

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

December 15, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, December 15, 2020 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Members Patrick Kaag, Ryan Lineaweaver, Samantha Kaag and Jennifer Bressler; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Police Sergeant Ryan Phillips; Borough Manager Nicholas Imbesi; Public Works Director Dean Murray; Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Recreation Director Helen Moyer; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Engineer Tom Unger; Deputy Fire Marshal Mark Burkholder; Main Street Manager Mark Ratcliffe; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln and Code Department Manager Cathy Hoffman were unable to attend the meeting.

VISITORS: (In attendance via Zoom Meeting)

Karen Livingood, Resident

Maureen Hasty, Resident

Brian Adams, Resident

Yahaira Castillo, Resident

Kevin O'Keefe, Network Building & Consulting

Nicole Phillips, Resident

Christina Shenk, Resident

Jenna Hiester, Resident

Sherry Berriker, Western Berks Ambulance

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m. via Zoom, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call. A moment of silence was requested to honor those impacted by the coronavirus.
2. **AT&T SMALL CELL PROJECT:** Kevin O'Keefe is an authorized agent for AT&T who proposed a small cell antennae installation on an existing pole located on the parcel of land where the Borough Hall and Police Department are housed. The existing pole supports an emergency siren that has not been in use for a number of years.

Following a meeting of emergency personnel, it was decided to retain the siren for emergencies that may arise when phone service is limited or unavailable. Mr. O'Keefe proposed to either install an additional pole to attach an antenna or review available options for a smaller siren to collocate the two devices on the existing pole. Mr. O'Keefe would approach AT&T to request updating the siren equipment.

Council members agreed to review options for both parties. The Public Safety Committee and Mr. O'Keefe will coordinate needs of both parties prior to deciding to install an additional pole.

Mr. O'Keefe departed the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Ms. Shenk noted that she has moved into the Borough and would like to implement a block captain program at no cost to the Borough to improve the aesthetics of the community. Mr. Wert asked for an understanding of the responsibilities of block captains and requested that a list of best practices be established. Ms. Shenk will discuss resources and steps with the Borough Manager prior to implementing a program.
4. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:** Motion to approve the November 14, 2020 budget meeting minutes; November 17, 2020 regular meeting minutes; November 24, 2020 Conditional

Use Hearing minutes; November 24, 2020 budget meeting minutes; and the December 1, 2020 special meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

5. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Resolution 2020-25 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – This Resolution would extend the declaration expiration date to the January Council meeting, allowing the ability to apply for emergency disaster funding.

Motion to approve Resolution 2020-25 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency through January 19, 2021. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Resolution 2020-26 Reaffirm Appointments to the Zoning Hearing Board** – This Resolution reaffirms the three members of the Zoning Hearing Board.

Motion to approve Resolution 2020-26 to Reaffirm Appointments to the Zoning Hearing Board. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Resolution 2020-27 Fee Schedule Amendment** – This Resolution establishes changes to the fee schedule as discussed during budget meetings.

Motion to approve Resolution 2020-27 Fee Schedule Amendment. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Ordinance 1130 – Parking Enforcement Penalty Amendment** – This amendment would increase the parking violation fine from \$30 to \$50.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 1130 Parking Enforcement Penalty Amendment. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Ordinance 1131 – Parking Time Limit Amendment** – This amendment would extend the 2-hour limit to a 3-hour limit Monday through Saturday.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 1131 Parking Time Limit Amendment. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- f. **Ordinance 1132 – Off-Street Metered Parking Fine Amendment** – This amendment would increase the off-street metered parking violation fine from \$15 to \$25.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 1132 Off-Street Metered Parking Fine Amendment. **Moved** Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- g. **Ordinance 1133 – 2021 Sewer Rate Amendment** – This amendment would increase commercial and residential standard sewer meter rates.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 1133 Sewer Rate Amendment. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- h. **Ordinance 1134 – 2021 Tax Rate Amendment** – This amendment would increase the tax rates for the year 2021 to 7.25 mills for general purposes, 0.75 mills for infrastructure and 2.85 mills for fire protection purposes.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 1134 Tax Rate Amendment. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

6. **CONSULTANT'S REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker stated that he had nothing new to report at this time.
- b. **Engineer's Report** – Mr. Unger commented on the following items:
 - **Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge** – The DEP joint permit application submitted to DEP's office on November 19th is in their que for review. However, since everyone is working from home it is unknown how long it will take to receive comments.
 - **Sewer Line Replacement Project** – Mr. Unger requested authorization to proceed with preparing bid documents for the PA Small Water and Sewer grant project along Linden Lane and Sycamore Road.

Motion to authorize preparation of bid documents for the 2021 sewer line replacement project along Linden Lane and Sycamore Road. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

7. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Gombach noted an executive session that was held at 6:30 p.m. this evening to discuss litigation and personnel matters.
8. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Mr. Gombach expressed his gratitude towards Borough staff, volunteers, Council members, police department, emergency services and the community revitalization foundation for all of their hard work during this challenging year and he looks forward to working together next year.

9. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:**

- a. **2021 Meeting Schedule** – Mr. Imbesi requested authorization to advertise the 2021 meeting schedule.

Motion to authorize advertisement of the 2021 meeting schedule as presented. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **2021 Appointments/Reappointments** – Mr. Imbesi reviewed the following appointments and reappointments:

- **Planning Commission** – Jennifer Bressler and Terry Siggins have agreed to be reappointed to the Planning Commission for another four-year term.

Motion to reappoint Mrs. Bressler and Mr. Siggins to the Planning Commission. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Imbesi noted a vacancy on the Planning Commission and the receipt of four letters of interest to fill this vacancy. The two candidates that were in attendance of the meeting shared a little about themselves:

Brian Adams indicated that he would be an asset to the Planning Commission through his partnership with the Schuylkill River Greenways/National Heritage Area (NHA) and his current membership on the Environmental Advisory Council.

Jenna Hiester noted her service on the Environmental Advisory Council since 2017 and service as Chairperson for the last two years. Ms. Hiester works on Penn Avenue and is interested in community development, and would like to work together with the Planning Commission to further develop environmental aspects within the community.

Mr. Imbesi read the letters of interest received from Cody Rhoads and Jay Santo Domingo whom were not in attendance of the meeting.

Mr. Adams asked if it would be a conflict of interest for Mr. Rhoads who is a Borough Manager for another municipality to serve on the West Reading Planning Commission. Mr. Becker indicated that there is not a conflict of interest.

Ms. Kaag recommended, based on experience in serving on another Planning Commission, to appoint Cody Rhoads to the West Reading Borough Planning Commission. Mr. Wert seconded the motion. **Motion carried 6-0.**

As Chairman of the Planning Commission, Mr. Wert welcomed all of the qualified candidates to attend the Planning Commission meetings, which allows resident participation.

- **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Imbesi reported receipt of three letters of interest for the Environmental Advisory Council. The two candidates that were in attendance of the meeting shared a little about themselves:

Nicole Phillips has resided in the Borough for three years and noted her degree in biology and experience in the environmental field. Ms. Phillips would like to become more involved in the community and feels that the Environmental Advisory Council would be a good place for her to volunteer.

Yahaira Castillo has resided in the Borough for six years and currently serves on the Shade Tree Commission and would like to further her involvement in the community. Ms. Castillo has a degree in the Arts in Leadership for Sustainable Communities in both the human and environmental aspects. The recent posts on Facebook from the Environmental Advisory Council has piqued her interest.

Motion to appoint Nicole Phillips, Yahaira Castillo and Jay Santo Domingo as Associate Members of the Environmental Advisory Council. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **Shade Tree Commission** – Mr. Imbesi noted that there is a vacancy on the Shade Tree Commission, however, no one has expressed an interest in filling this vacancy.
- **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Imbesi stated that the Recreation Director would request appointments under the Recreation report.
- **Housing Review Board** – Mr. Imbesi reported that Janice Jackson-Care has agreed to fill another three-year term on the Housing Review Board.

Motion to reappoint Janice Jackson-Care to the Housing Review Board. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **Zoning Hearing Board** – Mr. Imbesi reported receipt of two letters of interest to serve as alternate members of the Zoning Hearing Board.

Motion to appoint Karen Livingood and Stacey Shirk as Alternate Members of the Zoning Hearing Board. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **2021 Municipal Tax Sheet** – The Berks County Treasurer’s office annually requests an elected official to complete a municipal tax sheet.

Motion to authorize the signing of the 2021 Municipal Tax Sheet as presented. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Radio Frequency Concurrence** – West Hempfield Township in Lancaster County is requesting permission to update equipment on a shared radio frequency. The fire and police departments do not foresee interference issues and should an interference occur, West Hempfield Township would immediately correct the issue or discontinue operations on the interfering frequency until such remedy is found. Mr. Imbesi requested authorization to sign the letter of concurrence.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager to execute the West Hempfield Township Radio Frequency Coordination Letter of Concurrence, dated December 3, 2020. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Curbing** – Mr. Imbesi requested clarification from Borough Council as to the ownership of curbing in order to move forward in notifying residents along the roads that are planned to be paved in 2021. Mr. Wert was amenable to the Borough making repairs to curbing along road improvement projects. Mr. Kaag agreed that curb repairs would be an item that he would be willing to make a compromise.

Motion to fund curb repairs within road improvement project funds. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Borough Manager’s report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

10. **MAYOR’S REPORT:** Mayor Kearney reported that he met with the police and public works departments earlier today to discuss the pending snow storm. A decision has been made to declare a snow emergency as of Noon on Wednesday, December 16, 2020. Mayor Kearney asked everyone to share this information with their neighbors and social media to ensure that all vehicles are removed from snow emergency routes in a timely manner. The West Reading Police Department exhausts all efforts to notify the owners of vehicles that have not been moved prior to towing.

Mayor Kearney noted that Sergeant Ryan Phillips has accepted his request to be the Officer in Charge since Chief Stephen Powell’s command ended on December 5, 2020. In the weeks to come the Mayor plans to discuss promoting one of the three Sergeants to the position of Chief of Police.

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

11. DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

- a. **Police Department** – Officer in Charge Phillips thanked the Mayor for his confidence and appreciates the opportunity to fill Chief Powell's shoes with regards to leadership and professionalism.

Mr. Lineaweaver thanked Sergeant Phillips for stepping up to the Officer in Charge position and requested some insight as to an increase to the number of incidents reported during the month of November. Sergeant Phillips stated that the County has made changes to the interface of their system that includes nonreportable items. Sergeant Phillips will work to separate the nonreportable incidents from future reports.

Sergeant Phillips requested a vote on an executive session personnel topic. Motion to authorize a one-time payment to an officer of thirty-six hours of vacation time that would be lost due to the pandemic. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Murray offered to answer any questions regarding his report and noted that crew members are preparing for the snow storm. It was also noted that crew members whom are currently on vacation have indicated their willingness to assist in removing snow.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** - Chief Moyer requested Council's approval to alter plans for the upcoming Kiddie's Christmas Party due to the new pandemic regulations imposed that limit gatherings. Gifts will now be delivered by the Fire Department to the party registrants. Council Members were pleased with the change in plans.

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

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Imbesi noted that Mrs. Hoffman was unable to attend the meeting and offered to answer any questions. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – Mr. Ratcliffe noted the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee's recommendation to perform a traffic study prior to implementing a pocket park on north Sixth Avenue to determine implications of closing this portion of the roadway. It was decided to complete the traffic study prior to requesting Council's approval of a pocket park on north Sixth Avenue.

Mr. Ratcliffe announced that the Pennsylvania Downtown Center has awarded the West Reading Motor Club with a Townie Award for their physical improvements and design of façade restorations.

Motion to accept the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

12. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mrs. Moyer requested Council to approve a two-year reappointment of Lori Hoffman, Roger Hinsey, Nikki Frymoyer and Kristina Singleton to the Recreation Commission.

Motion to reappoint Lori Hoffman, Roger Hinsey, Nikki Frymoyer and Kristina Singleton to the Recreation Commission for an additional two-year term through December 31, 2023. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mrs. Moyer provided a list of events for the year 2021 and requested Council's approval of the events and dates.

Motion to approve the Recreation Commission 2021 list of events and dates. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

It was noted that a decision has been made to suspend rentals of the Bicentennial House following the more stringent pandemic regulations recently announced by the Governor.

Motion to accept the Recreation Director's report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Planning Commission** – The December Planning Commission meeting was cancelled.
- c. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert recapped discussions surrounding both rental and housing prices that have been incrementally increasing. There is a briskness to the transfer of properties in the Borough even with pricing that seems to be a bit overpriced. The Reading Eagle recently published an article about the business community in West Reading and how we have weathered the pandemic quite well with a net business gain of eight businesses. This is a testament to the resiliency of the West Reading business community.

The new Drexel medical school should be opening in the Borough of Wyomissing in the year 2021 and Alvernia University will be implementing redevelopment plans in the City of Reading. These two educational redevelopments should help West Reading Borough to move forward.

Motion to accept the Economic Development Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag reported that the community garden has been closed for the season. Goals for 2021 were discussed as well as plans to provide an annual report to Borough Council.

Mr. Wert inquired as to discussions on the installation of solar panels on Borough buildings and encouraged pursuit of this clean renewable energy. It was noted that certain items have

been addressed as recommended by the energy audit and review of this audit will continue. Chief Moyer recommended to keep the fire station in mind for solar panel installation since there is a large roof area that faces south. Chief Moyer reviewed a Met-Ed grant last year to install solar panels, however it seemed that the cost to install solar panels would far exceed available grant funds. Mr. Kaag noted that the HVAC systems will need to be updated in the near future.

Motion to accept the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Kaag requested an update from the solicitor as to the right-of-way agreement for UGI to attach a gas line to the proposed Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge. Mr. Becker reported that a draft of the agreement has been completed and will be shared with the engineer and Borough Manager for final approval prior to forwarding to UGI for execution.

Mr. Kaag also noted discussions surrounding the small cell installation and radio frequency upgrades that were discussed earlier this evening.

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – Mr. Kaag reported tree removals along Franklin Street and Reading Avenue. Some of the tree trimming tasks have been delayed due to pandemic issues. Approximately twelve Sycamore trees have been planted along the Wyomissing Creek to prevent erosion. These trees were donated by Cumru Township to West Reading and the City of Reading to be planted on either side of the creek.

Mr. Kaag thanked GNA, Nonno Alby's and Plow Farms for their donation of a Spruce Tree that has been planted in Delaney Circle.

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

- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Murray referred to the safety meeting minutes and noted discussions with an insurance representative during their annual training to improve safety by rotating members of the Public Works Department that sit on the committee.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- h. **Finance Committee** – The December Finance Committee meeting was cancelled.

- 13. **TREASURER'S REPORT:** Mr. Wert commented that as of November 30th, 97.8 percent of the projected 2020 total fund revenues were received during a pandemic year. Mr. Wert commended staff members on their good budgeting practices. Mr. Lineaweaver noted that 116% of the projected 2020 business privilege tax has been collected this year, which is another testament to the business district. He offered a hats off to the businesses that survived 2020 and hopes for brighter days next year.

- a. **Financial Statement Ending 11/30/2020** – Mr. Kaag inquired as to an expenditure for repairs to the fire station sprinkler system. Mr. Murray noted the following problem areas that were found during the annual inspection of the system:

- Low-pressure issues required a valve replacement;
- An elbow in the pit area needed to be replaced;
- Sprinkler system heads needed to be replaced.

Motion to accept the Financial Statement ending 11/30/2020. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Payment Approval Report 11/18/20 to 12/10/20 & 12/11/20 to 12/15/20** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the Payment Approval 11/18/20 to 12/10/20 & 12/11/20 to 12/15/20. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Adoption of the 2021 Budget** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to adopt the 2021 budget as presented. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

14. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There were no public comments.

Mr. Gombach noted discussions earlier this evening during an executive session that pertained to the interview process of selecting a new Police Chief. The Personnel Committee will be interviewing internal staff first and then make a recommendation to Council. Council felt that this was the best way to move forward while conversations evolve as to consolidating police departments with neighboring municipalities.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 p.m. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary