

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
BOROUGH COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING  
March 25, 2023**

West Reading Borough Council held a special meeting at Borough Hall on Saturday, March 25, 2023, with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Jennifer Bressler, Patrick Kaag, Denise Drobnick, and Zachary Shaver; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Borough Manager Dean Murray; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

**VISITORS**     Mark Schlott, R.M. Palmer Company

**CALL TO ORDER**

Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

**LOCAL DISASTER EMERGENCY**

Mr. Lineaweaver offered the Borough's sincerest condolences to Mr. Schlott and the R.M. Palmer Company following yesterday's explosion within one of their South Second Avenue buildings. Mr. Schlott indicated that their focus right now is supporting the families of missing colleagues.

Mr. Lineaweaver reported that the Berks County Community Foundation and Berks County United Way are co-sponsoring a single disaster relief fund with priority funding for Palmer families.

Mr. Schlott reported that all employees, including employees within their Wyomissing and Exeter operations, have been provided a week off with pay. A hotline was recently established for staff members to seek counseling services if needed. The integrity of the buildings will be evaluated prior to occupancy and their intent is to rebuild and reopen their West Reading facilities. Mr. Schlott stated that the emergency response team has been second to none.

Mr. Lincoln shared that everyone is in their thoughts and prayers and urged Mr. Schlott to reach out if he needs anything during this difficult time.

Mr. Schlott departed the meeting at 6:47 p.m.

Mr. Lineaweaver noted the limited abilities of Borough Council to help in this type of situation, since most of the responsibility falls to the Mayor who issued a Proclamation of Local Disaster Emergency that is valid for seven days. It was noted that Borough Council will need to meet again on Tuesday to extend the proclamation to the regular April meeting. The emergency can be extended by resolution if assistance is needed.

**RESOLUTION**

**Resolution 2023-3 Disaster Relief Fund** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted the following prioritization of support for the needs of individuals and families affected by this disaster through the award:

1. Grants to organizations providing support to the families of individuals who lost their lives in the explosion for immediate financial losses.
2. Grants to organizations providing support to individuals displaced from their homes as a result of the explosion.

3. Grants to organizations providing support to individuals displaced from employment as a result of the explosion.
4. Support to the Borough of West Reading for planning and/or implementation of historical commemoration of the explosion (including, but not limited to creation of a memorial to those lost).

The Red Cross has found temporary housing for the displaced residents within the neighboring apartment building.

Mr. Lineaweaver noted a scheduled joint press conference tomorrow morning at 10:00 a.m. with representatives from the Berks County Community Foundation and Berks County United Way. The press conference will also provide an update on the rescue and recovery progress during the overnight hours.

The County of Berks and West Side Regional Emergency Management has provided a referral destination to Holcomb Crisis Intervention located at 401 Buttonwood Street, West Reading for 24/7 crisis management. Also, the County of Berks and United Way of Berks County are providing the 2-1-1 lifeline to connect the community to essential services such as housing, food, family resources, and mental health services.

Mr. Kaag and Mr. Wert stated that R.M. Palmer has never denied a request for donations throughout the years for events such as the Easter Egg Hunt, and fireworks. It was noted that numerous law enforcement and fire agencies have been onsite seamlessly working together. The City of Reading was first on scene, and Exeter and Boyertown stayed onsite throughout the night.

Mr. Lineaweaver reported that the regular April Council meeting will be held at the firehouse to properly commend every single organization that has come in our time of crisis.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2023-3 Disaster Relief and Crisis Intervention. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:11 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary