Events**, and an additional \$5,000 allocation brought the proposed budget to \$7,300.

90-367-105 Bicentennial Rental – Mr. Esterly offered to increase revenues \$1,000 in 2026 to \$21,000. Renovations are planned for the bathroom area in the coming year.

90-453-183 Playground Wages – Mr. Esterly offered to lower wages by \$1,000 to \$11,500 in 2026.

90-452-181 Pool Wages – Mr. Lineaweaver noted the need to increase wages to attract quality employees. The proposed 2026 budget had been increased from \$72,900 to \$93,316.

Police Department

01-331-110 Vehicle Code Violations District Justice – Mr. Lineaweaver suggested increasing this revenue in 2026 based on the 2025 year-end estimate. Chief Tornielli thought it might be safe to increase revenues by \$5,000, bringing the proposed 2026 revenue to \$80,000.

01-331-300 Parking Tickets – Mr. Lineaweaer suggested increasing this revenue in 2026 based on the 2025 year-end estimate. Chief Tornielli stated that as long as two Parking Enforcement Officers are staffed on a full-time basis, an additional \$10,000 could be budgeted. The 2026 proposed budget revenues were increased to \$140,000.

01-331-321 Bus Patrol Violations – Chief Tornielli noted 30 violations year to date on this new program and suggested increasing the proposed 2026 revenue from \$300 to \$1,500.

01-410-171 Overtime – Mr. Lineaweaer inquired about reducing this expense now that two additional police officers are on staff. Chief Tornielli indicated that it could be lowered barring any long-term injuries. The proposed 2026 budget remained at \$168,772.

Code Department

01-413-314 Legal Services – Based on history, Mr. Moyer offered to lower this expense \$5,000 to \$15,000.

Additional revenue opportunities noted by Mr. Moyer included implementing a permit fee for skill games in the borough, which is under review by the Planning Commission, and revising the false alarm fee structure, which would require an ordinance amendment. The rental fee was recently reviewed to ensure it aligns with expenses. Salary and third-party labor cost increases were recommended for evaluation and incorporation into the fee schedule.

Mrs. Rentschler reported that with the noted revisions, the deficit was \$436,008. Mr. Miller recommended increasing the Fire Tax to 3 mills, which would add \$32,000 to the budget. Chief Moyer stated that this would reduce the strain on the General Fund. A 0.75 increase to the Road Tax would generate an additional \$130,000 in revenue. These changes brought the deficit to \$280,835. Mr. Miller noted that a decision to contribute to the library has not been made. Ms. Drobnick recommended increasing the building deductibles to \$5,000 and the vehicle collision deductibles to \$1,000 to lower insurance premiums.

The next budget meeting will be held on Saturday, November 8, 2025, to fine-tune the proposed budget and further discuss a contribution to the library.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no public comments.

7. ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira

Borough Secretary