

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

March 24, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Patrick Kaag, Jennifer Bressler, and Samantha Kaag; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Police Chief Stephen Powell; Borough Manager Nicholas Imbesi and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Member Nicholas Gardecki was unable to attend.

VISITORS: There were no visitors in attendance.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m., which was followed by Roll Call. It was noted that social distancing was being practiced during this meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore Council Members, Mayor and Solicitor were available via conference call.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no public comments.
3. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:** Motion to approve the February 18, 2020 Council meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**
4. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Ordinance – Handicapped Parking Space Amendment** – Chief Powell requested an opportunity to determine if any new applications have been received prior to advertising this amendment. This item was tabled until the April meeting.
- b. **Resolution 2020-5 Extension of Emergency Proclamation** – This Resolution would extend the Proclamation of Local Disaster Emergency signed by Mayor Andrew Kearney on March 17, 2020. This will allow the Borough to implement measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 until the next regularly scheduled meeting of Borough Council on April 22, 2020. If deemed necessary at that time, Borough Council could further extend the Proclamation to implement the West Reading Pandemic Response Plan.

Motion to approve Resolution 2020-5 Extension of Emergency Proclamation through April 22, 2020. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

5. **BOROUGH MANAGER’S REPORT:**

- a. **Cable Franchise Renewal** – Mr. Imbesi recommended that Borough Council engage Daniel S. Cohen to assist in the franchise fee audit and cable franchise renewal negotiations with Comcast at a 25% discounted flat fee of \$8,175. Mr. Becker noted that this law firm represents a number of municipalities, creating better leverage for deal negotiations. The final contract would be presented to Council for approval.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager to sign the letter of engagement with Daniel S. Cohen to renew the Comcast Cable Franchise contract. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Craft Pretzel and Beer Festival Penn Avenue Closure** – Mr. Imbesi shared the Main Street Manager’s request to reschedule this festival to July 25, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and requested Borough Council to approve the alternate date to close Penn Avenue.

Motion to approve the closure of Penn Avenue on Saturday, July 25, 2020 for the Craft Pretzel and Beer Festival. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Requests for Fee Waiver** – Mr. Imbesi shared two requests to waive fees associated with use of the Pavilion from Mom’s Demand Action and Berks Encore. Following a lengthy discussion of non-profit designations and adherence to Borough service, policies, or goals it was unanimously decided to deny both requests.

Motion to deny Mom’s Demand Action and Berks Encore fee waiver requests. **Moved** by Mrs. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Public Works Truck Gear** – Mr. Imbesi shared the Public Works Directors request for permission to purchase a V-plow, lift gate and light bar package for the new pickup truck at a total cost of \$12,559, which is \$1,800 below what had been budgeted.

Motion to approve the purchase of truck gear at a total cost of \$12,559. **Moved** by Mrs. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Yard Waste Collection** – Mr. Imbesi shared the Public Works Directors request to approve the additional staff time to provide residents with the opportunity to drop-off their yard waste at the Borough Garage. Drop-off times would be on the first Saturday of the month from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. during the months of April through November. Due to the pandemic it was decided to offer the additional service time during the months of May through November.

Motion to approve the additional staff hours of 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on the first Saturday of the month from May through November to collect residential yard waste. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Recreation Department Seasonal Employment** – Mr. Imbesi shared the Recreation Directors request to approve the list of seasonal hires or rehires for the pool and playground programs. It was noted that rehires typically receive a \$0.25 increase in wage and there is no apparent increase to the number of staff members.

Motion to approve the list of Recreation Department seasonal employment as presented. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

6. **TREASURER’S REPORT:**

- a. **Financial Statement ending 2/29/20**
- b. **Payment Approval Report 2/19/20 to 3/13/20 & 3/14/20 to 3/24/20**

Motion to approve the Financial Statement ending 2/29/2020 and the Payment Approval reports of 2/19/20 to 3/13/20 & 3/14/20 to 3/24/20. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mrs. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- 7. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Council recessed to executive session at 7:35 p.m. to discuss personnel, collective bargaining and potential litigation items. Council reconvened at 7:44 p.m. and Borough Council took the following action:

Motion to approve the hiring of Robert Pfromm of Element Environmental Solutions to perform environmental testing for the Borough. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to approve the hiring of Anthony Pollock to the position of Parking Enforcement Officer effective May 15, 2020 at a starting rate of \$13.50 per hour, with a potential rate increase following a six-month probation period. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

8. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no public comments.

Chief Powell asked Borough Council if they had any questions on actions pertaining to the pandemic and noted recent expenditures towards protective equipment. Quarantine recommendations will likely change this week as it pertains to emergency workers. An agreement has been made with a local hotel establishment to house staff members if the need should arise.

Mr. Imbesi noted that Public Works staff members are currently operating on a modified schedule, and the Recreation Director has been instructed to work from home. The schedule to disinfect the Borough Hall building has been increased, and we have not received any complaints from residents regarding the Borough Hall not being open to the public. It was recommended to consider revisions to the current emergency management relationship following this pandemic. These services are provided at a cost to the Borough, which are based on population.

9. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m. **Moved** by Mrs. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary