

BOROUGH OF WEST READING – SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 23, 2006

West Reading Borough Council held a special Council meeting at Borough Hall on the above date at 10:00 a.m. President Stephanie J. Murray called the meeting to order with the following persons present: Council members Kevin M. Conrad, Michael H. Doyle, Michael P. Ferenchick, and Nathalie R. Kulesa.

VISITORS: Kurt Bertges – 219 Tulpehocken Ave
Shane Keller – 395 Oak Terrace
Michael Morrill – 421 Ann St
Phil Wert – 214 Olive St
Jim and Sue Gilbert – 333 Sunset Rd
Kevin and Pam Barnhardt – 8 Eagles Lane
Bonnie Batdorf – 384 Oak Terrace
Jay and Angela Kupiszewski – 228 S. Third Ave
Becca Keller – 395 Oak Terrace
Ruth Cardell – 728 Reading Ave
Amy Good-Ashman – 210 Chestnut St
Lucille and Tom Tirdell – 308 Sunset Rd
Gene Gilbert – 333 Sunset Rd

Interviews - Borough Council interviewed the following individuals for the position of Mayor of West Reading: Kurt Bertges, Shane Keller, and Michael Morrill.

Mr. Bertges – Mr. Bertges stated that he would like to see the Borough maintain and forge forward with doing the best that it can for residents and merchants. Mr. Bertges stated that he previously sat on Council and resigned to fill a position on the Wyomissing Area School Board. As far as police regionalization he believes it is a good idea to look into it, but he believes people are very comfortable with the status quo. If the status quo is doing the job, then it would be hard to argue that it should be changed. However, if there are fiscal savings to be had, regionalization should be looked at. Mr. Bertges would like to see the gains that the Borough has made in past years continue to grow and build upon them. It will be interesting to see how the Penn View site develops. He expressed concern when asked about the loss of some of his property at the rear of Penn Avenue. When asked about ICGR, he imagines the Mayor would be asked to attend meetings and noted that it sounds like a great concept; however, more information is needed, such as funding and procedures to accomplish the plan. When asked about time flexibility, Mr. Bertges replied that he believes that with the help of his assistant, he would not have a problem meeting obligations. When asked about ways to increase safety and crime prevention, he stated he hopes since the demise of the Penn View that that would allow the Police Officers to spend more time on other issues. The Mayor should have the ability to give the real image that West Reading is a viable, valid, important and progressive player.

Mr. Keller – Mr. Keller stated that he has 15 years of public service, is a life-long resident, and plans to stay in the Borough. When asked about expanding the Police Department, he stated that might not be necessary if the Borough enters into a municipal agreement. If there is no municipal agreement expansion, he advised it could be necessary to hire more Police Officers, even if that meant an increase of taxes. Mr. Keller stated that it is important for the Codes Department to continue in its efforts to keep on guard with slum conditions and that it might be necessary to hire another person for the Codes Department. Mr. Keller has much experience as a Union Stewart and in Human Resource, managing and disciplining many people and having a unique perspective from both sides of the negotiating table. When asked about regionalization, Mr. Keller replied he believes that it is important to have an expansion of the municipal aid agreement, but it may not be worthwhile at this time to spend money on a study about regionalization, which leads to more questions than answers. When asked about ICGR, Mr. Keller replied that he too supports the concept; however, he struggles with how the Borough could fund Main Street and ICGR. When asked about the properties in the 400 block of Penn Avenue whose rear face Cherry Street and whether or not he believes they should be taken by eminent domain, Mr. Keller stated he sympathizes with the owners' situation about losing part of their property, but believes parking is an issue on Penn Avenue and by taking the properties by eminent domain, it would help alleviate some of the parking problem and enable those businesses in the 400 block of Penn Avenue to draw more customers.

Michael Morrill – Mr. Morrill stated that a Mayor needs three skills: (1) Leadership Skills, (2) Uniting of People Skills, and (3) Innovative and Creative Skills. If selected, he feels he has excellent leadership skills and stated how he has used those abilities. Mr. Morrill stated that he is a uniter and explained how he has used those skills in dealing with unions and other entities. Mr. Morrill believes that he is innovative and creative and because of that, he feels that he can articulate his ideas. When asked if he is not selected as Mayor, would he run next year against the person who is chosen? Mr. Morrill replied that it would depend on how well the person was carrying out his duties as Mayor. When asked about the police issues, he stated the Borough needs to be proactive and not reactive to situations by hiring more codes enforcement personnel. As Mayor, Mr. Morrill would conduct public forums, similar to what the City had, to talk about crime. However, he would include the Police Chief and officers at the forum. When asked about time constraints, Mr. Morrill said he spoke with both sides of his company, and they agree that this is a worthwhile position for him to pursue. He has ideas about crime, property tax relief and other issues and would welcome an open forum with the Mayor. When asked about regionalization, Mr. Morrill stated he likes the idea of studies, but to date he has heard no compelling reasons why West Reading should want to go for regionalization. In any regionalization, there are winners and losers. He stated that currently the Borough has a good ratio between police and citizens. With regard to ICGR, Mr. Morrill believes the concept is very good, but he does not believe the Borough should spend a lot of money. If it means sitting down, sharing plans, and working cooperatively, he is all for the ICGR. When asked about eminent domain, Mr. Morrill stated he is always skeptical about taking someone's property unless it is necessary. The real concern for the businessperson is - How I can provide parking for my patrons and my

employees if parking spaces are removed. When asked how he would handle regionalization if it was shoved upon the Borough, Mr. Morrill replied that the issue would have to go before the General Assembly and that he would use his relationship with many individuals around the state to work with the Borough.

At this time, Council President asked for a motion to appoint a Mayor. Mr. Conrad noted that all three individuals made compelling arguments as to why they should be Mayor, but that only one could be appointed. On motion duly made by Council Member Kevin M. Conrad, seconded by Council Member Michael P. Ferenchick, and passed, by a 3-2 vote, Council appointed Shane J. Keller as Mayor of West Reading Borough through December 31, 2007. Council President Stephanie J. Murray advised Mr. Keller that he would need to contact a judge to swear him in. At this time, Mr. Keller resigned his position on Borough Council. On motion duly made by Council Member Michael P. Ferenchick, seconded by Council Member Nathalie R. Kulesa, and passed, Council accepted the resignation of Shane J. Keller.

On motion duly made by Council Member Kevin M. Conrad, seconded by Council Member Nathalie R. Kulesa, and passed, Council approved the advertisement to fill the vacant Council seat. Resumes/Letter of Intent is to be submitted by October 13, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. Interviews will take place Council meeting evening, October 17, 2006. The time will be dependent upon the number of applications received.

Public Comments – None

Personnel Meeting – Council Member Michael P. Ferenchick stated a Personnel meeting is scheduled for September 28 and asked if a replacement should be named at this time to fill the position that Mr. Keller held on the Personnel Committee. Mr. Ferenchick stated that he did not mind if the Mayor worked on the Committee until a replacement is appointed. Council President stated that she would assemble a list of committees that the former Mayor sat and appoint Mr. Keller to them at the next Council meeting. In addition, if any Council Member is interested in sitting on a committee that Mr. Keller held, he or she should let her know.

Emergency Management - Council President Stephanie J. Murray attended the regular Emergency Management meeting and spoke to members about the Borough's anticipation in having a mutual aid agreement among several municipalities. The Spring Township representative suggested a very positive response.

Adjournment - On motion duly made by Council Member Nathalie R. Kulesa, seconded by Council Member Michael H. Doyle, and passed, Council adjourned the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalie A. Loeper
Recording Secretary

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