

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

May 20, 2026 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Wednesday, May 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, Justin Choate, and Vicki Haller Graff; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Engineer Pamela Stevens; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Code Department Manager & Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler (via Zoom); Assistant Treasurer Helen Moyer; Borough Manager Randall Miller; Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS:

James Rogers, Resident

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** An executive session was held this evening at 6:00 p.m. to discuss both labor negotiations and personnel matters.
3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** President Lineaweaver requested consideration to amend the agenda to include a discussion and potential action on plans to dissolve the Magisterial District Court in West Reading. A motion was made by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Graff to amend the agenda to add an action item under the Police Department report. **Motion carried 6-0.**
4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**
Mr. Rogers requested a meeting with the Council President, Borough Manager, and Code Department Manager to ask questions about how things are being handled. President Lineaweaver offered to meet after tonight's meeting.
5. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**
Motion to approve April 21, 2026, regular meeting minutes, and April 21, 2026, public hearing minutes. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 6-0.**
6. **ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS:**
 - a. **Ordinance 1207 Special Event/Public Gathering** – There were no questions or comments on amendments to the special event/public gathering ordinance.

Motion to adopt amendments to include regulations pertaining to bar crawl or similar alcohol related events. **Moved** by Mr. Choate and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 6-0.**
7. **POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT:**
President Lineaweaver shared that, due to the vacancy in the West Reading Magisterial District Judge office, the county has considered dissolving the office. The closing of the Walnut Street office would reroute activity to the Morgantown Road location.

Chief Tornielli noted that court administrators met with him to discuss their proposal. The court administrator will prepare a report for the PA Supreme Court to consider regarding the consolidation of a court office. Chief Tornielli's biggest concern is the move to a city court, where

preliminary hearings are held on Fridays. The majority of our patrol units would spend the day at the courthouse waiting to be called, causing a staffing shortage during those periods. A close relationship has been established with the local office to reduce the impact of overtime for both the police and code departments. It was noted that a judge may be elected next year to fill the vacancy and that a temporary judge is serving the West Reading office. President Lineaweaver spoke of a draft Borough of Wyomissing letter that was shared with Borough Council and requested thoughts on creating a joint letter. After some discussion, it was decided to draft a letter from the borough to meet the June 6 deadline to comment. A letter will be drafted for solicitor and council review.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager to prepare a letter regarding the potential Magisterial District Court closure in West Reading to be reviewed and executed by Borough Council and affected Department Heads. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Chief Tornielli reviewed his report, noting that BusPatrol violations are down this month. Officer-initiated activity increased this past month to 42-foot patrols; quite a few of these activities were in borough schools. Calls for service were on par between 1,000 and 1,200 for the month. The Craft Pretzel & Beer Festival was cut short by the weather; no issues were reported. The weather cooperated with the Armed Forces Day Parade with a shortened route that was easier to manage. The shortened route brought a bit more of a crowd to Penn Avenue. Final plans are underway for the Art on the Avenue event on June 20. Promotional testing for the sergeant's vacancy is well underway. The written exam is scheduled for July 25. The written test results will be certified, and oral examinations and interviews will follow. Based on this process, consideration of promotion may take place in September.

Grant funding in the amount of \$2,000 was awarded from the Darrell and Gloria Rank K9 Corps Fund and Richard Groff and Meda Kern K9 Corps Endowment Fund, administered by the Berks County Community Foundation. These funds help offset the costs of our K9 Program.

Chief Tornielli spoke of an incident that took place in a local business where an individual was brandishing a knife at an employee in a breezeway. This situation, years ago, would have escalated into some form of use of force. Our officers used tactical skills and de-escalation techniques to keep themselves safe and take this person safely into custody without any use of force. He is really proud of our training program and thankful to Borough Council for funding these types of training programs.

The following action items were reviewed:

- **PCCD Grant Opportunity** – The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) has opened a grant opportunity that includes technology. Ideas included adding security cameras on Penn Avenue and at Borough Hall, or updating body-worn cameras that are nearing the end of their life. Typically, body-worn cameras are leased with storage fees; this may be an opportunity to reduce that annual cost by purchasing them outright with grant funding. Permission was requested to pursue grant funding before the July 14 deadline. Final project approval could be discussed next month.

Motion to authorize the Chief of Police to apply for a Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency grant to upgrade technology in the police department. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **Norfolk Southern Grant Opportunity** – This \$15,000 grant focuses on rail safety. Instituting a drone program was suggested that could assess a railroad incident by quickly determining if evacuations or shelter-in-place decisions were needed. The drone would also be helpful during large special events. It was noted that the required technology would cost roughly \$23,000, requiring an \$8,000 match of borough funds. Savings from participating in the county radio replacement program could fund the match.

Motion to authorize the Chief of Police to apply for a grant from Norfolk Southern to fund the purchase of a drone. **Moved** by Ms. Graff and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **Radar Device Purchase** – This portable radar traffic data recorder for volume, speed, and types of vehicles can assist in calming traffic and resolving complaints with ready-made reports. This information would assist in directing patrols regarding traffic safety and provide data for the WalkWorks program. The quote for one device, including a laptop, is \$5,355. This is a one-time purchase cost; there are no monthly or annual fees.

Motion to authorize the purchase of a Covert Black Cat II Radar device, not to exceed \$5,355, should a funding source be identified. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Chief Torielli departed the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

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 reviewed the following action items:

1. **PEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities (BRIC)** – The BRIC grant would be a 75/25% match with a project cost estimate of \$900,000 for the replacement of two pedestrian bridges and streambank stabilization. The borough's share would be \$225,000. Federal grants undergo a longer approval process, allowing time to seek additional funding, including other state grants, to offset the funding match. It was noted that with every high-velocity storm event and flood, more erosion occurs. Flooding could eventually affect the swimming pool and court areas in the parkland. A letter of intent has been submitted, and we are awaiting comments on project approval. In the meantime, a funding commitment letter is needed by June 19.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager and Systems Design Engineering, Inc., to submit a 25% funding commitment to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) for a Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant for

streambank stabilization and replacement of two pedestrian bridges in the park. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 6-0.**

2. **Met-Ed Energy Sustainability Grant** – This no-match grant allows municipalities to replace their HVAC units with higher efficiency units. Mr. Grassley identified multiple units at Borough Hall and the Fire Company that need to be replaced. Grant funding averages between \$25,000 and \$100,000. The units to be replaced total \$65,000. Additional funds would be provided for energy credits after the new units are installed. A letter of intent was due by May 15. It was noted that a grant liaison had already begun reviewing our grant.

Motion to ratify a letter of intent submission for the Berks County Community Foundation Met-Ed Energy Grant and authorization of the submission of the final application. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Remediation investigation report and plans for 100-118 Franklin Street were discussed. Ms. Stevens has generated a list of issues or questions regarding the plan and inquired about scheduling a public notice meeting. Mr. Becker will review the responsibilities of scheduling and hosting an Act 2 Public Involvement Meeting. Mr. Miller will post the report on the borough's website after Borough Council has accepted the report. The report can be viewed online due to its size. Overall, the report has some good news, with some precautions, residential use may be permitted.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

9. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** President Lineaweaver stated that he, the Mayor, and Council Vice President were invited to visit Neo Pangea yesterday for their 21st anniversary event. It was highly recommended to take the time to tour this facility, which can transform a Zoom call into Indiana Jones, 2001: A Space Odyssey, 10,000 Leagues Under the Sea, or even a castle-night theme. President Lineaweaver also noted that the PSAB conference will take place in a couple of weeks, where he will be making a presentation.

Motion to accept the Council President's report. **Moved** by Ms. Graff and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

- a. **Borough Council Resignation** – A letter of resignation was read into the minutes:

"I am honored to have served on this council and am proud of everything we have accomplished together. It is with a heavy heart that I submit my resignation, as I will be relocating for work – a move I would not be making if my circumstances allowed otherwise. I have full confidence that the progress we have made as a community will continue, and I am grateful for the privilege of being part of it. Thank you for all of your dedication and partnership. Zanna Leniendecker."

Motion to accept the letter of resignation from Zanna Leinedercker. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Personnel Committee Member Appointment** – Ms. Leiendecker is also resigning from the Personnel Committee. An immediate appointment is needed for this Committee of Council. Ms. Drobnick expressed an interest in filling this vacancy.

Motion to appoint Denise Drobnick to the Personnel Committee. **Moved** by Mr. Choate and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Auditor Contract** – A separate audit of tax collection is not needed now that the county oversees real estate tax collection. Therefore, the fee for 2026 was \$500 lower at \$17,000, with annual \$500 increases for 2027 and 2028.

Motion to approve a contract with Maillie, LLC, to perform the annual DCED audits for 2026 through 2028. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Remedial Report for 100-118 Franklin Street** – Motion to accept the municipal notification of a combined remedial investigation report and cleanup plan for 100-118 Franklin Street, as well as indicate a desire for a public meeting. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Miller also reported that the trestle painting project has been completed. This two-year process was funded by a \$100,000 grant.

Also, the Business Improvement District (BID) voting is currently in process. If the no votes are fewer than the required number, the Borough Council will look to pass an ordinance at the regular June 16, 2026 meeting.

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 6-0.**

11. **MAYOR'S REPORT:**

Mayor Kaag provided a verbal report noting the following:

- The upcoming Art Plus Gallery Plein Air event coincides with the annual Art on the Avenue event. It was noted that the Art Plus Gallery displays local artist renderings in cafés around Berks County.
- An interview with BCTV was conducted to promote the West Reading Fire Department's 125th anniversary, the Armed Forces Day Parade, and the Art on the Avenue event.
- Attended and walked the Armed Forces Day Parade this year.
- Supported a Berks Cancer Support Services event.
- Attended an event at Neo Pangea, celebrating their 21st anniversary. It was noted that their offices look like spaceships or submarines. It was noted that the Nefertiti bust at the Reading Public Museum was created by Neo Pangea.
- Plans to attend the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB) conference at the end of the month. It was noted that she is officially a part of the Mayor's Roundtable.
- Attended the 125th Fire Department anniversary event.

Motion to accept the Mayor's report. **Moved** by Ms. Graff and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

12. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley offered to answer any questions about his report and noted that the borough garage is officially an inspection station. This designation will not only provide cost savings but also reduce the time required to transport the vehicles to an inspection station. Secondly, he noted that the City of Reading removed trash from the homeless encampments under the bridge last month, and the state will be coming tomorrow to clean the area. Lastly, he spoke with Berkshire Systems Group today to address the issue of security cameras failing in the heat last year, and to find a way to keep them cool

The following action item was reviewed:

1. **Seasonal Staff** – Permission was requested to hire at least two seasonal staff members from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The two seasonal staff members from last year would be returning at the same rate of pay.

Motion to approve the hiring of seasonal staffing. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his written report and noted that the last garage bay door failed before a replacement door could arrive. A spring repair was made to extend its life.

Chief Moyer thanked everyone for attending the 125th anniversary celebration, with a special thanks to Mayor Kaag for her assistance with the planning committee. He is thankful for the very good working relationship with the borough, noting that not all volunteer fire departments and municipalities have such a relationship. This is a testament not only to this Borough Council but also to all predecessors for having faith in us and supporting us in our continued provision of these services for the community.

Mr. Lineaweaver was pleased that fire hydrant flushing was completed without incident this year.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer referred to his report and provided an update on the status of a garage demolition order for 542 Franklin Street. The owner is paying the citations but not making the needed repairs or demolition. One additional citation has been filed for failure to demolish the structure. If no action is taken by the owner, quotes will be requested for the borough to demolish the garage. Mr. Moyer also noted that residential rental renewals have been mailed and shared that over one-third of the borough's 1,500 parcels contain rental units.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF)** – In the absence of Mr. Price, President Lineaweaver provided highlights from his written report that appeared very similar

to last month's report. A verbal update had been provided regarding the social media coordinator position. They have identified at least two people and are making an offer to one individual.

Motion to accept the WRCRF report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Bower.
Motion carried 6-0.

13. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – In the absence of Mr. Esterly, Ms. Drobnick noted a busy "Music May" month that went well. Porch Fest was a new event that was well-received and well-attended. We will host this event again next year with mini pop-up porch concerts in between, as requested by attendees. The fourth annual Vines & Vibes event, held in the park, had the highest attendance. Mr. Esterly has been busy getting the pool ready to open this weekend, if the weather cooperates. He is also preparing for the Playground Program. The following two action items were reviewed:

- Consideration was requested to approve the list of hires or rehires for the pool seasonal staffing. There were four lifeguards listed at a rate of \$12 per hour. It was noted that more than 20 lifeguards have been hired this year to accommodate scheduling conflicts for various reasons throughout the summer season.

Motion to approve the list of hire and rehiring seasonal pool staff. **Moved** by Ms. Graff and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- Consideration was requested to approve a concession stand agreement with Salsa Burrito again this year. Last year's concession stand was relatively successful. This agreement removes the need to hire staff. The cost for Salsa Burrito increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000 following a review of last year's expenses.

Motion to enter into a 2026 Concession Stand Agreement with Salsa Burrito. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Planning Commission** – The May Planning Commission meeting was canceled.
- c. **Economic Development Committee** – Mayor Kaag noted the ability to meet for the second month in a row. Mr. Choate had been nominated as Chairman of the committee, and Ms. Gantz as the Secretary. Recent business openings, relocations, and ribbon-cutting ceremonies were discussed.

Motion to accept the Economic Development Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Graff. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag indicated that efforts are underway to reduce single-use plastics in the borough. Members of the organization called "What' SUP Berks" attended the meeting to discuss reducing and eventually eliminating the use of single-use plastic bags in all stores, restaurants, and businesses.

Motion to accept the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Moved** by Ms. Graff and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Kaag referred to the minutes and noted two action items:

- **Right-of-Way Agreement** – Handicap ramp additions to the right-of-way along the North Sixth Avenue side of 559 Penn Avenue were reviewed. The agreement includes the costs and expenses of constructing, maintaining, and removing the ramps on the property owner, as well as indemnification of the borough. Ramp encroachment on the sidewalk area is minimal.

Motion to enter into a Right-of-Way Agreement with Back 9 Realty, LLC, property owner of 559 Penn Avenue, and approval of the construction of ADA ramps on North Sixth Avenue. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **Gage Personnel Parking Lot Access** – Based on the property owner’s concern about a steep stairway from the Gage Personnel parking lot to Reading Avenue, the engineer has recommended amending the previously approved engineering proposal to include an additional \$1,000 for a graduated step-landing-step type ADA ramp.

Motion to amend the Systems Design Engineering, Inc. design proposal approved on January 20, 2026, to add \$1,000 for a stairway-landing crossing from the Gage Personnel parking lot to the Reading Avenue sidewalk. **Moved** by Ms. Graff and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – Ms. Graff spoke of finalizing a letter to residents to distribute to property owners in instances where a planting strip is not available, but a borough tree had been removed from private property, to determine an interest in replanting a borough tree. A list of properties is being reviewed with the Public Works Director.

Motion to accept the Shade Tree Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- g. **Safety Committee** – President Lineaweaver noted review of slips, trips, and falls this month.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

14. **TREASURER’S REPORT:**

- a. **Transfer of Funds** – President Lineaweaver reviewed two action items, noting a transfer of tax revenues into an investment account and renewal of a maturing PLGIT TERM:

- Motion to approve the transfer of \$1,000,000 from the M&T General Fund to PLGIT PRIME. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- Motion to approve the transfer of \$2,000,000 from PLGIT PRIME to invest in PLGIT TERM for 150 days at approximately 3.82% interest. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Choate. **Motion carried 6-0.**

It was noted that the sweep account is earning roughly 3.37% of interest.

- b. **Financial Statement Ending 4/30/2026** – There were no questions or comments.
- c. **Payment Approval Report 4/22/26 to 5/14/26 and 5/15/26 to 5/20/26** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 4/30/2026, and Payment Approval Reports of 4/22/26 through 5/20/26. **Moved** by Mr. Choate and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to approve the Treasurer's report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

15. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers spoke of a vehicle in his neighborhood that he has observed for more than a month, and that has had an expired inspection sticker since July 2022. He also reported a vehicle on Juniata Street, parked in front of a garage, with two wheels in the alleyway and no license plate. In his estimation, the borough is becoming a junk yard.

16. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Choate and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary