

BOROUGH OF WEST READING

BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING

August 20, 2019 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, August 20, 2019 with the following persons present: Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Members Suzanne Thompson, Patrick Kaag, Jennifer Bressler, Nicholas Gardecki; Solicitor Charles Haws; Police Chief Stephen Powell; Public Works Crew Leader Kerry Grassley; Recreation Director Helen Moyer; Engineer Tom Unger; Fire Chief Mark Burkholder; Main Street Manager Mark Ratcliffe; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Borough Manager Cathy Hoffman and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS:	Oswald Herbert	Resident
	James Rogers	Resident
	Douglas Zeeger	Resident
	Karen Livingood	Resident
	Nicholas Imbesi	Resident
	Nathalie Kulesa	Resident
	Chad Moyer	Resident
	Jason Ulrich	Resident
	Jason Witman	Resident
	Elizabeth Heckler	Resident
	Jamie Keith	Resident
	Nick Stoner	Resident
	Jack Gombach	Resident
	Edwin Gonzalez	Resident
	Kylie Hand	Resident
	Christina Shenk	Property & Business Owner
	Sorita Averill	Property & Business Owner
	Anthony Tucci	Western Berks Ambulance
	Tom Caltigarone, Jr.	Non-Resident

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council Vice President Philip Wert called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **RUN SANTA RUN:** Sorita Averill explained her involvement as the race director of the annual Run Santa Run event over the past nine years that attracts approximately 400 runners and requested Council's direction as to a race route to limit the expenses incurred for Police Department assistance across intersections. The usual route ("Route A") begins in the 700 block of Penn Avenue to the hospital area, around park lands and finished at Bethany Lutheran Church. The alternate route ("Route B") that is being considered would start at Bethany Lutheran Church to the Thun Trail and circling back to the church. It was recommended by a local business owner to offset expenses by seeking fundraising opportunities. Ms. Averill requested Council's approval of both routes to allow time to seek fundraising opportunities.

Council noted that the closure of Penn Avenue would not be feasible and Chief Powell requested a decision by September 1st to ensure enough staffing would be available for the event.

Motion to approve "Route A" of the Run Santa Run event to be held on Saturday, December 14, 2019 with final notification received by September 1, 2019, failing to meet this deadline, "Route B" would be the approved alternative. **Moved** by Mr. Gardecki and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 5-0.**

3. **WESTERN BERKS AMBULANCE:** Anthony Tucci of Western Berks Ambulance provided an overview of their July report noting a total of 247 calls received with 225 being transported. The average response time was one-minute, twenty-four-seconds, which remains below their targeted time of one-minute, thirty-seconds. It was also noted that membership donation letters would be mailed at the end of September.
4. **COUNCIL VACANCY INTERVIEWS:** Mr. Wert noted receipt of four letters of interest to fill the vacant council seat until the end of the year from Kylie LaSota Hand, Edwin Gonzalez, Jack Gombach and Douglas Zeeger.

Mr. Zeeger noted that anyone who regularly comes to Council meetings would know who he is and what he is about, which should speak for itself.

Mr. Gonzalez noted his residency of three years, involvement in the community, his children, his volunteerism with Berks Technical Institute and IT trade and thanked everyone for the opportunity to be considered to fill the council vacancy.

Mr. Gombach stated he applied for the vacancy because of his love of West Reading. He loves the energy of the community; the events held and would like to take part in moving the community forward. Mr. Gombach noted his background provides him a skillset to handle challenges in a positive manner and his participation with Habitat for Humanity, service on the Board of Trustees for the Reading Area Community College, and committees such as risk management and finance.

Mrs. Hand stated that she is an educator by nature; she grew up outside of the Pittsburgh area and her interest to become involved in West Reading. She believes the vitality of the City of Reading is somewhat dependent on West Reading and believes her analytical, leadership and strategic planning would benefit the Borough. Mrs. Hand also noted her seat on the Finance Committee for the past six-months. Ms. Thompson inquired as to her grant-writing awards. Mrs. Hand noted a design firm grant in the San Francisco area and her familiarity with federal, state and local guidelines in particular to the education sector.

Mr. Wert requested nominations to fill the council vacancy. Ms. Thompson made a motion to nominate Kylie Hand. There was no second to the motion and therefore the motion failed.

Motion to nominate Jack Gombach to fill the council vacancy. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Gardecki. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Jeanette Rentschler who is a Notary for the Borough swore Mr. Gombach in as a member of Borough Council and Mr. Gombach took a seat at the council table.

Charles Haws then requested nominations for Council President to fill the vacancy of Nicholas Imbesi.

Motion to nominate Philip Wert to the Council President position. **Moved** by Mr. Gardecki and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **In favor of the motion:** Mr. Kaag, Mrs. Bressler, Mr. Wert, Mr. Gardecki, and Mr. Gombach. **Against the motion:** Ms. Thompson. **Motion carried 5-1.**

Mr. Wert then requested nominations for Council Vice President.

Motion to nominate Christopher Lincoln to the Council Vice President position. **Moved** by Mr. Gardecki and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

5. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Council recessed to executive session at 7:29 p.m. to discuss personnel items. Council reconvened at 8:15 p.m. and Mr. Wert noted two action items:

Motion to appoint Montana Ganster to the position of Assistant Treasurer. **Moved** by Mr. Gardecki and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to request a Civil Service hiring list for a Police Officer once the list is officially certified. **Moved** by Mr. Gombach and seconded by Ms. Thompson. **Motion carried 6-0.**

6. **REPRESENTATIVE CHRISSY HOULAHAN PRESENTATION:** Constituent Advocate MaCherie Dunbar along with her service dog Remi provided information regarding Congresswoman Chrissy Houlahan's two offices, one at City Hall in Reading and the other in West Chester that are available to provide assistance with Federal Agency services, such as healthcare, VA, IRS, Social Security, custom immigrations, etc. Their offices will perform what is called a congressional inquiry to determine the problem to assist in resolving these issues. Placards were provided with contact information and office hours of operation. Questions and comments regarding legislative issues, such as voting on a bill can be shared with their office via email, phone, letter, etc. Their office has received 50,000 pieces of correspondence and has responded to approximately 30,000 of these inquiries and fully intends to respond to every inquiry.

Mr. Wert thanked Ms. Dunbar for taking the time to visit this meeting and noted that in 13 years he does not recall anyone from a Federal capacity taking the time to visit a municipal meeting to share information as to constituent services, which speaks to the dedication of this Representative. Ms. Dunbar noted the Representatives very active outreach to municipalities to share a list of services and contact information. Also, requests for Representative Chrissy Houlahan to attend meetings or events can be done through their website.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** James Rogers requested an update on the status of the business privilege tax rate reduction as to the opinion of an alternate law firm. Mr. Wert stated that Council would review this information during a Budget meeting that is being held on Tuesday, August 27, 2019 to decide on a course of action. Mr. Rogers also requested a status update on the Fire Marshal's findings during the Lofts at Narrow executed search warrant. Mr. Unger stated that access was granted and the investigation lead by Mr. Hatt is ongoing. Mr. Haws stated to avoid compromising the investigation that no further information could be provided. Chief Powell stated that it was an Administrative Search Warrant that was executed and that a Police Officer was present until access was granted.
8. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:** Motion to approve the July 16, 2019 Council and Zoning Ordinance Amendment Hearing minutes as well as the July 30, 2019 Special Council meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Gardecki. **Motion carried 6-0.**

9. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Resolution 2019-8 Support of Citizens Commission for Redistricting** – A resolution that would show support of a citizen's commission for redistricting.

Motion to support a commission for redistricting by adopting Resolution 2019-8. **Moved** by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Resolution 2019-9 Appointing a Councilman** – A resolution appointing Mr. Gombach to fill the council vacancy.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2019-9 appointing Jack Gombach to fill the council vacancy. **Moved** by Mr. Gardecki and seconded by Ms. Thompson. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Resolution 2019-10 Deeds of Dedication for Certain Public Roads** – Mr. Unger indicated this resolution would provide dedication of the finished roadways within the Villas at Narrow subdivision to PennDOT to allow collection of Liquid Fuels monies. Mr. Haws asked if the road conditions have endured the maintenance period and if the maintenance period has expired. Mr. Unger reported that the road conditions are good and the maintenance period has lapsed.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2019-10 Deeds of Dedication for Public Roads within the Villas at Narrow subdivision. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Gombach. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Ordinance – Noise Amendment** – Mr. Wert noted discussion during the last Planning Commission meeting to tweak the times to prohibit trash/recycling collection between the hours of 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. due to non-municipal haulers creating excessive noise while emptying dumpsters near residential areas in the middle of the night. It was noted that the draft ordinance had a typo, which should be corrected from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

Motion to advertise a Noise Ordinance amendment to revise the times prohibited for trash/recycling collection with the noted revision. **Moved** by Mr. Gardecki and seconded by Ms. Thompson. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Ordinance – Peddling, Soliciting & Transient Retail** – Mr. Wert noted an overhaul of the existing solicitation ordinance to include regulations for food trucks and make revisions to door-to-door solicitation timeframes. It was noted that the draft ordinance had a typo on page five, number 14, which should read: “Vending shall not occur within twenty-five (25) feet of any fire hydrant **or** fire escape.”

Motion to advertise a Peddling, Soliciting and Transient Retail Ordinance amendment with the noted revision. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

10. CONSULTANT’S REPORTS:

- a. **Engineer/Code Enforcement Report** – Mr. Unger referred to the written report and stated there were no action items this month and that additional information was provided in this report to illustrate and monitor property maintenance enforcement activity.

Mr. Wert inquired as to the Green Light-Go project status since a retainage is still being held. Mr. Unger stated that PennDOT has accepted the project as complete and the retainage should be released in the near future. Mr. Wert also noted that a preconstruction meeting is scheduled next week for the additional 2019 paving projects to be completed prior to the arrival of cold weather.

Motion to approve the Engineer/Code Enforcement report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Gombach. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Solicitor’s Report** - Mr. Haws stated there was no report and items are being covered elsewhere on the agenda. There were no comments.

Motion to approve the Solicitor’s report. **Moved** by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Unger and Mr. Haws departed the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

11. BOROUGH MANAGER’S REPORT:

- a. **Planning Commission Appointment** – Mrs. Hoffman noted receipt of a letter of interest from Tracy Fiedler to fill a vacancy on the Planning Commission. Mr. Wert noted his unfamiliarity with Ms. Fiedler and Mark Ratcliffe stated she is a motivated and pleasant individual.

Motion to appoint Tracy Fiedler to fill the remaining term of Nicholas Imbesi's vacancy on the Planning Commission. **Moved** by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Mr. Gardecki. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mrs. Hoffman emotionally noted that this would be her last time she would be seated at the table after 11 years and her excitement to transition into the Code Department to make improvements within this department. Mr. Wert stated that Mrs. Hoffman always provided assistance in an efficient manner and with fidelity and thanked her for her many roles and years of service.

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

12. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** In the Mayor's absence, Mr. Wert noted that a report had not been provided by the Mayor.

13. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Powell referred to his written report and noted that in the near future a request to voluntarily register security cameras will be solicited. The information provided would be kept confidential and use of individual camera footage would be requested if the need would arise. Information regarding this registry would be provided on the Police Department website and Facebook page.

Chief Powell also noted that the Penn Street bridge construction should be completed by the end of the year, however, construction activities would cause the closing of the sidewalk area located on the south side of the bridge again.

Motion to approve the Police Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Mr. Gardecki. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Public Works** – Kerry Grassley referred to the written report. Mr. Wert inquired as to a possible action item regarding an expenditure to repair the gas storage tank tops. Mr. Grassley stated that the repairs would prevent water from infiltrating the tanks to allow a positive monthly pressure and pump test as required by the Department of Environmental Protection. It was explained that due to the specialty of this type of repair only two companies were available in the area to provide quotes.

Motion to approve the expenditure of \$37,350 to B&F Petroleum Installations for repairs to the gas storage tank tops. **Moved** by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Mr. Gardecki. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

- b. **Fire Department** – Chief Burkholder referred to the written report and noted that an additional restaurant fire had recently been caused by the improper storage of rags. Chief Burkholder indicated that efforts are being coordinated with the Fire Marshal to gather and disseminate educational information to all restaurant owners as to the proper storage of rags to prevent fires.

Motion to approve the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Gardecki and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – Mr. Ratcliffe reported that the parking kiosks should be installed tomorrow with a two-week testing period planned with the Police Department and information placed on vehicles parked within the lot to alert drivers to the upcoming paid parking regulations. Also, request for proposal interviews have been completed with Derck & Edson being chosen to fulfill the planning grant opportunity. It was noted that business during the recent Criterium event was similar to last year and the Fall Festival is planned on September 21st from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Motion to approve the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Mr. Gombach and seconded by Ms. Thompson. **Motion carried 6-0.**

14. **COMMITTEE/COMMISSION REPORTS:**

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mrs. Moyer referred to the written report and noted information that was provided as to Feeding Waterfowl signage. As required in the Wildlife Control contract, permission was requested to purchase five signs at a cost of \$35 each to be placed in various areas of the park grounds as well as information to be provided on the website directing you to the Code of Ordinances Section 303-3 Y for regulation guidelines. It was noted that permission was not needed to expend \$175 for these required signs.

Mrs. Moyer also requested permission to raise funds to construct a pedestrian bridge in place of the demolished Parkview Road Bridge. Ideas such as a “Go Fund Me” page, sale of commemorative bricks or engraved fence slats were discussed. Donations could be processed through the WRCRF for a tax write off. It was suggested to continue communications with UGI to determine if they are still interested in sharing the cost of constructing a bridge to cross the creek with a gas line.

Motion to allow the Recreation Director to develop and implement a fundraising strategy for a pedestrian bridge. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mrs. Moyer requested permission to revise the half-price pool admission cost timeframe, due to limited staffing, from 5:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. since the pool is now closing at 6:30 p.m.

Motion to approve the revised half-price pool admission cost time to 4:00 p.m. **Moved** by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to approve the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Gombach. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Ratcliffe departed the meeting at 9:09 p.m.

- b. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted the committees continued review of the Rental Ordinance amendment and options for a revised fee schedule. Review of other local municipalities rental fee schedules was suggested as well as Chief Powell being requested to attend a Planning Commission meeting to discuss and clarify enforcement of disruptive conduct.

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

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert stated that Wyomissing Borough has submitted a grant to obtain funds to connect the new medical campus with North Wyomissing Boulevard to

reduce congestion on Park Road. This endeavor would require the Borough's acquisition of additional property. Also, it was noted that five of the six new townhomes in the Villas at Narrow have been sold at the asking price.

Motion to approve the Economic Development Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Gombach and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag noted that the potluck social was again postponed due to weather and will try to reschedule in the fall; the fall cleanup is scheduled on September 29th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.; and the first Saturday of the month yard waste drop off at the Borough Garage is available now through December from 9:00 a.m. to Noon; the Spotted Lanternflies have been seen and tree bands are being replaced as needed.

Motion to approve the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Moved** by Mr. Gardecki and seconded by Mr. Gombach. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Traffic & Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Wert noted that the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting was cancelled.
- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – Mr. Wert noted that the Shade Tree Commission meeting was cancelled.
- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Wert referred to the minutes and there were no comments.

Motion to approve the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- h. **Finance Committee** – Ms. Thompson stated that budget talks began by reviewing any surplus funds; the committee will be looking for direction from the upcoming budget meeting to augment this process.

Motion to approve the Finance Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Gardecki and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

15. TREASURER'S REPORT:

- a. **2020 Minimum Municipal Obligations** – Mrs. Rentschler shared the good news and the bad news: the non-uniformed pension plan requires no funding for the 2020 plan year; the Police pension minimum obligation for the 2020 plan year is \$349,000, however the advisor recommends increasing this allocation above the minimum requirements of Act 44 to \$427,000. It was decided to discuss this allocation further during the upcoming budget meetings since a response is not needed until the end of September.

- b. **Financial Statement Ending 7/31/19** – There were no comments regarding the financial statement.

Motion to approve the Financial Statement ending 7/31/19. **Moved** by Mr. Gardecki and seconded by Mr. Gombach. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Payment Approval Report 7/17/19 to 8/15/19 & 8/16/19 to 8/20/19** – There were no comments.

Motion to approve Payment Approval report 7/17/19 to 8/15/19 & 8/16/19 to 8/20/19. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Gombach. **Motion carried 6-0.**

16. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Tina Shenk requested highlights of amendments to the Transient Retail Ordinance. Mr. Wert stated a copy of the proposed ordinance would be emailed to her attention and noted the addition of regulations to food trucks and additional regulations regarding door-to-door soliciting such as timeframes and background checks. Ms. Shenk also noted the ongoing poster/sign violations along Penn Avenue and the damage it causes to light poles. Mr. Wert noted the difficulty in locating a responsible party to enforce this regulation. Mr. Gardecki recommended the installation of a "Sounding Board" type area to designate a space to hang these temporary posters/signs. Mr. Wert stated this was included in the recent Kautter & Kelly Architect rendition of the Buttonwood Street/Reading Avenue corridor improvements.

17. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Thompson.
Motion carried 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary