

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

**November 8, 2025 – 9:00 a.m.**

West Reading Borough Council held a budget meeting at Borough Hall on Saturday, November 8, 2025, with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Member Denise Drobnick and Bethany Bower; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Assistant Treasurer Helen Moyer; Recreation Director Michael Esterly (via Zoom); Borough Manager Randall Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Vice President Philip Wert, Council Members Zachary Shaver, and Zanna Leiendecker were unable to attend.

**VISITORS:**

There were no visitors.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.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** – Borough Council was asked for direction on a contribution to the library. Mayor Kaag disliked their last-minute approach for funding to allow West Reading Borough to have representation on their board. It was suggested to decline a contribution in 2026 while allowing the library to expand its programming partnership with West Reading next year to gauge resident interest. It was thought that residents might visit the City of Reading's Library, and it was suggested that a library contribution line item be added to the budget to support library programming in the coming year.

Mrs. Rentschler noted that a formal agreement requiring a \$5 per capita contribution is \$1,765 more than the requested \$21,000 contribution. The recent layoffs at the hospital add to concerns about Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) and other revenues in the coming year.

Motion to allocate a contribution to a local public library in the amount of \$2,500. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 4-0.**
5. **2026 BUDGET DISCUSSIONS:**

Mr. Miller reviewed changes to the draft budget from the October 28<sup>th</sup> meeting that increased contributions from the Water, Sewer, and Sanitation Funds to the General Fund; increased the Fire Tax from 2.85 to 3 mils; and increased the Road Tax from 1 mil to 1.75 mils. These changes brought the proposed deficit to \$150,289, down roughly \$600,000 from the initial 2026 budget discussions.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of the proposed 2026 budget. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Mrs. Rentschler noted that the proposed increase in Fire and Road taxes would add \$90 to a home assessed at \$100,000.

Motion to authorize the advertisement for an amendment to the Fire and Road tax rates. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Sewer rate increases of 8% for commercial properties and 4% for residential properties were proposed. Water rate increases of 8% for commercial properties and 3% for residential properties were proposed. An example combined quarterly cost increase for a family that uses 1,200 cubic feet of water was \$11.46. Families may observe conservation measures to lower the cost increase. Western Berks Water Authority (WBWA) has suggested budgeting for a 10% rate increase in 2026, as it did not receive the requested grant funding for facility improvements. The AI Data Center's strain on available water and electric resources was discussed.

Ms. Bower asked why the borough does not contract with the Reading Area Water Authority (RAWA), which is community-oriented and has rates that are roughly half those of WBWA. Mr. Grassley reported that the Buttonwood Street bridge will be modified to accommodate three lanes of traffic as part of the highway improvements. At that time, RAWA intends to install a 12" line that could be made available to the borough. It was noted that RAWA recommended conservation measures earlier last year than WBWA during the drought. It was thought that WBWA should have made the same recommendation rather than watching their bottom line. A request will be made to the appointed board members to attend the December Council meeting to improve communication. A long-term appointment to a board can blur priorities. In roughly two years, new board appointments can be made. It was noted that meetings and agenda information are not available on WBWA's website. The solicitor has been asked to review the requirements to dissolve the agreement with WBWA.

Motion to authorize the advertisement for an increase in sewer rates of 8% for commercial properties and 3% for residential properties. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Motion to authorize the advertisement for an increase in water rates of 8% for commercial properties and 4% for residential properties. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Refuse and recycling rates would increase by \$5 per unit per quarter to \$105. A resolution establishes this rate increase and will be brought forward for adoption at the December meeting.

Mr. Miller provided an update on the limited local emergency status that was allowed to expire yesterday for the retaining wall at Candlewood Suites. The situation is being monitored to ensure that the original wall is not currently moving. A stop-work order has been issued, requiring analysis of why the secondary wall failed, soil samples to determine the base soils, and a fully redesigned wall. Systems Design Engineering currently does not have a structural engineer on staff. Therefore, the borough is seeking a contract with a structural engineer to address this situation; an agreement is currently under review by the solicitor's office.

6. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There were no public comments.

7. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:13 a.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary