

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

**APRIL 10, 2024**

The Borough of West Reading Traffic & Infrastructure Committee met on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chairman Christopher Lincoln; Council Member Patrick Kaag; Interim Borough Manager Richard Sichler; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Mayor Samantha Kaag; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

### **Visitors:**

Karen Livingood, Resident

Michael Witmyer, Resident

Nick Price, Main Street Executive Director

Paul Rizzo, Keystone Metrofiber

James Rogers, Resident

Andrew Moletress, Resident

Lee Gillman, Keystone Metrofiber

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

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Moletress recalled discussions roughly a year ago on restricting the direction of travel on Court Street to deter repeat damages to the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF) office building and the William H. Diller Jewelers garage at the intersection of North Sixth Avenue. Both structures have recently been damaged by large commercial delivery vehicles exiting Court Street onto North Sixth Avenue. Mr. Lincoln noted prior plans of creating a pocket park on North Sixth Avenue between Penn Avenue and Court Street while limiting the direction of travel on Court Street westbound and North Sixth Avenue southbound from Reading Avenue. The pocket park theory has been redirected towards the planned purchase of property within the 400 block of Penn Avenue. Limiting the direction of travel on North Sixth Avenue becomes more difficult while allowing the two directions of travel to remain from Penn Avenue to Court Street. It was noted that delivery vehicles as well as trash collection vehicles all travel eastbound on Court Street. A review of large vehicle access and egress from Court Street would need to be reviewed as well as the potential removal of a parking space on the east side of North Sixth Avenue across from Court Street to provide a larger turning radius.

Mr. Rogers noted his continued observation of parking within the 500 block of Grape Street that would cause difficulty for fire engines in accessing homes in the event of an emergency. He also inquired as to an update on a traffic study of the Sixth & Reading Avenue intersection. Chief Tornielli stated the only line-of-sight issue identified at this intersection was in front of the restaurant on Reading Avenue from Sixth Avenue, the pavement has been marked, signage installed, and enforcement measures increased in that vicinity. The radar sign is undergoing maintenance, and it was noted that the initial data did not indicate significant speeding issues. Mr. Grassley noted an appointment that has been scheduled for the end of the month with a representative of the Pennsylvania Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) to review the intersection and obtain their feedback.

Mr. Gilman of Keystone Metrofiber introduced himself and his colleagues as fiber optic internet service providers headquartered in Coplay Pennsylvania. Fiber optic infrastructure assets were acquired in the greater Reading area from MAW Communications. Their goal is to build fiber optic internet services for West Reading residents. The service would be faster and more cost-effective for the end user. Their initial roll-out to gauge the market would be presented to 20% of the 1,700 West Reading residences. The initial build will include existing infrastructure which is aerial. Improvements would be low impact,

no tree removal or street openings. A presentation and map of the 350 targeted homes will be shared during the May Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Motion to approve the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee minutes of March 13, 2024. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Grassley. **Motion carried.**

Mr. Gilman and Mr. Rizzo departed the meeting at 6:16 p.m.

### **New Business**

**Traffic Box Wraps** – Mr. Price proposed the installation of four large traffic box wraps with an anti-graffiti coating on Penn Avenue fully sponsored by New Castle Lawn & Landscape. The Art Plus Gallery will request four local artists to provide individual renderings that would include three QR Codes, one for New Castle Lawn & Landscape, one for a calendar of West Reading events, and a third of a map of the area. Mr. Lincoln indicated that the traffic boxes are borough equipment and recommended drafting an agreement that specifies maintenance responsibilities between the two parties. He recommended avoiding the coverage of vent holes and anything that would distract drivers. Mr. Moletress recommended the opportunity for Borough Council to approve the artwork similar to how the WRCRF reviews renderings of murals prior to their installation.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to support vinyl traffic box wraps subject to an agreement coordinating maintenance, damage, and replacement. **Moved** by Mr. Grassley and seconded by Chief Tornielli. **Motion carried.**

Mr. Price departed the meeting at 6:23 p.m.

**ARLE Grant** - Mr. Lincoln shared an opportunity that is offered annually by the state from funds collected by the Automated Red-Light Enforcement (ARLE) camera fines to fund traffic and pedestrian safety improvements. Project ideas were discussed, the planned improvements to Delaney Circle would include striping and concrete islands. Mr. Grassley confirmed that these items could be completed in-house and recommended beginning with striping to determine the need for concrete islands at a later date.

Another project could be the installation of an electronic rapid flashing beacon at the pedestrian crossing on South Fifth Avenue at Pine Street. It was noted that many hospital staff reside in the Borough and cross this busy roadway during peak traffic volumes. Funding amounts of ARLE project grants are rather small, it was thought that the noted project would cost roughly \$50,000. A grant match is not required; however, offering the borough to fund engineering costs may be more favorable of an approval. A pre-scoping form is due by the end of the month and will require Borough Council's approval. Following a thirty-day review period comments will be provided with a full application due by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Chief Tornielli was in support of the chosen location due to the speed and volume of traffic on South Fifth Avenue.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to apply for an ARLE grant to install a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) pedestrian crossing signal on South Fifth Avenue at Pine Street. **Moved** by Chief Tornielli and seconded by Mr. Grassley.

**300 Block South Seventh Avenue Parking** – Chief Tornielli met with the hospital's security director to review parking along South Seventh Avenue and shared a request to increase the number of handicapped parking spaces on the east side while maintaining the 20-minute parking spaces near the

entrance to the Doctor's Office Building (DOB). A system has been established with the hospital's parking enforcement officer and the borough on enforcement of 20-minute parking spaces in this vicinity. Adjustments could be made to the handicapped parking policy to allow additional spaces for this area that primarily serves hospital uses. Chief Tornielli will review the area and map the optimal placement and numbers of handicapped and 20-minute parking spaces on the east side. The west side of South Seventh Avenue was recommended to be restricted to a 3-hour parking limit.

### **Old Business**

**Delaney Circle** – Steps were reviewed following receipt of an approval from Delaney's family to relocate her memorial items from the traffic circle to the pool area. It was decided to relocate the frog statue and plaque to the pool area in the near future to allow safety improvements to be implemented at the traffic circle. Funding of these changes was discussed. Mr. Grassley requested cost information from New Castle Lawn and Landscape to install the plants and mulch. Public Works plans to create the stamped concrete walkway and look into refurbishing two benches for the memorial garden. Mayor Kaag asked for cost information to share with the school district that is interested in commemorating what would have been Delaney's senior year. The overall memorial discussion should include the Recreation Commission, Mr. Kaag will communicate with Ms. Drobnick, and share with the Environmental Advisory Council. Pavement repairs will be made initially to the traffic circle and the engineer plan followed for striping.

**20-Minute Parking Policy** – A draft policy for 20-minute parking space designations was reviewed, noting its similarity to the handicapped parking space policy. Due to the limited number of spaces that would be designated per block on Penn Avenue, it was thought that these spaces could be reviewed by staff for optimal placement based on demographics and business composition and installed. The installation of 20-minute parking spaces may reduce the number of pedestrians crossing the street and instances of double parking. Chief Tornielli and Mr. Grassley will review each block to provide recommendations.

**Trial Sidewalk Program** – Borough Council granted approval of a trial sidewalk replacement program contingent upon solicitor approval. The Code Department Manager has provided a solicitor approved waiver agreement where the solicitor noted that the program will likely reduce the existing risk of liability to the borough. Mr. Grassley noted plans to review areas around the borough with Mr. Moyer next week to begin addressing prioritized areas in the near future.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Moletress requested consideration of reestablishing the numbering of parking spaces on the curb on Penn Avenue for ease of vendor locations during large events. Last fall Mr. Murray was concerned about marking the curbs following enforcement of regulations that prohibit painting of sidewalks. It was recommended to request clarification from the solicitor and to wait until PennDOT repaves Penn Avenue this summer.

### **Adjournment**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:09 p.m. by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Grassley.

**Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary