

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION
JULY 1, 2026**

The West Reading Planning Commission met for its regular meeting on Wednesday, July 1, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chairman Philip Wert, Members Daniel Horman, Jennifer Bressler, Charles Wanyo, Ryan Lineaweaver, and Maria Napoli; Zoning Officer and Code Department Manager Chad Moyer; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Vice Chairman Christopher Lincoln was unable to attend.

Visitors

Maureen Hasty, Resident

Chairman Wert called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve minutes of June 3, 2026, meeting. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Horman. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Business

a. Curative Zoning Amendment – Data Center Use

A curative amendment is a process that municipalities can use to work through the enactment of amendments before a proposal is put forth. In this case, the subject is data centers. The Zoning Ordinance does not reference data center uses; therefore, if a proposal were submitted, the borough would not be able to regulate placement or set standards. Data center technology has become smaller, enabling the construction of these facilities within existing buildings. A curative amendment can be used only once within a three-year period.

An ordinance example, provided by the solicitor's office, and excerpts from Cumru Township's ordinance, provided by Mr. Lineaweaver, were discussed. A decision on whether to permit data center use by right, as a conditional use, or as a special exception was considered. Use by right is the least restrictive option; a conditional use hearing with Borough Council would allow Council to apply reasonable conditions specific to data center uses; a special exception hearing takes place with the Zoning Hearing Board. It was noted that Council would remain impartial during a conditional use hearing; a special exception hearing would allow the borough to take a stance and argue against the use or the applicant, providing added leverage to ensure compliance with performance standards. It was decided that data center uses would be heard through a special exception process.

The sample ordinances address aspects such as noise, vibration, testing of emergency backup generators, underground fuel storage, fire suppression systems, adequate water and power, spill prevention, and decommissioning. Mrs. Bressler requested to include some additional language within the Data Center definition:

- Cloud computing
- Quantum computing
- High-performance computing
- Successor computing technology

A zoning district designation of either light industrial or conservation was discussed. The Conservation District would provide separation from residences but allow a structure to be built alongside the river for

use as a cooling system. It was decided that the Light Industrial District would be the designated district for data center uses.

The draft ordinance amendment establishes a minimum building setback of 500 feet from residences and sensitive receptors. This may be an exclusionary designation since most properties in the borough would not meet that setback requirement. Likewise, the minimum lot size of 10 acres would be exclusionary. Elevation and height of buildings should be considered with regard to ambient noise.

Mr. Moyer requested consideration of including a catch-all use in the Zoning Ordinance that would permit undefined uses in a given district through a specified process. The Light Industrial District, via Special Exception, was the most stringent and the preferred option.

The noted changes will be incorporated within a draft ordinance amendment and reviewed by the solicitor and engineer, who were recommended for their legal and technical expertise. It was noted that a curative amendment would need to be adopted within 180 days of resolution adoption, which took place on June 23, 2026. To meet this timeline, draft ordinance language should be reviewed next month.

Mr. Lineaweaver reviewed a list of Berks County Planning Commission recommendations for data center development that could be incorporated in a zoning amendment following enactment of a curative amendment:

- 1,000-foot setbacks from residences, schools, and parks
- Avoidance of prime agricultural districts
- Adherence to dBA and dBC frequency weighting standards for noise measurement
- Mandatory reporting on water usage
- Pollution caps
- Post-construction audits and comprehensive environmental assessments
- Wastewater and thermal release accountability
- Closed-loop cooling system use
- Decommissioning reviews every five years
- Developer to hold a publicized, mandatory, public informational meeting
- Air-quality emission safeguards
- On-site clean generation, such as solar arrays, to maximize renewable energy usage

b. Quality of Life Regulation Update

Mr. Moyer provided an update on quality-of-life regulations that would rework the current nuisance ordinance by establishing a ticketing process for violations such as tall grass and trash, similar to the process used for snow-clearing violations. This enforcement method would encourage compliance in a more timely manner than issuing a citation, and the ticketing method would help offset expenses associated with repeat offenders.

The final aspect to be determined would be the appeal process. It was noted that the adoption of the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) requires the appointment of a three-member appeal board, which may also be designated to hear appeals of quality-of-life violations. This hearing-type process would require payment of the fine to be eligible to appeal. The fine would be refunded if the designated board finds the person not guilty. An appeal of the appeal board's decision would need to be researched. These aspects will be discussed, along with a review of the fully drafted amendment as a future meeting as time allows.

c. **Games of Skill Regulation Update**

Mr. Moyer noted plans to assess a per-machine license fee for operating game-of-skill devices in the borough, based on the added policing costs associated with these establishments, to deter illegal gambling. Mr. Moyer shared that the Supreme Court ruled recently that these types of devices are illegal gambling machines. The State Assembly has been allotted 120 days, set to expire in October, to enact legislation that would deem the devices legal. The State Assembly has been debating the legalization of these devices with a percentage tax, similar to that of casinos.

The meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Horman and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary