

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

**September 21, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.**

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, September 21, 2021 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Jennifer Bressler, 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; Interim Borough Manager & Public Works Director Dean Murray; Public Works Team Leader Kerry Grassley; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Engineer Tom Unger; Main Street Manager Mark Ratcliffe; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

**VISITORS:**

Denise Drobnick, Resident	Christina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner
Zachary Shaver, Resident	James Rogers, Resident
Nathalie Kulesa, Resident	Brian Adams, Resident
Carl Garman, Resident	Kacie Rodriguez, Resident
Rafael Torres, Resident	Sheila Perez, Visitor
Joseph Garapola, West Reading Pickleball Association	
Santiago Serrano, U.S. Representative Chrissy Houlahan	

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call. A moment of silence was observed.
2. **PRESENTATION:**
  - a. **Representative Chrissy Houlahan** – Santiago Serrano, a Constituent Advocate for U.S. Representative Chrissy Houlahan provided an overview of services that are provided by their offices that are located in the City of Reading, West Chester, and Washington, DC. Mr. Serrano noted the following:
    - Commitment to fighting for access to quality, affordable healthcare and working to build a strong, stable economy that benefits everyone.
    - Communication efforts to work with constituents and assistance in dealing with federal agencies.
    - Leadership during the pandemic to provide updates to small business owners as to relevant programs such as PPP.
    - Securing funds for local projects such as: bridge replacements; improved public transportation access; stormwater repairs; electric vehicle charging stations; mobile medical facility for low-income and rural Pennsylvania; STEM programs at Albright College; and youth vocational training.
    - Legislative actions in passing the American Rescue Plan and Invest in America Act.

Mr. Gombach noted the good standing relationship the Borough has with Representative Houlahan and her assistance in helping displaced families of Franklin Manor earlier this year. Mr. Gombach has enjoyed this working relationship and looks forward to working together in the future.

Mr. Serrano provided business cards and flyers and departed the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

- b. **West Reading Pickleball Association** – Joseph Garapola, President of the West Reading Pickleball Board of Directors noted the increased activity at the newly transformed Pickleball court area that has been donated by Fromuth Tennis. This new attraction has brought people from as far as York, Pennsylvania. Tonight, is the first night of the Pickleball League, which should generate additional foot traffic to the local businesses. Next spring the Association is planning a Pickleball team sponsorship with local bars. Mr. Garapola indicated that the sport is a lot of fun for all ages, and he encouraged everyone to give it a try.

Mr. Garapola departed the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Adams reported that Sheila Perez would read aloud his written statement. Ms. Perez (in Mr. Adams' words) requested that the minutes reflect the following comments in their entirety noting a disparity in the July 2021 minutes regarding comments made by Brian Adams and Ms. Perez concerning the discrimination investigation report findings. It was indicated that the April 2021 meeting minutes reflected comments of non-resident visitors. However, the minutes failed to mention that the incident in question fully pertained to double-parking in a residential area. It was indicated that the investigation findings were unfounded on the basis of discrimination but rather a personality issue. It was noted that Mr. Adams expressed his entitlement to a copy of this report and a verbal and written apology, and that his written statement be included with the September approval of minutes in October.

Mr. Rogers requested that consideration be given to adding regulations to the parking ordinance that is up for adoption this evening as to his recommended creation of one or two parking spaces on Franklin Street between Yarnell Street and Second Avenue and to designate this area as a snow emergency route to avoid incidents during slippery road conditions. Mr. Lincoln indicated that the ordinance that is up for adoption this evening pertains to time limit parking and that the snow emergency aspect would fall under a separate section of the ordinances. Further discussions are needed to consider this aspect.

4. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve the August 17, 2021 regular meeting minutes, and the August 24, 2021, August 31, 2021, and September 11, 2021 budget meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

5. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Resolution 2021-15 Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) Emergency Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Grant Application** – Chief Granitz noted that last summer the state awarded grant funding through PEMA to municipalities based on population to offset expenses associated with the civil disturbance and unrest throughout the Commonwealth. Chief Granitz indicated that there is no match required for this award and requested a resolution authorizing execution of all grant documents.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2021-15 authorizing application and execution of Emergency Federal Law Enforcement Assistance grant documentation. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Ordinance 1142 Time Limit Parking** – It was noted that this ordinance amendment addresses discrepancies within the ordinance regulations with regards to what is currently signed on the street and brings time limit parking regulations into consistency throughout the Borough for enforcement purposes.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 1142 Time Limit Parking amendment. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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 noted that the 2021 road paving project is slated to begin this evening and that additional curb patching will be completed after paving has been completed.

The Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge project has been completed. UGI Utilities, Inc. has completed their installation of a gas main to the bridge, sidewalks have been completed, railings installed, and stormwater controls have been added. Mr. Unger requested approval of Payment Application No. 2 to DESCCO Design and Construction in the amount of \$25,323.41.

Motion to approve Payment Application No. 2 to DESCCO Design and Construction in the amount of \$25,323.41. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Unger also requested approval of the final payment application, Payment Application No. 3 in the amount of \$8,541.41 paying the retainage.

Motion to approve Payment Application No. 3 to DESCCO Design and Construction in the amount of \$8,541.41. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Reduction No. 1 to the Financial Improvement Agreement Letter of Credit has been received from Nickel Properties, LLC for progress made to the 428 Penn Avenue project. The amount or reduction requested is \$55,158.87. This reduction would leave a balance of \$59,510.96.

Motion to approve Reduction No. 1 to the Letter of Credit for Nickel Properties, LLC improvements to 428 Penn Avenue in the amount of \$55,158.87. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Unger reported that PVC piping is still unavailable for the Linden Lane sewer project. A delivery schedule has not yet been established; however, he is hopeful that this material should be available to complete the project this year.

An accessibility audit report from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry has been received based on a review of commercial projects permitted under the Uniform Construction Code and inspected within the last five years. There were notations of items installed less than an inch outside of accessibility guidelines. Mr. Unger stated that there are no repercussions to their findings and indicated that more time will be spent performing these types of inspections to avoid audit findings in the future.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Unger departed the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

7. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Gombach noted an executive session that was held on September 2, 2021 to discuss personnel, and again this evening to discuss personnel and litigation matters.
8. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Mr. Gombach noted the thorough search for a Chief of Police and that Council was thrilled with the process and findings that they decided to use a private partner to find our next Borough Manager. After a thorough and exhaustive search, the next chosen Borough Manager is Dean Murray.

Mr. Murray thanked everyone for their confidence in him and noted his pleasure working for the Borough the last twenty-nine years and looks forward to the next fifteen years of service as Borough Manager.

Mr. Gombach stated that Mr. Murray laid out a clear vision for the Borough that focused on the essentials, and tasks needed to continue the growth of our Borough financially and to ensure that residents are getting the most from us.

Motion to extend an offer of conditional employment to Dean Murray to serve as Borough Manager. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Gombach stated that it was brought to his attention recently that the Borough could be doing more to create a safe, diverse, and inclusive community for people of color, sexual orientation and other background socioeconomics. Because there is a bit of an education process to determine where the Borough is deficient, Mrs. Bressler has agreed to Chair a specialty task force that will review ordinances and internal policies and bring recommendations to move forward. Borough staff and community partners will be requested to join this task force which will be announced in the future. Given the nature of this task force Mr. Gombach requested a motion to approve this undertaking.

Motion to approve Jennifer Bressler to Chair a specialty task force to make recommendations to create a safe, diverse and inclusive community. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mayor Kearney inquired as to Mr. Imbesi's efforts a few years ago that may have resulted in the enactment of a resolution pertaining to nondiscrimination. It was noted that a partnership had been established with the City of Reading and that no ordinance or resolution had been enacted.

9. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** In addition to reading his written report, the Mayor noted his attendance to the PA Downtown Center Conference last week and that an award was presented to the Cocuzza family for the redevelopment of the West Reading Motor Club, formerly the A-Z Building.
  - a. **COVID-19** – The Mayor expressed his firm belief in continuing to protect against transmission of the virus due to the rising threat.
  - b. **Reading Science Center** – The Mayor requested support of the Reading Science Center that is located at 645 Penn Street in the City of Reading. Founder Jim Cinelli is improving lives by

instilling in children a desire to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

- c. **Retreat Behavioral Health** – This organization provides counseling services for individuals with substance use or mental health issues and would like to address Borough Council in October as to their services.
- d. **Fall Fest Event** – Mayor Kearney thanked the Public Works Department and the West Reading Police Department for making the 2021 Fall Festival event hosted by the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF) a success and noted that Penn Avenue was reopened by 9:00 p.m.
- e. **Community Cleanup Event** – Mayor Kearney noted his three-hour participation in the fall cleanup event this past weekend.
- f. **Event Security Funds** – Mayor Kearney intends to begin discussions with the WRCRF to begin providing financial support of the security services rendered by the West Reading Police Department for the annual Art on the Avenue and Fall Festival events.
- g. **Alcohol in the Park** – The Mayor requested Council to reconsider allowing alcohol consumption in the playground and park area during events.

Motion to accept the Mayor's report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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

- a. **Landfill Contract** – Mr. Murray noted the pending expiration of this contract effective January 31, 2022. Mr. Becker recommended reviewing landfill space contract options. Pioneer Crossing has not yet provided contract renewal information.
- b. **Parking Agreement** – Mr. Murray referred to a Parking Agreement drafted by the Solicitor to allow the County of Berks to park their vehicles within the Borough Garage premises, and in return the County would continue the painting of yellow curbing and removal of graffiti within the Borough. Mr. Wert recommended that graffiti removal be addressed in a timelier manner than thirty-days to deter additional renderings. Chief Granitz shared his experience where the renderings are fueled by notoriety and recognition and recommended a twenty-four-to-forty-eight-hour timeframe for removal. It was agreed to revise the agreement to twenty-four hours for removal of graffiti prior to presenting the agreement to the County of Berks.
- c. **Cleaning Services** – Mr. Murray reported recent issues with the cleaning company and the pursuit of an alternate cleaning service for both the Administration and Police Department offices.
- d. **Vehicle/Equipment Sale** – Mr. Murray reported that the 2011 Dodge Charge Fire Police vehicle has sold on auction for \$5,500.

Motion to approve the auction sale price for the 2011 Dodge Charger in the amount of \$5,500. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

**11. DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Granitz highlighted a few items within his report, specifically the calls for service statistics that have increased from pandemic numbers last year, which is expected. However, this number is higher than 2019 records and is something that will be monitored. Chief Granitz noted the unfathomable dispatch and response time of 1.42 minutes.

It was noted that the months of September and October are busy with community events. The following are a few functions of their own that are planned in the near future:

- September 24<sup>th</sup> - Coffee with the Chief at Simply Bold. These proceeds will benefit the K-9 program.
- September 25<sup>th</sup> – The Chief and Officer Breitenstein along with K-9 Zea will be featured on the WFMZ morning show and take part in the Pipes 4 Paws motorcycle event, some of these proceeds will benefit Zea.
- September 27<sup>th</sup> – Pickleball with the Police.
- October 6<sup>th</sup> – National Coffee with a Cop Day at Wawa in Wyomissing with the Wyomissing Police Department.
- October 16<sup>th</sup> – K-9 Demo at the Out in the Park Event

Chief Granitz reminded everyone of the rolling street closures associated with the Friends of Reading Hospital half-marathon and 5K event on Sunday, October 17<sup>th</sup>. There is a good deal of additional manpower for this event provided by the fire police, as lined up by Fire Chief Moyer, and the Sheriff's Department. He noted his experience in planning large events such as Music Fest in Bethlehem and the Allentown Fair. Fall Fest was a great event to be a part of, he is proud of our Officers and the partnership with a number of other agencies during this event. The Public Works Department also did a great job shutting down the roadway and reopening at the end of the event.

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Murray offered to answer any questions regarding the report, and noted the intent to list various unused tailgates and five-inch hoses for sale.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer offered to answer any questions regarding the fire report. He noted that fire prevention week is October 3<sup>rd</sup> through the 9<sup>th</sup> and reminded everyone to replace the batteries in their smoke detectors. Chief Moyer noted that normally the open house event coincides with fire prevention week, however, this year it has been scheduled on October 17<sup>th</sup> along with the Chicken BBQ Dinner.

Mr. Lineaweaver expressed his appreciation of the fire department arriving so quickly to extinguish a fire in the home next to his, and staying for a while to ensure there were no flareups.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Code Department** – Mrs. Hoffman offered to answer questions regarding her report and noted a complaint received last week regarding lights strung in front of the Allison Clothing Store. Since that time five additional businesses have installed string lights in front of their establishments. Mrs. Hoffman requested Council to provide written guidance or regulations on how to address lights that are located within the right-of-way.

Mr. Gombach asked that the Main Street Manager look into how other Main Street communities regulate items placed in the right-of-way. He also noted that Harrisburg allows businesses to use hooks to hang lights. Further guidance will be reviewed and provided at a later date.

Mr. Kaag asked if there was a way to track repeat property maintenance offenders. Mrs. Hoffman indicated that a search of the monthly reports could be done.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – Mr. Ratcliffe noted a great Fall Fest event this year. He felt this year was the best setup, breakdown though is still a bit like herding cats. The estimated attendance has not yet been determined from the drone footage. Mr. Ratcliffe noted that the drone coverage could be used for future event promotions. There are more store openings such as Betsy's Boutique in the 500 block of Penn Avenue and Mendez Flooring moving to the 300 block of Penn Avenue. The PA Downtown Center Conference was nice and recognized the West Reading Motor Club for the best façade renovation statewide. These conferences are great for networking. Mr. Gombach was able to speak with other Main Street Managers whom were impressed with how committed Borough Council, staff members and the community are to our Main Street Program. Our relationship and dynamic with the WRCRF is truly unique. Mr. Ratcliffe noted that sixty Main Street Managers took a tour of the mural corridor and three of our restaurants, B2 Bistro, Beer Wall, and the West Reading Motor Club opened their doors on a Monday evening in order to accommodate the tour.

Motion to accept the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

## 12. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Ms. Boud noted one action item, the West Reading Pickleball Association has requested an additional night for the Pickleball League due to popular demand. The request is for Monday through Thursday evening, which the Recreation Commission has unanimously voted in favor of the change in schedule. Four courts would remain available to the public for use during the league timeframes.

Motion to approve the West Reading Pickleball Association Pickleball League extension of Monday through Thursday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. through December 31, 2021. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Ms. Boud noted their next event that is in conjunction with the LGBTQ Out in the Park scheduled on October 16<sup>th</sup>.

Motion to accept the Recreation Director's report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Ratcliffe and Ms. Boud departed the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

- b. **Planning Commission** – The September Planning Commission meeting was cancelled.
- c. **Economic Development Committee** – The September Economic Development Committee meeting was cancelled. Mr. Wert reviewed highlights of the August meeting noting new members to the Wyomissing Foundation that includes a member from Reading Hospital and Drexel University. The state-of-the-art new medical school building is attracting thousands of applicants, however full capacity is 200 students. Housing continues to be an issue for faculty and students. Economic Development continues to trend upward.

Mr. Gombach noted an interest by these students to become involved civically and in service opportunities. He plans to devise fun ways to integrate them into our community.

Motion to accept the August Economic Development Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag referred to the minutes and noted discussions regarding renewable energy options and a plastic bag ban. The successful fall Borough cleanup last weekend yielded approximately three hundred pounds of trash from the clover leaf area, Penn Avenue and various Borough streets.

Mr. Gombach inquired as to Borough-wide composting research. The Borough of Media, Pennsylvania utilizes their Public Works Department to collect composting material on a weekly basis, which reduced trash tonnage by thirty-percent.

Motion to accept the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – The September Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting was cancelled.
- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – The September Shade Tree Commission meeting was cancelled.
- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Murray referred to the report and offered to answer any questions, he noted that these meetings are getting further in depth. Recommendations for topics are welcomed.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

### 13. TREASURER'S REPORT:



- a. **Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System (PMRS) 2022 Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO)** – Mrs. Rentschler reported that five-percent of non-uniform wages during the year 2022 equates to \$61,740 as the MMO.

Motion to approve the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System 2022 Minimum Municipal Obligation of \$61,740. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs 2022 Non-Uniformed Pension Plan MMO** – Mrs. Rentschler reported that no funds are needed next year for this defined benefit.

Motion to approve the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs 2022 Non-Uniformed Pension Plan Minimum Municipal Obligation of zero dollars. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs 2022 Police Pension Plan** – Mrs. Rentschler noted the two options of MMO of \$391,459 or the recommended MMO based upon market value of assets of \$430,595. It was noted that in the past the minimum had been approved and should funds be available during the budget process we could increase the amount up to the market value of assets.

Motion to approve the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs 2022 Police Pension Plan Minimum Municipal Obligation of \$391,459. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Financial Statement Ending 8/31/2021** – Mrs. Rentschler offered to answer questions. Mr. Wert noted that the business privilege tax has earned an additional \$17,280 above the budgeted amount, or 108.2 percent of anticipated revenue.

Motion to accept the Financial Statement ending 8/31/2021. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Payment Approval Report 8/18/21 to 9/16/21 & 9/17/21 to 9/21/21** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the Payment Approval Reports of 8/18/21 to 9/16/21 & 9/17/21 to 9/21/21. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Treasurer's report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

**14. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Ms. Shenk requested that Council take into consideration while deliberating on the welcoming ambience of string lights within the right-of-way in front of businesses that the height restrictions are within the height of the storefront and that they are fastened securely. Mr. Gombach described a clamp that would attach to street poles or trees without causing damage to the façade. Ms. Shenk shared that the business meeting is planning approximately three small additional events each month such as a mystery tour. She requested contact information for the local colleges to include them on event notifications.

Mr. Rogers spoke of a right to know request that he submitted with six questions regarding the paid parking program and noted the 197 pages of information he received that he is currently working through. The net income question however could not be answered because this type of report does not exist. Mr. Gombach requested additional time to determine if this report could be generated. Mr. Rogers went on to discuss repayment of the \$28,000 parking kiosk machines to the WRCRF, which was partially funded through \$9,000 of grant funds gifted by BB&T Bank. He felt that the paid parking program was not being enforced based on the number of tickets issued during the Art on the Avenue. Mr. Wert reported that paid parking is not enforced during festival days.

Chief Moyer reminded businesses that the string lights may not be powered by an extension cord for more than thirty days per the Fire Code.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary