
West Reading Environmental Advisory Council

500 Chestnut Street
West Reading, PA 19611
610-374-8273

E-mail: eac@westreadingborough.org



MEETING MINUTES

March 23, 2026

Members Present

Chairperson Patrick Kaag, Nicole Weik, Samantha Kaag, Bethany Bower, Jay Santo Domingo, Associate Member Jim Keller, Borough Manager Randall Miller

Visitors

Jacob Gardner, Reading Gateway Bridge Project
Elaine Paul Schaefer, Reading Gateway Bridge Project
Becky Blimline, Resident
Terry Blimline, Resident

Call to Order

Mr. Kaag called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Weik to approve the minutes of November 24th, 2025. Motion Carried.

Schuylkill River Greenways Gateway Bridge Project & Grant

Mr. Kaag announced that the Schuylkill River Greenways Group would give a presentation on a current project and are looking to obtain some federal funding with West Reading. Ms. Schaefer introduced the project and shared that the project would be to transform the current bridge into a destination section of the Schuylkill Trail. The project is currently in phase I which is the public engagement and design phase. Ms. Schaefer shared that this bridge is connected to West Reading by a pathway near the Bertolet Fishing Dock and a road that comes off the bridge on the other side. She stated that this project would help to improve both of these areas. Ms. Schaefer shared photos of other projects where bridges have been improved to make it more of a destination area and what could potentially be done with this project.

She shared that they currently have \$80,000 in funding for phase I. The county has paid for \$50,000 and the William Penn Foundation has paid for the other \$30,000. They will be working with an architect to get some design and cost estimates for this project which should be ready by the early summer. She stated that by the end of the summer they will have picked an idea and will start fundraising. The current cost estimate for this project is 3 million dollars. She stated that they will be applying for congressional funding to help fund this project and need a municipal sponsor. The county has their own congressional funding request and is unable to sponsor this project. The city of Reading received congressional funding the previous year and so would not be a good sponsor for this project. Cumru Township is already applying for their own funding and is also unable to sponsor this project. Ms. Schaefer is requesting that the West Reading Borough sponsors this project.

Mr. Kaag asked what plans there are for the Bertolet Fishing Dock area. Ms. Schaefer stated that the improvement to that area would be in the access to the bridge. Mr. Kaag asked if the 422 project would effect the timeline for this project. Ms. Schaefer stated that they would need to then start the project from the

Reading side and get an extension on the funding. She stated that you are able to extend the timeframe for the funding if you have a good reason. Mr. Kaag then asked what the expectations of West Reading Borough will be before, during, and after the project. Ms. Schaefer stated that this arrangement is merely a money pass through. The money would come to the West Reading Borough, and the Schuylkill River Greenways would do the work and invoice West Reading for the funding. Mr. Kaag asked who would remain responsible for the bridge. Ms. Schaefer stated that the county would still have responsibility for the bridge while Schuylkill River Greenways will have responsibility for the trail. Mr. Domingo asked if there was ever a project that couldn't be completed. Ms. Schaefer stated that they have never not finished a project even if they have had to fundraise during the project. Ms. Bower asked if any consideration has been given to the families who reside near the bridge. Ms. Schaefer stated that each home gets an update and a survey and some of the families have come to the meetings to give input.

Ms. Schaefer mentioned that the trail will become a lot busier next year as there is a current gap on the trail in Pottstown that will be opening next Fall. She shared that they will be creating maps for the trail and that one is specifically for the part of the trail from Pottstown to Reading. These maps will show places to stay along with business that people can patronize.

Mr. Kaag asked if someone would like to make a motion to make a recommendation to Borough Council from the EAC to have the Borough of West Reading strictly as a pass through with a memorandum agreement with Schuylkill River Greenways for the Schuylkill River Reading Gagetway Bridge Project pending solicitor review. Motion made by Mr. Domingo and seconded by Ms. Bower. Motion Carried.

M.O.R.E. Grant Update

Mr. Kaag stated that West Reading filed for a grant to get an energy audit done on the boroughs buildings. This will help with getting energy upgrades for the borough. Mr. Kaag stated that he had asked the engineer on this project what we should ask for with the grant. He stated that she had suggested doing solar panels on the firehouse and bicentennial house. Mr. Miller shared that the M.O.R.E. Grant will be used for the design and engineering phase of that project and then the borough will apply for additional funding for the rest of the project.

Single Use Plastics Reduction Update

Mr. Kaag shared that he got a letter from retired Judge Arthur Grim with information on how to execute a single use plastics ban within our townships or borough. Mr. Kaag mentioned how when we do cleanups around the borough the biggest thing that is found are single use plastic items. Ms. Weik asked if this would mean that no single use plastic items could be used by businesses in the borough. Mr. Kaag stated that there are a lot of places in the borough that would be affected and we would need to be very thorough and delicate with how we would incorporate this type of ban. Mr. Miller shared that there are two bills pending in the state legislature for banning single use plastic items. Ms. Kaag mentioned that the borough should work with the WCRF to create tote bags that would encourage people to not use plastic bags. Ms. Bowers suggested bringing your own Tupperware for takeout and then suggesting that business offer an incentive for people who do that. Ms. Kaag mentioned that it would be a good idea to attend the business meetings to see if they would be willing to do anything to help reduce the plastic usage in the borough. Ms. Bower suggested that Mr. Kaag reach out to Judge Grim to see if he would be willing to come to our next meeting.

Memorial Gardens Cleanup & Replanting

Mr. Kaag shared that there will be new sky pencil hollies planted at the Palmer Memorial Garden. He also mentioned that he is working on a volunteer list for weeding and regular maintenance help with the gardens. Ms. Kaag asked if the residents at the meeting were there to volunteer with the community garden. Mr. & Ms. Blimeline stated that they are willing to help with the community garden in some capacity. Ms. Kaag suggested

they leave their information on the sign in sheet. Ms. Kaag suggested that we should bring back the community garden to the borough from the WCRF. Ms. Bower asked if the memorial garden cleanup would just be weeding and maintaining. Mr. Kaag stated that would be part of it and he would like to have qualified people who know what needs to be pulled and how to maintain these gardens. Ms. Kaag suggested that we reach out to the Master Gardners to see if they would be willing to educate us on how to properly maintain the gardens in West Reading. Ms. Bower shared that the Master Gardeners will also be at the Vines and Vibes event coming up.

Spring Borough Cleanup & Free Market

Mr. Kaag suggested that we hold the Spring Borough Cleanup & Free Market on either the weekend of April 18th/19th or April 25th/26th from 10am to 2pm. Ms. Kaag suggested April 19th 10am to 2pm since it is closest to Earth Day. Mr. Kaag asked if there was a motion to have the Spring Borough Cleanup and Free Market on April 19th from 10am to 2pm. Motion made by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Weik. Motion Carried.

Fall Borough Cleanup & Free Market

Mr. Kaag suggested that we have the Fall Borough Cleanup & Free Market on either September 20th or September 27th. Ms. Kaag suggested that we hold these events on September 20th since it is also a BBB cleanup weekend. Mr. Kaag asked if there is a motion to hold the Fall Borough Cleanup and Free Market on September 20th from 10am to 2pm. Motion made by Ms. Bower seconded by Mr. Domingo. Motion Carried.

Shredding Event

Mr. Kaag shared that there is a shredding event that will take place at the Masonic Lodge on April 11th from 9am to 12pm. Ms. Weik asked what a shredding event is. Mr. Kaag shared that this is a paper shredding event.

Open Member Spot

Mr. Kaag asked if there was a motion to amend the agenda. Motion made by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. Motion Carried.

Mr. Kaag asked if there is a motion to add consideration of appointing Jim Keller as a voting member to the EAC. Motion made by Ms. Kaag seconded by Ms. Weik. Motion Carried.

Mr. Kaag asked if there was a motion to reestablish Jim Keller as a voting member of the EAC with a current vacancy. Motion made by Ms. Kaag seconded by Mr. Domingo. Motion Carried.

Adjournment

Moved by Ms. Weik and seconded by Ms. Kaag to adjourn the meeting at 7:09.m. Motion Carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Nicole Weik
EAC Member