

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

October 20, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Wednesday, October 20, 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 Joan London; Chief of Police Glenn Granitz, Jr.; Recreation Director Christine Boud; Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Borough Manager Dean Murray; Public Works Team Leader Kerry Grassley; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Code Department Manager Cathy Hoffman (via Zoom); Engineer Tom Unger; Sergeant Ryan Phillips; Police Officer Nicholas Karetas (via Zoom); Main Street Manager Mark Ratcliffe; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS:

Denise Drobnick, Resident
James Rogers, Resident
Carl Garman, Resident
Michael Witmyer, Resident
Susan Fisher, Resident

Zachary Shaver, Resident
Nathalie Kulesa, Resident
Karen Livingood, Resident
Suzanne Thompson, Resident

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., which was followed by a moment of silence, the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**
Mr. Rogers shared information that he obtained from a Right-to-Know request noting that Snapbox Storage has not yet obtained a business license. Based on this finding Mr. Rogers indicated that the system of finding and collecting business privilege tax and license fees are still not functioning properly.
3. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**
Motion to approve the September 21, 2021 regular meeting minutes, and the September 28, 2021, and October 16, 2021 budget meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**
4. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**
 - a. **Resolution 2021-16 Police Pension Contribution for the Year 2022** – Per Act 30, Police Pension contributions are to be authorized on an annual basis.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2021-16 affirming the members' contributions to the Police Pension Plan of 8% for the year 2022. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**
 - b. **Resolution 2021-17 Disposal of Municipal Records** – A list of municipal records from the Treasurer's office were presented for disposal in accordance to the Municipal Records Manual.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2021-17 authorizing the disposal of listed municipal records from the Treasurer's office. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Ordinance – Handicapped Parking Space Amendment** – This amendment would remove handicapped parking spaces from Chestnut Street and Pine Street and add a handicapped parking space to the 100 block of Franklin Street.

Motion to authorize advertisement of an ordinance amendment to remove and add handicapped parking spaces. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

5. **CONSULTANT’S REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor’s Report** – Ms. London stated that she had nothing new to report that is not otherwise covered on the agenda.
- b. **Engineer’s Report** – Mr. Unger noted that Payment Application No. 1 to DESCCO Design and Construction for the Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge in the amount of \$51,549.27 was not brought to Council’s attention prior to approval of Payment Application No. 2 and No. 3 last month. Mr. Unger requested a motion to approve this payment application.

Motion to approve Payment Application No. 1 to DESCCO Design and Construction for the Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge project in the amount of \$51,549.27. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Unger reported that the paving project has been completed. Curb patching and a punch list of items are being addressed. An application for payment has not yet been submitted for this project.

The Linden Lane sewer project is still delayed due to a shortage of PVC pipe fittings. The new projected date to begin is December. However, depending on weather conditions this project may be postponed until March of 2022.

Mr. Unger referred to the favorable comments within the PA DEP approval letter, dated October 6, 2021, that is addressed to the Wyomissing Valley Joint Municipal Authority pertaining to the annual Chapter 94 Wasteload Management Report.

Following the September Council meeting it was reported that one of the Code Enforcement Officers had resigned. Mr. Unger was happy to report that a replacement has been found and began working last Monday. This individual has five-years of experience in property maintenance, code enforcement and rental inspections. It was requested that the Mayor swear in Mr. Luis Negrón as a Code Enforcement Official for the Borough of West Reading.

Motion to appoint Luis Negrón as a Code Enforcement Official. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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

Mr. Unger departed the meeting at 7:11 p.m.

6. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Gombach noted an executive session that was held at 6:30 p.m. this evening to discuss personnel matters and requested Council to address an action item.

Motion to approve an amendment to the Police Department Collective Bargaining Agreement to be effective January 1, 2022. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

7. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Mr. Gombach noted a meeting with a representative from Alvernia University, the Police Chief and Borough Manager to discuss partnerships. A project is being developed to engage students in constituent work, the cost would be carried by Alvernia University. Additional meetings are being planned in order to launch the new program at the beginning of the year.

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

- a. **Landfill Contract** – There are two opinions as to whether requests for proposal are needed for the lease of air space from a landfill. Ms. London recommended requesting permission to draft a request for proposal until a determination is found. Mr. Murray noted that costs per ton as well as costs to haul tonnage to an alternate landfill need to be factored into this decision.

Motion to authorize drafting a request for proposal for landfill contract. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Right-to-Know Officer** – Mr. Murray requested to be appointed as a Right-to-Know Officer now that he has been appointed as Borough Manager.

Motion to appoint Borough Manager Dean Murray as a Right-to-Know Officer. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Codification of Ordinances** – Mr. Murray requested permission to proceed with codification of Ordinances 1128 through 1141.

Motion to authorize codification of Ordinances 1128 through 1141. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Central PA Teamsters Health & Welfare Fund** – Mr. Murray requested permission to execute the agreement for non-uniform healthcare coverage effective January 1, 2022 with a 3% rate increase.

Motion to authorize execution of the Central Pennsylvania Teamsters Health and Welfare Fund Participation Agreement for non-uniform office staff effective January 1, 2022. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **IT Support** – Mr. Murray and Chief Granitz provided an overview of the three local companies that were interviewed. All companies seemed capable of providing adequate IT support. Following reference checks Solve IT Solutions, LLC seems to be the best suited to meet the Borough's needs. Their monthly service fee is less than the current IT support provider contract. A very appealing aspect to the Solve IT Solutions agreement is that the contract can be terminated at any time if we are not satisfied with their services, and they offered to waive two hours of afterhours service fees for the first six months of onboarding.

Motion to appoint Solve IT Solutions, LLC to provide Information Technology Services. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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

9. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Kearney stated that he had nothing new to report this month.

10. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Granitz provided a statistic of note from the report regarding a significant increase to the number of calls for service year-to-date in comparison to 2019 statistics. The dispatch and response time statistic continues to remain well under two minutes.

Community Involvement:

- The WRPD has partnered with Breast Cancer Support Services of Berks County, which is located in the Borough, to provide workshops as requested on safety training for those people utilizing their services.
- The WRPD has begun a classroom program at the West Reading Elementary Center to interact with middle-school aged students in the classroom by setting goals to help support educators and keep students motivated.
- Today the WRPD performed Operation Safe Stop to enforce school bus violations. Officers were physically onboard school buses as well as following school buses through West Reading and Wyomissing. Certain individuals will be receiving tickets in the mail for aggressive driving violations that were observed.

Chief Granitz reported that Officer Fortin is being deployed by his Army Reserve Unit. Officer Fortin is a Captain involved in a logistics unit that is being summoned to assist with the Afghan refugee influx.

Mr. Gombach thanked Officer Fortin for his service and will remain committed to him and his family.

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

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley offered to answer questions regarding the report and noted, as promised during a recent budget meeting, that the crosswalk lines have been refreshed within the traffic circle in an effort to improve pedestrian visibility by motorists. The following are two action items:

- Council's permission was requested to hire Sewer Specialty Services to slip line the sewer line along the south side of the 500 block of Penn Avenue due to several sections of broken piping. Of the quotes received Sewer Specialty Services was the best price and are Costars approved. The cost would not exceed \$27,250. The project is anticipated to last two days and work would be completed during the overnight hours. It was thought that Sewer Capital Funds would be available for this project due to the delay in starting the Linden Lane sewer improvement project.

Motion to approve Sewer Specialty Services to slip line the sewer line along the south side of the 500 block of Penn Avenue in the amount of \$27,250. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- Council's permission was requested to order the budgeted sewer lateral trailer in an amount not to exceed \$24,064. This equipment would provide pressurized water to assist in clearing clogged sewer lines. Purchase of this equipment should remove the need to hire Captain Clog a half dozen times throughout the year. The purchase price is roughly \$1,000 over the budgeted amount due to increased shipping expenses. The anticipated date of arrival would be the end of November.

Motion to authorize the purchase of a sewer lateral trailer in an amount not to exceed \$24,064 subject to Costars verification. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

A review of the annual trash tonnage history was shared noting an agreement that began in 2016 where Eagle Disposal did not charge for removing the contents of a dumpster located at the Borough Garage. This dumpster is used to contain trash from the Bicentennial House, Fire House and pool areas. Therefore, from June of 2016 through December of 2019 the Borough was not being charged for these tonnages. A review of the total tonnage from 2015 was 1,723. Year-to-date the tonnage is 1,791. It was also noted that in 2015 the Borough offered Spring and Fall trash removal events as opposed to monthly bulk collections. Other additions to tonnage calculations would include the new townhomes on the north side of town. Mr. Grassley reported that he inspected the trash trucks at 5:00 a.m. yesterday and reported that they were empty upon arrival to the Borough. Random inspections will continue to be performed.

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

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer offered to answer any questions regarding the fire report.

Mr. Lincoln inquired as to funding of the garage door damaged by Western Berks Ambulance. Chief Moyer indicated that once a quote has been received it will be presented to Western Berks Ambulance for discussion. It was unclear as to whether a contract is in place for Western Berks Ambulance to house their equipment within the Fire Department in exchange for providing Borough residents with free memberships. Mr. Murray will review records for a contract with Western Berks Ambulance.

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

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

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 offered to answer any questions regarding his report.

Mr. Lincoln asked if Mr. Ratcliffe could foresee any issues with a sewer project during weekday evening hours within the 500 block of Penn Avenue. It was noted that earlier in the week would be best.

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

11. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Ms. Boud noted the Out in the Park event last weekend and sixty-eight visitors to the haunted house. The Haunted House events will be held this Friday and Saturday evening. The tree lighting ceremony is scheduled on Friday, December 3rd.

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

- b. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted ongoing discussions regarding amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, and Solicitor comments that are being incorporated into an update to the Animal Ordinance. Mr. Wert hopes to have an amendment to the Animal Ordinance in front of Council by the end of the year.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – The minutes have not yet been drafted from last Thursday night's meeting. Mr. Wert provided a verbal report noting the continued growth on the Avenue and construction progress within the Villas at Narrow Development. A new noodle and bubble tea restaurant is moving into the space at Reading and Sixth Avenues, and a second bubble tea establishment is rumored to be coming soon.

Acceptance of the written minutes was delayed until the next Council meeting.

- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – The September Environmental Advisory Council meeting was cancelled.

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Lincoln noted two action items:

- The alley between Franklin and Grape Street, below Brewer's Bar & Grill was reviewed by the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Public Works Department which was precipitated by resident complaints of property damage from vehicles navigating this narrow roadway. The homes fronting Yarnell Street do not have rear driveway/parking pad access, and neither the trash hauler, fire truck, ambulance or plow truck are able to access this roadway. A recommendation from the committee is to install removable bollards to close off a portion of the alley from the point beyond the Brewer's Bar & Grill parking area to Grape Street. Residents along Yarnell Street would be notified of this change.

Mr. Grassley noted that one of the homes were damaged again over the weekend, and water barriers have been placed as a temporary measure to protect these homes. It was noted that pricing of the removable bollards is \$160 each.

Motion to approve the installation of four removable bollards in the unnamed alley between Grape Street and Franklin Street. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Lincoln noted a discussion regarding curb work now that the Borough has taken back the responsibility of curb repairs to be incorporated into street projects. It was brought to the attention of the committee that the Public Works Department is proposing to do some of this work in-house to save money. In order to ensure that normal Public Works activities do not suffer by taking on this added responsibility a trial period has been agreed to.

- Options were reviewed by the committee to address line-of-sight issues exiting the unnamed alley onto Sycamore Road near the entrance to the pool. The homeowners in that vicinity were amenable to removing one parking space on either side of the alleyway for better visibility purposes. The committee has made a recommendation to Council to remove these two parking spaces.

Motion to approve the removal of one parking space on each side of the unnamed alley that intersects Sycamore Road in the vicinity of the pool entrance. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – Mr. Kaag referred to the minutes and offered to answer any questions. It was noted that the Penn State Agriculture Department has speculated that the significant decrease to the number of Spotted Lanternflies is based on the more humid winter.

Mr. Gombach expressed an appreciation for the work that the Shade Tree Commission does in organizing the maintenance of the trees to avoid large tree disasters within the Borough.

Motion to accept the Shade Tree Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- g. **Safety Committee** – The September Safety Committee meeting was cancelled.

12. TREASURER'S REPORT:

- a. **Financial Statement Ending 9/30/2021** – Mrs. Rentschler brought Council's attention to page thirty of the report noting that the balance of the sanitation fund is \$427.40. There were not enough funds to repay the loan this quarter to the water fund. This payment may need to be postponed until next year.

Motion to accept the Financial Statement ending 9/30/2021. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Payment Approval Report 9/22/21 to 10/15/21 & 10/16/21 to 10/20/21** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the Payment Approval Reports of 9/22/21 to 10/15/21 & 10/16/21 to 10/20/21. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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

13. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Witmyer requested a free-standing pedestrian crossing sign within the crosswalk area on Reading Avenue behind Rite-Aid. Mr. Grassley indicated that state officials believe these signs are

dangerous in that they distract drivers' attention downward and away from the view of pedestrians. Lighted pedestrian crossing signs are preferable and could be discussed further during a Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting.

Mr. Rogers requested further clarification as to the availability of funds to repay the sanitation fund loan. Mrs. Rentschler stated that the water fund transferred \$60,000 last year to balance the sanitation fund and this loan was to be repaid within four years. The first two quarterly payments were made this year.

Mr. Rogers noted that the hospital's assessed value is \$244,799,000 and that the Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) is a mere \$640,000. Mr. Gombach assured Mr. Rogers that the solicitor is monitoring all of the hospital's assessment appeals on a case-by-case basis to assist with the Borough's negotiations with the hospital. Ms. London indicated that a PILOT agreement is a settlement type of agreement intended to avoid uncertainties of litigation.

Ms. Fisher inquired as to who assumed the responsibilities of the late Elm Street Manager, Dean Rohrbach. Mr. Ratcliffe indicated that he is continuing some of Mr. Rohrbach's programs such as the mural corridor and assisting the Recreation Department with community projects. Ms. Fisher was especially interested in the Paint-the-Town program. Mr. Ratcliffe noted the challenges associated with home owners agreeing to paint their homes, coordination of agreed upon paint color schemes as well as obtaining funds. Ms. Kaag hopes to engage additional individuals to fulfill some of the duties of the late Dean Rohrbach.

Mr. Rogers noted a recent Right-to-Know request regarding the lighting expenses associated with the new pickleball courts. He quoted \$449,000 for the lighting portion of the project. It was noted that Mr. Shields donated \$250,000 towards this project to cover all improvement expenses. This information will be clarified with Mr. Rogers at a later date.

Ms. Fisher asked which police department is responsible for monitoring the pickleball court area since this is in the vicinity of three municipalities. It was noted that the property is owned by the City of Reading and that there is an agreement in place for the West Reading Police Department to patrol the area.

14. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 p.m. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary