

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
TRAFFIC & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**

**MAY 10, 2023**

The Borough of West Reading Traffic & Infrastructure Committee met on Wednesday, May 10, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chairman Christopher Lincoln; Council Member Patrick Kaag; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Officer-in-Charge Chad Marks; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Fire Chief and Code Enforcement Officer Chad Moyer; Borough Manager Dean Murray; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

**Visitors:**

Karen Livingood, Resident	Blake Tobias, Resident
Christine Matthews, Resident	Michael & Helen Witmyer, Residents
Lindsay Vollandt, Resident	Thomas Bausher, Emergency Management Coordinator

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Tobias of Holland Square shared his thoughts and experience following receipt of a resident permit parking ticket. As a resident of the Borough this was viewed as inequitable, and he noted the limited parking options that are available to residents of Holland Square that are surrounded by alleys without off-street parking capabilities. He reported that he paid the \$50 fine, which was perceived by him as an admission of guilt, as opposed to taking the time and possible added expense to allow the District Justice to hear his plea. A formalized review of ordinance regulations was requested to consider the designation of Holland Square as a permit parking area, to review a discrepancy between the ordinance allowing 72-hours to pay fines and the ticket designating seven-days, and the requirement to display a permit when certain individuals were quoted by the police department as being exempt.

Mr. Lincoln noted that the permit parking program was established to deter hospital staff from parking within residential areas for extended periods of time, and that expanding the areas of permit parking would require additional manpower. Officer Marks indicated that a person may be exempt from displaying a permit for confidentiality purposes and stated that he would review this with office staff. Mr. Tobias stated that while he was employed by the hospital a shift in staffing and parking regulations facilitated the availability of numerous on-campus parking spaces. Mr. Lincoln reported that for consistency purposes the number of hours or days to remit fines would be reviewed.

Mr. Tobias shared his experiences walking to the hospital campus and the difficulty in navigating the intersection of Lakeview Drive and Spruce Street. It was thought that the minimal distance between the parking stall and stop sign creates a hazard. It was noted that the stop sign had been installed a few years ago and that a modification to the parking stall lines would be reviewed to improve safety.

Mrs. Witmyer indicated that crossing the traffic circle has recently improved and brought attention to the Fifth and Penn Avenue intersection. The pedestrian crossing signal was thought to be too short to safely cross Penn Avenue. The signal will be reviewed for compliance to permitting requirements and if the signal is found to be operating as permitted an update to the permit will be requested.

Ms. Matthews noted her attendance at a recent Environmental Advisory Council meeting and her desire to assist in cleaning the area near the fishing dock. Recommendations were made to improve access to the overgrown path leading to the Schuylkill River Trail by grading, clearing, and installing signage. Mr. Grassley noted two issues with this proposal, one of which being that this property resides within the jurisdiction of Cumru Township, and secondly a notice was received from PennDOT that the area below the bridge will be closed for two years for maintenance. The benefits to West Reading residents of having access to the trail were noted and would be reviewed for the feasibility of improving the area.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Motion to approve the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee minutes of April 12, 2023. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Grassley. **Motion carried.**

## **Presentation**

Mr. Bausher introduced himself as the Emergency Management Coordinator for West Reading and Mike Fesh as the Deputy Coordinator. Following the recent train derailment in Ohio a review of resources has been gathered to update a Railroad Incident Action Plan. It was noted that Norfolk Southern rails are present in West Reading and the local 2019 derailment in Wyomissing of a train hauling trash. Contents of the action plan include contact information for the railroad and resources, access via public streets to the rails, staging/command areas, fire hydrant locations, storm drain locations and paths of flow. Access to the elevated rails in West Reding would be via the 100 blocks of Franklin and Chestnut Streets. A staging area was identified as the Berkshire Mall parking lot. Fire hydrant locations near the rail line were identified at 139 S. Second Avenue, Penn and Second Avenues, and 224 Reading Avenue. Storm drain locations were identified at the 200 blocks of Penn Avenue and Franklin Street, the 100 blocks of Franklin and Chestnut Streets, the 300 block of Buttonwood Street and the 100 blocks of Olive and Juniata Streets with the natural flow towards the Schuylkill River. Various hazardous materials transportation incident checklists are provided within the action plan specific to rail transportation as well as other methods of transportation. An example map radius was provided overlaying West Reading, similar to the Ohio incident, of the vicinity that was evacuated following a vinyl chloride spill. A traffic evacuation plan was thought to be Penn Avenue heading west, and Museum Road heading south with a contraflow system directing both lanes away from the incident.

## **Old Business**

**Sidewalk Repairs** – Mayor Kaag shared information gathered during a recent PSAB webinar on Sidewalk Safety noting that ultimately the responsibility for sidewalk repairs falls to the property owner. However, a number of municipalities offer assistance via either grant funding for low-income households or low interest rate loans. Exclusions from the assistance program were noted as curbing repairs, handicap ramp repairs, brick sidewalk repairs, rental properties and commercial or industrial properties. An overview of a program offered by Northern Liberties was for the property owner to apply, meet with a representative of the municipality to view the sidewalk in question, and receive reimbursement following completion of the work by a list of approved contractors to ensure the project is completed in compliance with specifications. Another example was provided by the City of Lock Haven where owner occupied properties can receive a loan (grant) up to \$3,000 with consideration given towards corner property owners to receive an additional \$3,000. Other municipalities allow rental property owners to apply for assistance noting that these applications are considered after owner occupied applications have been awarded. The Mayor plans to attend an additional webinar tomorrow and will share a summary of this information with the committee for consideration next month.

**Alley Parking – Twilight and Wedge Alley** – Mr. Grassley reported that a no parking sign has been posted on the garage and line painting should be completed soon.

**Utility Billing** – The solicitor has reviewed the water, sewer, and refuse billing policy, and repayment, and budget payment plan agreements making one recommendation to require the owner of a rental property to pay any outstanding balance in full prior to new tenancy. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to implement the revised water, sewer, refuse billing policy.

**Moved** by Mr. Grassley and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

**Bulk Trash Collection** – The consensus at staff level since the trash hauler contract expires at the end of this year is to refrain from going to the expense of an addendum to the existing contract. The Request for Proposal (RFP) should be drafted in the near future and was requested to be brought to this committee to discuss the desired options prior to advertising. It was noted that Wyomissing Borough provides one trash collection, one recycling collection and one yard waste collection per week and it was thought that the RFP could be drafted to request these services for consideration. Mr. Grassley offered to review grant opportunities for recycling activities.

**Pedestrian Safety Improvements** – The Fourth and Reading Avenues intersection pavement markings and pedestrian crossing signs should be completed soon, as well as a multi-way stop study.

**School Zone** – Mr. Lincoln recapped last month's discussion on options to lessen school buses from blocking the lanes of travel near the South Seventh Avenue and Franklin Street intersection. An extension of the school zone designation along the curb was recommended with the creation of two parking spaces for the area outside of school zone timeframes. The section of ordinances that would require a change to create an additional school bus zone on South Seventh Avenue was 430-23 Parking Prohibited Certain Hours. Mr. Murray spoke with representatives of Sacred Heart School who welcomed the extended school zones. Draft amendments will be provided for consideration next month.

## **New Business**

**Parking Restriction** – A request was received from Bethany Lutheran Church to reinstall a sign to prohibit parking on Sunday mornings to allow an elderly drop off space. It was noted that the yellow curbing by itself is not enforceable, however parking outside of the stall lines is enforceable. Additional feedback is needed from the church as to the need to limit parking for food pantry deliveries. It was thought that there is ample space to create a parking space within the previously designated fire zone.

**Alley Name / Maintenance** – Mr. Lincoln noted the recent naming of alleys and designation of no winter maintenance roadways and the finding of an alley that was not named. The alley in question is located on the north side of the Borough between Olive Street and Jade Alley. The topography of the alley is unknown that serves roughly six properties and there does not appear to be a curb cut from Olive Street. Mr. Moyer noted a recent code complaint investigation of a single garage parcel fronting Jade Alley along the unnamed alley and confirmed the area in question is a right-of-way. It was thought that the area could be vacated back to the adjacent property owners. Rear access to the parcels will be reviewed and discussed with the solicitor.

## **Public Comment**

Mr. Tobias commented on the recent realization from the Borough website that the alley behind his home on Holland Square is named Tulip Alley and asked if this is a legitimate name due to package delivery issues based on Google Maps listing the alley as Holland Square. Mr. Lincoln indicated that the names are primarily for internal use, and from a cost perspective it is not intended to install street signs.

## **Adjournment**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 p.m. by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Grassley.

**Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary