

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

November 16, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, November 16, 2021 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln (via Zoom); Council Members Jennifer Bressler, Patrick Kaag, Samantha Kaag, and Ryan Lineaweaver; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Chief of Police Glenn Granitz, Jr.; Sergeant Ryan Phillips; 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; Engineer Tom Unger; Main Street Manager Mark Ratcliffe; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS:

Denise Drobnick, Resident

James Rogers, Resident

Carl Garman, Resident (via Zoom)

Terry Siggins, Resident

Maggie Hunt, Retreat Behavioral Health

Zachary Shaver, Resident (via Zoom)

Nathalie Kulesa, Resident

Karen Livingood, Resident

Michael & Helen Witmyer, Residents

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. **PRESENTATION:**

- a. **Retreat Behavioral Health** – Maggie Hunt spoke of the comprehensive inpatient and outpatient substance use disorders and mental health issue services that are provided by Retreat Behavioral Health located twenty-five minutes away in Ephrata. Retreat Behavioral Health can assist mental health patients that are released from a short-term visit to a psychiatric facility to assist in their recovery and stabilization before being released to outpatient care. Free training is offered for mental health professionals and the general public, including peer support services. Ms. Hunt noted an increase to substance use disorders during the pandemic and welcomed calls for assistance to navigate their treatment options. Business cards and flyers were made available to the public.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

The Zoom meeting was hacked without the ability to expel the participant(s) and their unwanted behavior. Therefore, the Zoom meeting was terminated. Christopher Lincoln continued his attendance to the meeting via telephone.

Mr. Rogers inquired as to the handicapped parking space policy that limits the designation of handicapped parking spaces to the end of the block and the proposed space within the 100 block of Franklin Street that would not be located at the end of the street. It was noted that exceptions are made for extenuating circumstances.

Mrs. Kulesa thanked the Public Works, Police and Fire Departments for their assistance in the haunted house and hayride events.

4. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve the October 20, 2021 regular meeting minutes, and the October 26, 2021 budget meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

5. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Ordinance 1143 – 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 and the 300 block of Sunset Road.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 1143 Handicapped Parking Space Amendment to remove spaces from the 500 block of Chestnut Street and the 400 block of Pine Street, and to add a space to the 100 block of Franklin Street and the 300 block of Sunset Road. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Resolution 2021-18 Temporary Prohibition to Park in the 600 Block of Court Street** – It was noted that the building located on the corner of North Sixth Avenue and Court Street, owned by the Community Revitalization Foundation, has been struck by delivery automobiles on seven occasions since they took ownership of this building in 2018. The Mayor has declared an emergency prohibition to parking within this block until the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee can consider a permanent solution. Mr. Lincoln indicated that this will be discussed during the December meeting and hopes to bring a recommendation to Council next month.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2021-18 temporarily prohibiting parking within the 600 block of Court Street. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Resolution 2021-19 Appointing Individuals to the Berks County Tax Collection Executive Committee** – An update is needed to appoint Dean Murray as the alternate delegate of this committee.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2021-19 appointing Borough Manager Dean Murray as the alternate delegate of the Berks County Tax Collection Executive Committee. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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 indicated that a second reduction to the letter of credit has been received from the developer of 428 Penn Avenue. The request is to reduce the amount by \$19,526.25, which would leave a balance of \$39,984.71. Mr. Unger recommended authorization to release this amount from the letter of credit.

Motion to approve Reduction No. 2 to the Letter of Credit for Nickel Properties, LLC in the amount of \$19,526.25 for the 428 Penn Avenue project. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Three Costar bids have been received to televise and inspect a portion of the sanitary sewer system. Sewer Specialty Services Co., Inc. was the lowest bidder at \$44,555.58 for the base

and alternate bid items. Mr. Murray indicated that \$50,000 had been budgeted for 2021 and is also been included in the proposed 2022 budget should the project be completed after the new year.

Motion to award the 2021 Sanitary Sewer Inspection Project to Sewer Specialty Services Co., Inc. in the amount of \$44,555.58. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Unger indicated that the Linden Lane sewer project is scheduled to begin the end of this week, weather permitting.

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

Mr. Unger departed the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

7. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Gombach noted an executive session that was held at 6:30 p.m. this evening to discuss personnel matters.

8. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Mr. Gombach noted continued work with Alvernia University as part of their College Town Initiative, he should have a formal announcement to provide at the end of the year.

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

- a. **Teamsters Collective Bargaining Agreement Addendum** – Mr. Murray requested authorization to draft an amendment to allow a senior Public Works Crew Member to assume responsibility in the absence of the Director and Team Leader.

Motion to authorize drafting an addendum to the Teamsters Collective Bargaining Agreement. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **UGI Utilities, Inc. Agreement** – Mr. Murray requested permission to accept an offer of \$13,290 from UGI Utilities, Inc. to offset the expense of rerouting sewer lines due to natural gas line placement for the Linden Lane Sewer project.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager to execute an agreement with UGI Utilities, Inc. to reimburse the Borough of West Reading in the amount of \$13,290 to reroute the Linden Lane sewer lines around natural gas line placement. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

10. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Kearney spoke of the following items within his written report:

- **COVID-19** – Mayor Kearney recommended that all individuals, regardless of vaccination, continue to protect themselves from contracting this virus.
- **Pumpkin Painting Contest** – Mayor Kearney thanked the owner of the Art Room, Brian Adams, for allowing him to judge the pumpkin painting contest on October 17th.

- **Retreat Behavioral Health** – Mayor Kearney noted that on November 22nd he will be touring the Ephrata facility that provides counseling and therapy for individuals with substance abuse or mental health issues.
- **West Reading Park Grounds** – Mayor Kearney requested Council to reconsider the decision to allow alcohol within the playground and park area.
- **Proclamation** – Mayor Kearney read a proclamation recognizing October 24th as Jack Holcomb Day in West Reading. Mr. Holcomb has resided in the Borough for twenty years and began his 65-year radio career with WEEU AM Radio on October 24, 1956.

Mr. Gombach thanked the Mayor for honoring one of our local legends and suggested that Mr. Holcomb attend a meeting that suits his schedule to present this proclamation to him in person.

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

11. DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Granitz noted a 12% increase to the number of calls for service year-to-date in comparison to 2019 statistics. The good news is that this increase has not resulted in an increase to reportable crimes, it has however increased the number of quality-of-life issues. Chief Granitz indicated that the Borough is not alone in these altered crime reporting statistics that can be found on the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics (UCR) website. The dispatch and response time continues to remain under two minutes. In order to keep first responders safe, COVID-19 protocols have increased to limit contact. Several aggressive driving enforcement operations were recently conducted that included stop sign enforcement in the area of both schools; an increased focus on the traffic circle; and Officer DeLozier was onboard school buses as part of Operation Safe Stop issuing citations from the buses. Chief Granitz shared news of an announcement planned on Friday morning at 11:30 a.m. at Customers Bank, thanks in part to Mr. Gombach, of funding for a body-worn camera program.

Mr. Gombach is equally excited for the Chief who expressed in a budget meeting that a body-worn camera system was something that is important for the growth of the department, especially as more incidents occur. Following a few phone calls, Mr. Gombach was able to obtain a sizable donation from Customers Bank to support this program. Customers Bank is one of the many great partners that we have in our Borough that are eager to support good police work.

Mr. Wert expressed his frustration with a two-year long noise complaint to the City of Reading for music along the river that has at times rattled his windows. A letter was submitted by Mr. Wert to City Officials and the City of Reading Police Department and no action has been taken. A formal request for action from this governing body was discussed. It was thought that based on the number of people engaging in this type of behavior and the number of incidents the police department handles that there are not enough resources for the City of Reading Police Department to deal with sound complaints. Chief Granitz expressed that based on the number of calls for service a majority of West Reading residents would support mediation efforts, and shared efforts of his previous department in dealing with instances such as this by improving

the landscape or geographical aspects to remediate the situation. The Solicitor and the Borough Manager were requested to draft a letter to the City of Reading.

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

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley offered to answer questions regarding his report and noted cost saving efforts this past month by performing vehicle body repairs in-house and concrete removal from the Fire Department driveway apron. He shared an opportunity he had to speak with trash removal personnel and believes that the message has been received to limit the number of containers collected per home, limit the collection of bulk items per month, and refraining from the collection of yard waste. Mr. Gombach recommended that the Environmental Advisory Council work towards educating residents as to the limitations that are in place for municipal trash collection and avenues to contract over the limit or junk removal.

Mr. Grassley requested Council to consider hiring a part-time Public Works member for the month of December to assist the department during two sewer projects, quarterly and monthly meter readings, street sweeping every day, and crew member vacation and medical leave. Cost projections for twenty-five hours per week for four weeks will be presented to Council next week.

Mr. Grassley reported that he removed stickers from signs today around the traffic circle and greased the signs for easier removal in the future.

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

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer offered to answer any questions regarding the fire report, noting that the month of October experienced normal call volumes. The Open House and Chicken BBQ were held on October 17th, Chief Moyer thanked everyone for their support. During Fire Prevention Week Ladder 64 visited the Sacred Heart Elementary School and Tower Health Daycare Center to share life safety information with approximately 200 children.

Mr. Murray noted that the redlined Brindlee Fire Apparatus Contract had been provided under his report and requested Council to review for potential action next week.

Mr. Wert questioned why a replacement bay door panel has a thirty-two-week lead time. Chief Moyer noted that the door is larger and heavier than an average in-stock garage door. It was also noted that a bucket truck and water meters are on backorder for as many weeks.

Mr. Kaag noted the report of an unusual structure fire at 546 Penn Avenue where linens were used to divert air flow in the heating duct and had fallen onto an electric heating element that began to burn.

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

- d. **Code Department** – Mrs. Hoffman offered to answer questions regarding her report noting that the number of permits issued this past month is lower than normal. There were no questions or comments.

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

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – Mr. Ratcliffe offered to answer any questions regarding his report and noted the list of events for the coming month.

Mr. Ratcliffe requested permission to close North Sixth Avenue from Penn Avenue to Court Street on Saturday, November 27th for Small Business Saturday. It was thought that the Mayor could handle this aspect since this request was not on the agenda.

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

12. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Ms. Boud thanked everyone for their assistance with the haunted house event this year. It was noted that revenues were roughly \$2,000 less than a typical non-pandemic year.

Ms. Boud requested on behalf of the Recreation Commission to install a “Little Free Library Box” at the pavilion to be maintained by the West Reading-Wyomissing Rotary Club.

Motion to approve the installation of a “Little Free Library Box” at the pavilion to be maintained by the West Reading-Wyomissing Rotary Club. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Ms. Boud reported that the Recreation Commission will begin taking orders for holiday candy. It was recommended to blast this information on the website and various Facebook pages to boost sales.

Ms. Boud reminded everyone to save the date for the Tree Lighting Ceremony scheduled on Friday, December 3rd with a rain date of December 6th.

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

- b. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted that there was not a formal agenda for the November meeting, instead Commission members met with the new Planner from Systems Design Engineering and discussed Zoning changes. An animal ordinance amendment should be in front of Council soon.

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

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert noted that the October and November minutes were provided this month. Highlights of the two meetings were shared noting discussions that continue to implement aspects of the master plan with assistance from the WRCRF; and a new Ramen Restaurant that should be opening soon on Reading Avenue. An update was provided by a member of Wyomissing Borough noting potential large

development projects spurred by the medical school, and the sale of the Friendly's restaurant on Park Road. Mr. Wert noted that if a Rail Passenger Fairness Act bill is passed through the Federal level there is the potential for passenger rails to come to our area.

Motion to accept the October and November Economic Development Committee report.

Moved by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag referred to the minutes and offered to answer any questions. Mr. Lineaweaver noted a vacancy on the board left by Ms. Heister and the boards recommendation to appoint Nicole Phillips, who has been an associate member, to the open voting position. Ms. Kaag reported that Ms. Phillips has been the acting Secretary who provides the meeting minutes.

Motion to recategorize Nicole Phillips from an Associate Member of the Environmental Advisory Council to a Voting Member with a term expiring on December 31, 2023. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Ms. Kaag noted the implementation of "Clean and Walks", the first one took place last week where two bags of trash were collected within a four-block area. Also, Ms. Kaag would like to work with Mr. Ratcliffe and the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation to reduce the number of plastic bags used within retail stores by offering reusable bags.

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

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – The November Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting was cancelled.
- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – The November Shade Tree Commission meeting was cancelled.
- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Murray referred to the minutes and offered to answer any questions. There were no questions or comments.

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

13. TREASURER'S REPORT:

- a. **Financial Statement Ending 10/31/2021** – Mr. Wert noted the unusual \$881 business privilege tax revenue generated so late in the year, and the \$22,000 in additional revenue for the year. Mr. Wert appreciated the Berks Earned Income Tax Bureau report that shows an increase to Earned Income Tax Revenue.

Motion to accept the Financial Statement ending 10/31/2021. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Payment Approval Report 10/21/21 to 11/12/21 & 11/13/21 to 11/16/21** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the Payment Approval Reports of 10/21/21 to 11/12/21 & 11/13/21 to 11/16/21. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

14. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers suggested recording the noise disturbance to save as proof. Mr. Wert indicated that he tried this and found that the recording is not saved at the actual sound level. The City of Reading is aware of this disturbance and understands the magnitude of the number of people involved. Ideas recommended by Chief Granitz as to geographical improvements may be a better solution to remediate this type of disturbance.

Ms. Drobnick recommended allowing newly elected City Officials an opportunity to offer new insight to remediation options.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 p.m. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary