

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

August 17, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, August 17, 2021 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Members Patrick Kaag, Samantha Kaag, and Ryan Lineaweaver; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Chief of Police Glenn Granitz, Jr.; Recreation Director Christine Boud; Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Assistant Treasurer Helen Moyer; Interim Borough Manager & Public Works Director Dean Murray; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Engineer Tom Unger; Main Street Manager Mark Ratcliffe; Police Sergeants Wayne Holben and Chad Marks; Police Officers Kyle Bohn and Nicholas Karetas; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Vice President Philip Wert, Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln, and Council Member Jennifer Bressler were unable to attend.

VISITORS:

Karen Livingood, Resident	Denise Drobnick, Resident
Zachary Shaver, Resident	James Rogers, Resident
Stacey Shirk, Resident	Nathalie Kulesa, Resident
Carl Garman, Resident	Andrew Moletress, Resident
Benjamin Hasty, Resident (via Zoom)	Maureen Hasty, Resident (via Zoom)
Brian Adams, Resident	Oswald Herbert, Resident
Lance Parmer, Visitor (via Zoom)	Sheila Perez, Visitor
Jesse Royer, Visitor (via Zoom)	Christopher Herr, Maillie, LLP
Beth Kohl, Friends of Reading Hospital	
Christopher Winters, Nick Philippides, and Kat Royer of Olivet Boys & Girls Club	

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call. A moment of silence was requested to remember those impacted by the COVID-19 Delta variant.
2. **PRESENTATION:**
 - a. **Police Officer Award Presentation** – Chief Granitz expressed his privilege and pleasure to award Officer Kyle Bohn with a Life Saving Award. Mayor Kearney read the commendation aloud, which noted an incident within the 500 block of Penn Avenue on July 27, 2021 where an unresponsive male was reported to be in cardiac arrest and was recognized by Officer Bohn, by several indicators, that this incident was an overdose. Officer Bohn administered two doses of Naloxone that succeeded in reviving the male. Officer's Bohn's immediate and decisive actions brought a positive outcome to this incident.
 - b. **Maillie, LLP Audit Report** – Mr. Herr provided a summary of their opinion on the financial statements of the Borough and noted one finding that resulted in a recommendation to improve internal controls in relation to sewer billing. There has been an improvement towards the percentage of funding of the Police Pension plans. Revenues increased primarily due to rate increases in 2020, however a net decrease in revenues was reported to be caused by the pandemic for items such as a reduction in large building projects and recreation revenues. Public Safety expenditures rose 12% in 2020 due to salaries and benefits, however, total expenditures were down 9% due to a reduction in recreation expenses. A radio

equipment loan that was paid in full in 2019, in addition to a large water main project that was completed in 2019. Overall, it was a good audit that was consistent with prior year audits.

- c. **Turnkey Taxes Update** – A representative from Turnkey Taxes provided a status update in lieu of attending tonight's meeting.
- d. **Olivet Boys & Girls Club** – Mr. Winters, CEO of Olivet Boys and Girls Club shared information on their pursuit of an agreement with the Wyomissing School District to provide after school and summer programs at the West Reading Elementary Center. This will benefit the West Reading Community and Wyomissing Area School District. It was noted that there are no similar programs available in the area, and that the current target is for 5th and 6th grade students. The program would work in collaboration with teachers to coordinate support needs for approximately thirty students in year-one and expand from there. The program will focus on academic success, healthy lifestyles, good character and citizenship. There will be assistance with homework, reading enrichment programs, social learning, and sport/recreational activities. It was noted that the school district will not be funding the program, only offering the space. Mr. Winters stressed that this program is being developed to serve the 700 West Reading Elementary Center students that reside within the West Reading zip code.

Chief Granitz noted a recent meeting with the Superintendent and Principal to share ideas and that he looks forward to working with the Olivet Boys and Girls Club.

Motion to draft a letter of support of the Olivet Boys and Girls Club West Reading Elementary Center after school program for the school district meeting scheduled next week. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- e. **Reading Hospital Road Run** – Mr. Gombach stated for full disclosure purposes he will be recusing himself from this conversation since he sits on the Board of the Friends of Reading Hospital. Beth Kohl introduced herself as the Secretary of the Friends of Reading Hospital and Chair of the annual road run event. The date requested for the 2021 event is Sunday, October 17th beginning on Seventh Avenue and covering portions of West Reading, Wyomissing, City of Reading and Spring Township for a half marathon, run/walk, and 5K. A special event application has been submitted and Ms. Kohl offered to answer questions about the event and requested support of the application and waiver of fees for barriers or cones. Friends of Reading Hospital is a 501(c)(3) organization that enhances healthcare for the community by fundraising for programs that recently provided a disinfection robot donated to Reading Hospital, and PPE equipment for local EMS providers. Similar to the 2019 event, labor costs will be paid for all public works and police service hours.

Mr. Lineaweaver referred to Chief Granitz and Mr. Murray for their feedback in supporting this event on October 17th. Chief Granitz noted internal discussions and County resources that will enable the Borough to provide adequate services for this event.

Motion to approve the request for fee waiver associated with barricades and no parking signs for the October 17, 2021 Friends of Reading Hospital Road Run event. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 3-0.**

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Adams apologized for his emotional outburst last month noting the detriment to his business from an alleged public discrimination investigation and asked why he is being denied access to the investigation results.

Ms. Shirk noted her involvement in the discrimination investigation and asked what evidence sparked the investigation. Mr. Gombach indicated that the primary focus of the investigation was to investigate the conduct of Borough Officials, Borough Employees and the government of the Borough of West Reading.

Mr. Adams questioned a change to the agenda noting that only residents and taxpayers may address Council. Mr. Gombach indicated that this is at the discretion of the person Chairing the meeting and that he was not in attendance of last month's meeting. Mr. Gombach does allow a bit of leeway in how he responds and engages comments based on the good of the community. A draft summary report of the investigation by independent council has been received this evening. However, due to the number of Council Members that are not present this evening it has been decided to refrain from accepting this draft document until next month. The investigation has concluded and the findings are in-line with what was expected. With regards to public access to the document, this will be in accordance with Right-to-Know Law Section 708(b)(17). It was clarified that an oral report of the investigation was received last month and a draft written report was received this evening.

Mr. Rogers noted his attendance to the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting this month and his recommendation to add two parking spaces on Franklin Street from Yarnell Street to Second Avenue. He recommended establishing this roadway as a snow emergency route to ensure that vehicles are not parked on the steep grade during slippery road conditions.

Mr. Rogers indicated that Franklin Manor Apartments neglected to pay their Business Privilege Tax for twenty-one years and hopes that Turnkey Taxes can begin collecting this outstanding debt. Mr. Gombach stated that Turnkey Taxes is performing a thorough review and will be providing updates in the future.

Mr. Garman expressed his concerns of the volatile atmosphere of the Country today in regards to discrimination and the responsibility to defend yourself when an accusation is made. The people who made these accusations and expressed a fear of visiting West Reading were volunteering their time to our community while questioning the reputations of respected men and women of the Borough. Mr. Gombach stated that the Police Department did an exceptional job and cooperated fully with the investigators, they were very open and transparent about the incident. Our men and women need to be recognized for how they conduct themselves under pressure.

4. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve the July 16, 2021 special meeting minutes, and the July 20, 2021 regular meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Brian Adams, Sheila Perez, and Stacey Shirk departed the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

5. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Resolution 2021-13 Intergovernmental Agreement with the County of Berks to Provide Emergency Dispatch Services** – Mr. Murray noted a history of annual agreements for service, this new agreement would establish a more uniform annual cost for services.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2021-13 to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with the County of Berks to provide emergency dispatch services. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- b. **Resolution 2021-14 Intergovernmental Agreement with Wyomissing Borough for Use of Pickleball and Tennis Courts** – Mr. Gombach stated that West Reading residents can now use the Wyomissing tennis courts.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2021-14 to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with the Borough of Wyomissing for shared resident use of tennis and pickleball courts. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- c. **Ordinance - Time Limit Parking Amendment** – Mr. Murray noted this first group of parking regulations that have been reviewed by the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee and the recommendation to authorize the advertisement of an amendment.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of an amendment to Section 430-24 Time Limit Parking. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- d. **Ordinance - Animals** – Mr. Gombach noted amendments to this ordinance to prohibit tethering of an unattended domestic animal as a means of restraint contingent upon solicitor comments. These changes are intended to prevent another dog attack in the Borough.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of an amendment to Chapter 152 Animals. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

6. **CONSULTANT'S REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker stated that he had nothing new to report that is not otherwise covered on the agenda.

- b. **Engineer's Report** – Mr. Unger did not have any action items for this month. He provided an update to the progress on the pedestrian bridge stating that the bridge has been set and UGI Utilities, Inc. should finish the installation of their gas line by August 20th. At that time the general contractor will finish the railing and sidewalks.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Mr. Unger departed the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

7. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Gombach noted an executive session that was held at 6:00 p.m. this evening to discuss personnel and litigation matters.

8. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Mr. Gombach stated that a meeting was held with delegation of the Borough, Representative Mark Rozzi and his team, and Senator Judy Schwank and her team to discuss different grant opportunities as it relates to planning and parking for our Borough. The hope is that these grant opportunities would lead to a Borough-wide study to address these major concerns.

The Borough's COVID task force met to discuss the Delta variant. From a PPE perspective we are well stocked, and internal COVID policies are being reviewed to ensure that best practices from the state and Centers for Disease Control are being followed.

Finally, in an effort to engage residents in the upcoming budgeting process Mr. Gombach has instituted office hours where one hour prior to the Borough Council meetings residents can ask a Council Member questions either in person, via telephone or a Zoom meeting.

Motion to accept the Council President's report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

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

- a. **Audit Report** – Mr. Murray requested action be taken to accept the auditor's reports.

Motion to accept the 2020 DCED Audit performed by Maillie, LLP. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Motion to accept the 2020 Tax Collector Audit performed by Maillie, LLP. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- b. **Animal Control Services Contract** – Mr. Murray reported that the Animal Rescue League Contract has been finalized. Safety Net Sanctuary was requested to refund the remaining portion of this year's contract costs, which was denied. Safety Net Sanctuary offered to provide secondary services for the remainder of the year.
- c. **COVID ARPA Local Recovery Funding** – Mr. Murray noted the first installment was received and is being held in a separate account. It is now thought that these funds could be utilized in the General Fund based on the loss of revenue last year. We are unsure at this time as to what the parameters for use of the second installment of funds will be that is scheduled for release next year.
- d. **Vehicle/Equipment Sale** – Mr. Murray requested permission to sell the old Fire Police vehicle, which is a 2011 Dodge Charger, eleven sections of five-inch hosing, three unused tailgates, and a few miscellaneous items that have not been in use.
- Motion to authorize the sale of the 2011 Dodge Charger and miscellaneous unused items through Public Surplus auction system. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**
- e. **2020 Census** – Mr. Murray noted the release of official counts from the 2020 Census, which indicates that the Borough has increased the number of residents by 8.1% or 341 people. The total number of residents is 4,553.
- f. **Fire Police Services** – A letter will be drafted to request Fire Police services for future events. Mr. Murray requested authorization for the Solicitor to review this document.

Motion to authorize the Solicitor to review a request for Fire Police services letter. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- g. **IT Support** – Mr. Murray noted review of infrastructure technology support services, including copier support to enter into a new contract for services next year.

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

10. MAYOR'S REPORT:

Mayor Kearney read his report aloud noting the following:

National Night Out was an enjoyable event for the community. During this event an Outstanding Community Service Award was presented to James and Karen Livingood. Mayor Kearney thanked the Livingood's for being exemplary citizens.

Mayor Kearney noted preparations to protect residents and visitors from the COVID-19 Delta Variant.

Mayor Kearney thanked Ms. Shenk for organizing a wine walk that brought hundreds of visitors to Penn Avenue. He also noted a successful sidewalk sale event organized by the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation.

As requested by the President of the Reading Pride Celebration the Mayor will be speaking briefly during an event to be held on Sunday, August 22nd.

Lastly, a wind storm brought a street pole down on Penn Avenue on August 11th, thankfully no one was injured and the damage was confined to the pole. Mayor Kearney thanked the Public Works Department for their rapid response to move the pole, which allowed traffic to flow along Penn Avenue.

Motion to accept the Mayor's report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

11. DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Granitz reported that he views things in a couple different ways and will gladly provide any information that is not normally included in the monthly Police report to Council. He likes to review statistics and to be out interacting with the public. The item that jumps out on the report to him was the increased number of calls for service, which rose 21% year-to-date. Crime statistics are doing well, which is a credit to the men and women of the Borough, including communication from residents, which is a welcome change to what he was accustomed to in the past. Another impressive statistic is the time on location averaging one and a half to two minutes. Aggressive driver operations have increased, Chief Granitz thanked the Public Works Department in assisting with the establishment of a few more locations to respond to issues and concerns as witnessed by residents and business owners.

Chief Granitz thanked staff members for their assistance in preparing for a successful National Night Out. The Chief congratulated the Livingoods' for their Outstanding Community Service Award. He also noted that Officer Bohn is a unique individual that responds well under

pressure with the ability to recognize and analyze a situation to provide the correct method of care. Chief Granitz is glad that Officer Bohn is being recognized by his peers with the Life Saving Award.

Mr. Gombach expressed his appreciation to Chief Granitz as to the improved communications with residents, stating that this goes a long way to building trust and support of our Police Department. Chief Granitz indicated that they are looking to utilize more automated options within the Crimewatch webpage to provide residents further avenues of communication with the department.

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Murray referred to the report and noted a recent valve rupture at the Western Berks Water Authority plant. Emergency water services were smoothly transitioned to Reading Area Water Authority without the need to boil water. As of yesterday, we successfully transitioned back to Western Berks Water Authority service. Mr. Murray reported that this was a great team effort by all parties. He also reported a water main break on Parkside Drive North last weekend.

Mr. Lineaweaver thanked the Public Works Department for their efforts even in the middle of the night.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer offered to answer any questions regarding the fire report. He highlighted a notation in his report of Fire Marshal Troy Hatt performing an inspection of the Berkshire Village apartment building where fire alarms were found to not operate properly, and all of which were not calling out to dispatch emergency personnel. Mr. Hatt promptly notified the owners to rectify these issues. Chief Moyer thanked Council Members for deciding to partner with the Township of Spring to provide these life safety fire inspections. There are numerous examples, this one being the largest thus far, where your actions could have avoided a catastrophe.

Mr. Gombach expressed his appreciation of the grant funding opportunities that are pursued by the fire department.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- d. **Code Department** – In Mrs. Hoffman's absence, Mr. Murray offered to answer any questions regarding her report. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – Mr. Ratcliffe referred to his report and spoke of repayment of the parking kiosk loan. It was thought that the Borough's

repayment schedule was half of the paid parking revenues until the loan was paid in full. Mr. Gombach asked for time to review this documentation prior to taking any action.

Motion to accept the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

12. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Ms. Boud noted two action items, the Recreation Commission has made a recommendation that Borough Council waive the \$250 bonfire fee for the Wyomissing Area Football Parents Association homecoming parade on September 17th. The second request was to hire Hailey Schmeck as a lifeguard at \$9.25 per hour.

Motion to waive the \$250 bonfire fee for the Wyomissing Area Football Parents Association Homecoming Parade on September 17, 2021. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Motion to approve the hiring of Hailey Schmeck as a lifeguard at \$9.25 per hour. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Mr. Lineaweaver requested any further anticipated pool closings. Ms. Boud could not guarantee that there would be no further pool closings due to a lack in staffing. She has reached out to other pools to request sharing of staff members and they are also short on staff. Non-residents have been turned away in an effort to stay below capacity limits. Future closures will be posted on the Recreation Facebook page now that she has access to this page.

Motion to accept the Recreation Director's report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- b. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Murray offered to answer questions regarding the meeting. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – The minutes and Committee Chairperson were unavailable for comment this evening.

- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag referred to the minutes and noted discussions regarding a composting program. Renewable energy options are being reviewed to potentially save money, and a date has been set for the fall Borough cleanup on September 19th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with a rain date of September 26th.

Motion to accept the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Murray shared an action item to consider approval of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Information Technology (IT) services to pursue a service provider effective January 1, 2022.

Motion to approve the Request for Proposal for Information Technology Support Services as presented. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – Mr. Kaag noted review of tree removal and trimming schedules, and Spotted Lanternfly treatments. Mr. Kaag had introduced information on the Bare Root Tree Program that is available through the PA Urban and Community Forestry Council to potentially qualify for twenty large caliper bare root trees. A preliminary application will be submitted to determine qualification for the program.

Motion to accept the Shade Tree Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Murray referred to the report and offered to answer any questions, he noted that CPR training updates for staff may be obtained through either the police or fire departments. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- h. **Personnel Committee** – Mr. Gombach noted that the Personnel Committee met and entered into executive session to discuss the search for a Borough Manager.

Motion to accept the Personnel Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

13. TREASURER'S REPORT:

- a. **2021 General Obligation Bond Update** – Mrs. Rentschler reported that on July 7th we received \$689,291 that was deposited into the General Fund account to reimburse pre-payment of the fire truck purchase.

- b. **Financial Statement Ending 7/31/2021** – Mrs. Rentschler offered to answer questions. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Financial Statement ending 7/31/2021. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 4-0.**

- b. **Payment Approval Report 7/21/21 to 8/12/21 & 8/13/21 to 8/17/21** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the Payment Approval Reports of 7/21/21 to 8/12/21 and 8/13/21 to 8/17/21. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Motion to accept the Treasurer's report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

14. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mrs. Livingood thanked the Council President for breaking through the wall of Wyomissing Borough for use of the tennis courts. She asked if West Reading residents would be allowed to also ice skate at the Stone House Pond. Mr. Gombach noted that Wyomissing officials seem more open and receptive to partnering with us on mutual beneficial items.

Mrs. Livingood noted her regular attendance at the pool and she wanted to publicly commend Ms. Boud for the job she has been doing during this difficult summer season.

Mr. Rogers asked if the Borough still owes money for the parking kiosks. Mr. Gombach indicated that this information needs to be researched.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary