

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

January 20, 2026 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, January 20, 2026 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Patrick Kaag; Council Pro-Tem Denise Drobnick; Council Members Bethany Bower, Vicki Haller Graff, Justin Choate and Zanna Leiendecker; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Code Department Manager & Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Engineer Pamela Stevens; Main Street Executive Director Nick Price; Borough Manager Randall Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS:

James Rogers, Resident	Christina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner
Karen Livingood, Resident	James Keller, Resident
Suzanne Thompson, Resident	

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** There was an executive session held this evening to discuss personnel and potential litigation matters.
3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** There were no amendments to the agenda.
4. **MOMENT OF SILENCE:** A moment of silence was requested by Mr. Lineaweaver for two major losses. Pamela Barnhardt, who served on Borough Council alongside her husband, Kevin Barnhardt, who was a former Mayor of West Reading and current Chief Operations Officer for the County of Berks. Mrs. Barnhardt had been involved in the Penn Avenue streetscape project. The second loss is Paul Janssen. Mr. Janssen was not a native of West Reading but was instrumental in assembling a five-year plan to avoid financial ruin. Mr. Janssen shared his wealth of municipal government knowledge at any given opportunity.
5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**
Mr. Rogers spoke of his efforts in early December to notify Met-Ed of needed streetlight repairs near Borough Hall and reported that the lights are currently back in service. He also spoke of information gathered through a Right-to-Know request for 2024 Business Privilege License income. He noted that \$260,000 in revenues had been budgeted for 2024 and that \$280,000 had been collected. About \$97,000 is delinquent, bringing the total possible revenue to \$377,000. He further stated that 658 licenses have been paid, while 141 accounts are delinquent. The system is working, but it is still slow.
6. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**
Motion to approve the December 16, 2025, regular meeting minutes and the January 5, 2026, reorganization meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

7. **ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Ordinance 1202 Vehicles and Traffic Amendment** – Various parking amendments were requested to be adopted as advertised last month.

Motion to adopt amendments to prohibit parking in Boot Alley, add a handicapped parking space on the 200 Block of Spruce Street, and modify a valet parking zone to a patient loading and unloading zone in the 300 Block of South Seventh Avenue. **Moved** by Ms. Leindecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Ordinance 1203 Micromobility Vehicles** – A conversion of the Bicycle Ordinance to a Micromobility Vehicle Ordinance that would include e-bikes, electric scooters, and the like was requested to be adopted.

Motion to adopt amendments to convert the Bicycle Ordinance to a Micromobility Vehicle Ordinance. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Ordinance Vacant Premises Water Service Amendment** – This ordinance amendment would remove the minimum charge for temporarily disconnected water service from Section 441-13 and establish monthly and quarterly charges via resolution. Mr. Miller noted the outdated fee of \$19.80 per quarter and the desire to offer this feature to monthly accounts without fire suppression systems.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of an amendment to remove the minimum charge for temporarily disconnected water service from Section 441-13 and establish monthly and quarterly charges via resolution. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

8. **CONSULTANTS' REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker did not have anything new to report at this time.
- b. **Engineer's Report** – Ms. Stevens shared information on a number of grants awarded to West Reading Borough earlier today. The total amount of grant funding awarded today, including the recent Green Light-Go Years 9 and 10, Fifth and Pine Pedestrian Crossing, Playground Drive Sidewalk and ADA Ramps, 100-200 Block of S. Seventh Avenue Watermain Replacement, and Olive Street Watermain projects, is \$1.7 mil, with a \$153,000 match. A plan will be prepared to fit these projects into the budget.

- **Commonwealth Financing Authority Multimodal Transportation Fund Grants**
 - Fifth Avenue and Pine Street Rapid Flashing Crossing Device \$132,047 with the match of \$56,591.
 - Playground Drive Sidewalk/Curb and Handicap Ramp Access Project \$543,180
- **Commonwealth Financing Authority PA Small Water & Sewer Grants**
 - 100 and 200 blocks of South Seventh Avenue watermain replacement \$400,000

Ms. Stevens noted that the proposed reduced scope of work for the Olive Street watermain replacement project, awarded \$232,612, would only include the 100 block of Olive Street. Additional grant funding could be pursued for the 200 block of Olive Street at a later time. The estimated construction cost for the 100 block of Olive Street is \$226,828. The grant

analyst is requesting Borough Council's approval of the reduced scope of work to complete the paperwork.

Motion to approve the Olive Street watermain replacement project, reducing the scope of work, and authorizing Systems Design Engineering, Inc. to proceed with the survey, design, plans, and specifications to bid the project. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Ms. Stevens will meet with staff to discuss a plan to effectively administer all grant-awarded funding. The 2026 road paving projects and Green Light-Go Year 10 actionable items can be addressed next month.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

9. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Mr. Lineaweaver shared that he will be speaking at the June PSAB conference and plans to talk about positive and creative methods of dealing with issues such as the budget. He has also indicated his intent to run for the Second Vice President of the Borough Council's Association.

Motion to accept the Council President's report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**

10. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:** Mr. Miller reviewed the following items:

- **Gage Personnel Stairway** – The Traffic and Infrastructure Committee reviewed Systems Design Engineering, Inc.'s consulting engineering services proposal to design a stairway from the Reading Avenue sidewalk to the Gage Personnel parking lot. The lot could be used by customers and patrons of the borough, as well as employees, to open up street parking for visitors.

Motion to accept the Systems Design Engineering, Inc. proposal to design a stairway from the Reading Avenue sidewalk to the Gage Personnel parking lot, in an amount not to exceed \$2,000. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **2025 Certification of Unpaid Tax Bills** – The listing of unpaid tax bills totals \$59,969.68 for the county and borough.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager to execute the certification of unpaid 2025 regular tax bills. **Moved** by Ms. Graff and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Active Transportation Plan Update** – Mr. Miller announced the launch of an online public survey map on the borough's website today aimed at making walking safer for the community. Residents can share their experiences and ideas to shape a plan that responds to real needs. The study area covers Penn Avenue between Third and Sixth Avenues.
- **Brownfield Assessment Grant** – The Redevelopment Authority is a co-sponsor of a development plan for municipalities to be able to find funding to evaluate Brownfield Sites. A public improvement plan has been received for the Palmer site that will be reviewed.

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Ms. Stevens departed the meeting at 7:39 p.m.

11. **MAYOR'S REPORT:**

Mayor Kaag provided a verbal report noting a quiet month surrounding the holidays. State Senator Judy Schwank and State Representative Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz are planning a Town Hall event at the firehouse on Wednesday, March 18, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Details surrounding the event are still being planned. Residents were encouraged to attend the meeting.

Motion to accept the Mayor's report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

12. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Tornielli referred to his report and highlighted K-9 Zea's activity in assisting the Wyomissing Police Department relative to two armed robberies. Officers Breitenstein and Tinoco assisted in securing the perimeter and taking the suspect into custody. Following the suspect being taken into custody, Officer Breitenstein deployed K-9 Zea to conduct an article search. During that search, K-9 Zea located the suspect's jacket, mask, and the firearm used in the robbery, securing key evidence in the case.

A review of high-level 2025 statistics was shared, such as 5,724 calls for service and 7,370 officer-initiated activities, for a total of 13,094 department activities. Additionally, the department supported seventeen special events last year. On December 30th, officers participated in DUI roving patrols funded by the Highway Safety Network. During those patrols, officers conducted fifteen traffic stops, resulting in eleven citations and two arrests for the possession of narcotics.

Chief Tornielli asked to table the purchase of five portable radios as part of a four-year project to replace all twenty portable radios. The Berks County Emergency Services is looking to secure a contract with Motorola to provide bulk pricing that could result in savings of up to 40%.

A request was made to authorize the lease of a replacement vehicle as budgeted. Patrol vehicle 38-8, which is a 2020 Ford Interceptor SUV, would be sold upon deployment of the replacement vehicle. The current vehicle has approximately 33,000 miles and 11,000 idle engine hours. The vehicle required \$607 in repairs in 2024, and \$1,222 in 2025. The vehicle is currently experiencing transmission issues, with an estimated repair cost of \$3,000 to \$6,500. There is a possibility that part of the repair expense could be covered by warranty; it would need to be evaluated by the dealer at a cost of approximately \$500. The amount to purchase a 2026 Ford Interceptor SUV, including upfitting and graphics, is \$63,129.92. The three annual lease payments would be \$17,644.

Mr. Grassley inquired about handing down the 2020 Ford Interceptor to parking enforcement if a portion of the transmission repairs would be covered under warranty. It was agreed to have the vehicle's transmission assessed.

Motion to authorize the lease of a replacement vehicle and assessment of the transmission warranty. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

A request was made to authorize the purchase of sixteen air purifying respirators, as included in the 2026 Capital budget. Chief Torielli indicated that this equipment is not in stock and is needed in instances of chemical agent use, such as tear gas or the PepperBall system. It was noted that the City of Reading used respirators during COVID.

Motion to authorize the purchase of sixteen air purifying respirators. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley offered to answer any questions about his report. He noted that the remaining streetlights have arrived and will be installed in the 400 Block of Penn Avenue, weather permitting. A meeting is scheduled for Friday morning to discuss the possibility of declaring a state of emergency based on the weather forecast. This would allow access to funds to offset snow removal costs. Mr. Miller noted contingency plans that are being formulated for operating the office.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his written report and noted that the ladder truck aerial emergency power unit part has arrived and has been installed. Attention was drawn to the 125th anniversary of the West Reading Fire Company, established in 1901. A small celebration is planned during the annual Armed Forces Day Parade on May 15th. After the parade, a small event will be hosted at the fire station.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer noted that 100 S. Sixth Avenue has a pending settlement date that will satisfy the lien from forced hoarding remediation. The Department of Labor & Industry is conducting its five-year accessibility audit. They will review commercial building permits and certificates of occupancy issued during the last five years. A visual inspection of five locations will be conducted to ensure the borough is complying with applicable accessibility standards.

A Zoning Hearing Board hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, January 28, regarding the conversion of the second-floor office space at 634 Penn Avenue to residential without a zoning permit. Residential use requires off-street parking amenities. The Planning Commission recommended that the borough provide representation to oppose a variance for off-street parking.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF)** – Mr. Price spoke of the Ice and Spice event scheduled to take place this weekend. Based on the weather forecast, closure of North Sixth Avenue will not be pursued. Also, Chili Fest has been moved to March. Fire dancing will take place on Friday evening on South Sixth

Avenue as planned. WRCRF has joined West Reading Tavern to expand the Ice and Spice event.

Motion to accept the WRCRF report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Price departed the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

13. **COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:**

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly requested consideration to approve the list of 2026 events. Mr. Lineaweaver read the list of events aloud. A correction was needed for the Thursday night Haunted House event, scheduled for October 29, 2026.

Motion to approve the 2026 Recreation Commission Calendar of Events. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Esterly requested consideration to approve the 2026 Pickleball Calendar of Events. The spring tournament would take place on June 13 and 14, the fall event would take place on October 3 and 4; both events request permission for food trucks. Also, a tentative request was made for a food truck to be available on one Friday per month from June through September. Mr. Lineaweaver noted that the Pickleball Association would need to file a request with the City of Reading for approval of a food truck vendor.

Motion to approve the 2026 Pickleball Calendar of Events. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to approve a food truck at the Pickleball Courts on one Friday per month, June through September. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Grassley noted an increase in Bicentennial House rentals, in part due to Mr. Esterly's Facebook posts and customer-service-oriented approach.

Motion to accept the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Lineaweaver provided an overview of January discussions, noting that Mr. Wert was nominated to remain as Chairman, and Mr. Lincoln was nominated to remain as Vice Chairman. Stormwater design standards were discussed. Mr. Moyer gave an overview of plans to link impervious coverage with civic space and stormwater standards to create triggers and requirements during redevelopment processes to implement best management practices. Mr. Lineaweaver noted a civic space survey to determine preferred amenities in the business district, such as water features, green spaces, gathering spaces, and town squares. Most commission members favored all amenities except the market idea. Language is being drafted to update the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. The discussion of the Games of Skill regulation was tabled until the Supreme Court determines whether these devices should be classified as games of chance or games of skill. Quality-of-life violation regulations were briefly discussed.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – The January Economic Development Committee meeting was canceled.
- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – The December Environmental Advisory Council meeting was canceled.
- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Kaag noted that most of the topics discussed were reviewed earlier in this meeting through ordinance amendments. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Leindecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – The January Shade Tree Commission meeting was canceled.
- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted review of workplace stress with suggestions to prioritize tasks, perform stretching exercises, and develop a healthy lifestyle.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Leindecker and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- h. **Finance Committee** – The January Finance Committee meeting was canceled.

14. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Financial Statement Ending 12/31/2025** – There were no questions or comments.
- b. **Payment Approval Report 12/17/25 to 1/16/26 and 1/17/26 to 1/20/26** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 12/31/2025, and Payment Approval Reports of 12/17/25 through 1/20/26. **Moved** by Ms. Leindecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Lineaweaver noted that the 2025 General Fund ending balance had a surplus of \$12,500. The Water Fund had a surplus, allowing the borough to limit the 10% increase from Western Berks Water Authority to 5% for commercial accounts and 3% for residential accounts. The sewer fund had a surplus; however, the sanitation fund had a deficit, which is why rates were increased slightly.

15. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mrs. Livingood welcomed Ms. Graff and Mr. Choate and introduced herself as a resident of 55 years. She shared a story from the late 1970's when the word "SLO" was painted in the alleyways. A petition was presented requesting that the word be spelled out as "SLOW". The request was accommodated, and to this day, the signs are still spelled correctly.

Mr. Rogers spoke of the approaching 250th anniversary of the United States of America and recalled a time when the borough displayed fireworks and had a parade. He understands the generation gap and the differences in activities, which make it difficult to find time to volunteer to host a parade. He also understands the limited separation distance, which makes it unsafe to host

or allow the display of fireworks anywhere within the borough, but misses the era of the community. He recommended pursuing an alternative light show. Mr. Lineaweaver noted a limited number of volunteers for the 4th of July Committee and that the previous owner of Third & Spruce Café would subsidize fireworks expenses.

16. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary