

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

January 19, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Patrick Kaag, 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; Main Street Manager Mark Ratcliffe; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Member Ryan Lineaweaver was unable to attend the meeting.

VISITORS: (In attendance via Zoom Meeting)

Karen Livingood, Resident

Maureen Hasty, Resident

Brian Adams, Resident

Rae Wheelan, Resident

Christina Shenk, Resident

Jenna Hiester, Resident

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. via Zoom, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.

2. **INTERMUNICIPAL LIQUOR LICENSE TRANSFER:** Mr. Gombach requested Council to render a decision on the request to transfer a liquor license to West Reading Borough.

Motion to deny Marahana, Inc. request for an intermunicipal liquor license transfer for the property located at 501 Penn Avenue, West Reading PA. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.** Mr. Wert abstained from the voting process based on his role in representing the Planning Commission.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Ms. Shenk expressed concerns surrounding an uncomfortable experience a friend of hers had while visiting the area and the Sunoco station at 501 Penn Avenue. Based on the hours of operation, Ms. Shenk was pleased with Council's decision to deny the request for an intermunicipal liquor license to this establishment.
4. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:** Motion to approve the December 15, 2020 regular meeting minutes and the January 4, 2021 special meeting minutes. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

5. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Ordinance – Estimated Water Billing Amendment** – This amendment would add regulations pertaining to calculating an average consumption in the event of a meter failure.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of an ordinance amendment to estimate water meter readings in the event of a meter failure. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Resolution 2021-1 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – This Resolution would extend the declaration expiration date to the February Council meeting, allowing the ability to apply for emergency disaster funding.

Motion to approve Resolution 2021-1 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency through February 16, 2021. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **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:
 - **2020 Road Project** – Application for Payment #2 from Reamstown Excavating, Inc. has been received. This would be a final payment for the Sycamore Road handicap ramp improvements in the amount of \$3,790. Mr. Unger requested approval of the payment application.

Motion to approve payment of Application No. 2 to Reamstown Excavating, Inc. in the amount of \$3,790. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- **Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge** – Mr. Unger inquired as to the right-of-way agreement for UGI to attach a gas line to the proposed Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge. Mr. Becker indicated that the document had been forwarded to the engineer's office for approval. Mr. Unger indicated that he has reviewed and approved the document. Mr. Imbesi requested the document so that he may forward the agreement to UGI. Once the document has been executed Mr. Unger will proceed with awarding a contract to Contech Engineered Solutions for a self-weathering steel pedestrian bridge. Also, comments have not yet been received from DEP regarding the joint permit application.

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

7. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Gombach reported an executive session that was held at 6:00 p.m. this evening to discuss litigation, contract and personnel matters.
8. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Mr. Gombach expressed his excitement to move forward in the year 2021 and his confidence in Borough staff members, volunteers, and fellow colleagues in delivering incredible services to the community.
9. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:**
 - a. **Appointments and Reappointments** – Mr. Imbesi stated that we neglected to reappoint Jenna Hiester and Patrick Kaag to the Environmental Advisory Council last month and requested a motion from Council.

Motion to reappoint Jenna Hiester and Patrick Kaag to the Environmental Advisory Council. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **In favor of the motion:** Mr. Wert, Mr. Lincoln, Mrs. Bressler, and Mr. Gombach. **Against the motion:** Mr. Kaag and Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-2.**

Mr. Imbesi noted receipt of a letter of interest from Rae Wheelan to serve on the Zoning Hearing Board. This appointment would provide a full Zoning Hearing Board for the first time in a number of years. Ms. Wheelan was in attendance of the meeting to answer any

questions. Mr. Wert thanked Ms. Wheelan for her interest in serving the Borough in this capacity and noted the vital importance of a Zoning Hearing Board to the community.

Motion to appoint Rae Wheelan as an Alternate Member of the Zoning Hearing Board.

Moved by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Resignation** – Mr. Imbesi noted receipt of a letter of resignation from Christin Kelley from both the Planning Commission and Economic Development Committee due to personal and professional demands. Mr. Wert indicated that Ms. Kelley was dedicated to the success of West Reading Borough while serving in these capacities for a number of years and regrettably accepts her resignation.

Motion to accept Christin Kelley's resignation from the Planning Commission and Economic Development Committee. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Comcast Audit Report** – A franchise audit was performed as part of the cable franchise agreement that was entered into with the Cohen Law Group. The findings of this audit reveal that Comcast, LLC has underpaid the Borough \$572.64. Mr. Imbesi requested approval of the audit, which would allow the Cohen Law Group to request remittance of the unpaid amount.

Motion to approve the Cohen Law Group Franchise Fee Audit Report of January 13, 2021.

Moved by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Unpaid 2020 Regular and Interim Tax Bills** – Mr. Imbesi requested authorization to sign the reports of unpaid tax bills.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager to execute the Berks County Tax Claim Bureau Certification of Unpaid 2020 Regular and Interim Tax Bills. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Employee Handbook Update** – Mr. Imbesi reported that he and the Treasurer have been working with Hubric Resources to update the employee handbook, which is being funded by Tompkins Vist Bank. The Personnel Committee is currently reviewing the modified handbook, Mr. Imbesi anticipates that the revised version of the handbook should be provided to Council next month for approval. Also, discussions are being held to revise the employee review process from a yearly basis to a quarterly basis to facilitate a better connection with staff members.

- f. **Administrative Aide Position** – Per Personnel Committee and Executive Session discussions, Mr. Imbesi requested to recategorize Helen Moyer to an Assistant Treasurer position and to hire a part-time Recreation Director and a part-time Police Administrative Aide.

Motion to recategorize Helen Moyer as Assistant Treasurer. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to authorize the advertisement of a part-time Recreation Director. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to authorize the advertisement of a part-time Police Administrative Aide. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- g. **Chief of Police Position** – Per Executive Session discussions, Mr. Imbesi requested authorization to enter into a consulting services contract with the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association in the amount of \$5,000 to search for a Chief of Police.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager to enter into a contract with the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association to search for a Chief of Police candidate in an amount not to exceed \$5,000. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Kaag requested permission to revote on the reappointments to the Environmental Advisory Council individually.

Motion to reappoint Mr. Kaag to the Environmental Advisory Council. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to reappoint Jenna Hiester to the Environmental Advisory Council. **In favor of the motion:** Mr. Wert, Mr. Lincoln, Mrs. Bressler and Mr. Gombach. **Against the motion:** Mr. Kaag and Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-2.**

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

- 10. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Kearney reported that the search continues for police vehicles. A new car has been budgeted and ordered being funded in part by insurance proceeds and raised funding. There are two used vehicle replacements still being pursued to replace the K-9 vehicle and a regular police vehicle.

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

11. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Officer-in-Charge Ryan Phillips requested permission to purchase an additional new vehicle, stating that there is a fully equipped leftover 2020 that would be honored at the same price as last year. The amount budgeted during 2021 for a vehicle replacement was \$52,000, the purchase price for the leftover 2020 is \$44,391.

Motion to approve the purchase of a replacement police vehicle in the amount of \$44,391. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Sergeant Phillips informed Council that Officer Christopher Fortin whom was hired last year is now officially off of probation. Also, Officer Gil Tinoco will be officially off of probation effective February 10, 2021. Sergeant Phillips congratulated both officers and hopes that they will remain employed by the Borough of West Reading for quite some time.

Sergeant Phillips inquired as to transport services being provided by Safety Net Sanctuary. It was noted that transport services are not part of the contract with Safety Net Sanctuary. Sergeant Phillips reported an approximate need of once or twice per month to transport animals, which would require an officer to travel out of the Borough for a one-hour round trip to Fleetwood. Mr. Imbesi noted that we have not yet received a fully executed contract from

Safety Net Sanctuary. There is a difference of approximately \$2,000 between the Animal Rescue League contract that offers transport services and the Safety Net Sanctuary contract that does not offer transport services. Unfortunately, there is not a perfect method available for animal control services.

Sergeant Phillips offered to answer any questions regarding the year-end report. Mr. Wert thanked Sergeant Phillips for the colorful analysis of the variation in services provided for the year and noted that the number of noise complaints had increased during the pandemic year, more than likely caused by residents spending more time at home.

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

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Murray requested permission to move forward with purchasing a budgeted replacement bucket truck. The price increased approximately \$200 per year over the course of a five-year lease bringing the annual payment to roughly \$15,277, a definitive cost could be locked in tomorrow with Council's approval to purchase.

Motion to approve the purchase of a replacement bucket truck as budgeted. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Mr. Murray requested feedback from Council in providing residents the ability to drop off their yard waste at the Borough Garage on the first Saturday morning of the month without an appointment during the months of April through November.

Motion to approve the first Saturday morning of the month as yard waste drop off at the Borough Garage during the months of April through November. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried. 6-0.**

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

- c. **Fire Department** - Chief Moyer referred to his report and offered to answer any questions. Mr. Wert thanked the Fire Department for delivering his daughter's last Kiddie Christmas Party gift.

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

- d. **Code Department** – Mrs. Hoffman referred to her report and offered to answer any questions. There were no questions or comments.

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

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – Mr. Ratcliffe reported that the cost to perform a traffic study with regards to creating a Pocket Park on North Sixth Avenue has been approved by the board. The results of the study should be available in a few weeks.

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

12. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mrs. Moyer requested Council to approve a change in dates for the Haunted House event due to a conflict with another event in the park.

Motion to approve the Haunted House event dates of October 22, 2021 and October 23, 2021.

Moved by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

- b. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted discussions surrounding the implementation of design standards within the business district as well as a number of potential zoning ordinance amendments that may come forward to Council later in the year.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – The January Economic Development Committee meeting was cancelled.

- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag apologized for the delay in providing Council with an annual report. The report highlighting accomplishments during the last year was forwarded to Council via email this evening. The committee voted to appoint Mr. Kaag as Chairperson and Brian Adams as Vice Chairperson. Mr. Kaag noted a number of goals that committee members are striving for this year.

Mr. Wert commended the committee for completing their very first annual report.

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

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – The January Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting was cancelled.

- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – The January Shade Tree Commission meeting was cancelled.

- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Murray referred to his report and noted progress towards productivity.

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

- h. **Personnel Committee** – Mr. Gombach reported that the Personnel Committee met to discuss the Police Chief, Recreation, Assistant Treasurer and Police Administrative Aide positions as well as review revisions to the employee handbook.

Motion to accept the Personnel Committee report. **Moved** Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- i. **Finance Committee** – The January Finance Committee meeting was cancelled.

13. **TREASURER'S REPORT:** Mrs. Rentschler mentioned that Sergeant Phillips had brought to her attention an overestimated Police Department telephone expense. Therefore, line item 01-410-319 would drop to \$15,703.

Mr. Kaag inquired as to the Borough Hall HVAC units. Mr. Murray reported that they are inspected prior to each season and only minor issues have been found.

- a. **Financial Statement Ending 12/31/2020** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Financial Statement ending 12/31/2020. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Payment Approval Report 12/16/20 to 1/14/21 & 1/15/21 to 1/19/21** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the Payment Approval Reports of 12/16/20 to 1/14/21 & 1/15/21 to 1/19/21. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Wert referred to the end of year revenues in comparison to budget and noted that more revenues were been brought in while spending was reduced during a pandemic year. The residents of the Borough should be pleased with these accomplishments.

14. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There were no public comments.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary