

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

**September 27, 2022 – 6:30 p.m.**

West Reading Borough Council held a Conditional Use Hearing and Budget Workshop at Borough Hall on Tuesday, September 27, 2022 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Jennifer Bressler, Patrick Kaag, Denise Drobnick, and Zachary Shaver; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Solicitor Joan London; Zoning Officer Cathy Hoffman; Assistant Zoning Officer Chad Moyer; Borough Manager Dean Murray; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Assistant Treasurer Helen Moyer; Police Chief Wayne Holben; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

**VISITORS:**

James Rogers, Resident (arrived 7:00 p.m.)	Suzanne Thompson, Resident (arrived 7:00 p.m.)
Alexander Elliker, Esquire	Charles Wenzel, Property Owner
Scott Gentile, Property Owner	

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.

2. **CONDITIONAL USE HEARING:**

Ms. London announced that this is the time, date and location advertised for the hearing by Borough Council on the application of C&S Realty, LLC for the property located at 304 Penn Avenue for conditional use approval to convert the existing first-floor commercial space to residential use in the Central Business Zoning District and General Business District Overlay. An application to convert to residential use was submitted on July 5, 2022, and the denial due to the need for conditional use approval was dated July 14, 2022. The applicant is burdened to demonstrate to Borough Council that the proposed use meets the criteria of the Zoning Ordinance and any additional conditions imposed by the governing body.

Ms. London provided an overview of the following procedural exhibits associated with the hearing:

1. Conditional Use Application
2. Public Hearing Notice
3. Affidavit of Publication from Media News Group, publisher of the Reading Eagle stating that the notice was published on September 16, 2022 and September 19, 2022.
4. Affidavit of Posting Borough Hall on September 8, 2022
5. Affidavit of Posting the notice on September 14, 2022 at 304 Penn Avenue
6. Affidavit of Mailing Notice to adjacent property owners on September 8, 2022
7. Denial Letter from Zoning Officer
8. Planning Commission meeting minutes recommending approval of the application contingent upon the installation of wheel stops within the onsite parking spaces
9. Borough of West Reading Zoning Ordinance

There were no questions regarding the exhibits. Attorney Elliker entered his appearance on behalf of the applicant C&S Realty, LLC and identified Charles Wentzel as a witness to testify on behalf of the LLC that is partnered with Scott Gentile. The witness was sworn in by Ms. London, and it was noted that although public notice was given no one appeared to oppose the application.

Attorney Elliker provided an overview of the property's location and similar neighboring uses noting that the commercial space has remained vacant for some time. Mr. Wenzel shared that his business is a real estate investment company that currently owns 302, 304 and 306 Penn Avenue. The proposed residential use should reduce the flow of traffic in that vicinity. A current description of the property at 304 Penn Avenue was one large open space on the first floor and a single residential unit occupying the second and third floors. There are four off-street parking spaces located at the rear of the property that are compliant with the minimum off-street parking zoning requirements. Mr. Wenzel indicated that should Borough Council grant approval of the conditional use application a two-bedroom apartment would be constructed on the first-floor.

Ms. London asked if the applicant would be willing to install wheel stops within the four onsite parking spaces as a condition of approval, Mr. Wenzel was in agreement.

Mr. Wert inquired as to any interest shown in the commercial space. Mr. Wenzel indicated that minimal interest was shown during the pandemic that did not align with their financial goals.

Borough Council recessed to an executive session at 6:53 p.m. to deliberate on rendering a decision, and reconvened at 6:59 p.m.

Motion to approve the conditional use requested relief to permit the conversion of the vacant first-floor commercial unit located at 304 Penn Avenue, Borough of West Reading to a residential unit subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Applicant shall comply at all times with applicable statutes, regulations, and ordinances, and shall procure all required governmental approvals.
2. Applicant shall use, develop and occupy the property for which this conditional use approval is granted in strict accordance with the representations offered at the hearing.
3. Applicant shall install wheel stops at all four parking spaces on the property prior to occupancy of the apartment.

**Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Attorney Elliker, Mr. Wenzel, Mr. Gentile, Mrs. Hoffman and Mr. Moyer departed the meeting, and Mrs. Rentschler, Mrs. Moyer, and Chief Holben joined the meeting at 7:01 p.m.

**4. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Mr. Lineaweaver noted an executive session that was held today at 6:00 p.m. to discuss personnel and acquisition of real property matters.

**5. AGENDA AMENDMENTS:**

An action item was requested to be added to the agenda following executive session discussions. Consideration to proceed in retaining Belair Real Estate for an appraisal of potential real estate acquisition. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

**6. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers spoke of his constant education through researching Business Privilege Taxes and an unknown West Reading address of 116 Grande Boulevard listed by the County in their real estate transfer report of August 2022. Mr. Rogers indicated that the larger firm of Berkheimer may be better suited to finding and resolving these types of discrepancies.

Ms. London departed the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

**7. POLICE DEPARTMENT BUDGET:**

Chief Holben thanked Mrs. Rentschler and Mrs. Moyer for their assistance in preparing the Police budget and noted the following:

**Police Revenues**

- **01-331-300 Parking Tickets** – The end of year estimate of \$94,808 is below the budgeted amount of \$115,000, the 2023 budget was proposed at \$100,000. Mayor Kaag inquired as to the description of a part-time parking enforcement officer. Chief Holben indicated that Mr. Pollock is employed on an as needed basis.
- **01-331-310 Permit Parking Violation** – The end of year estimate of \$2,486 is below the budgeted \$3,000, the proposed 2023 budget was \$2,500.
- **01-331-320 Parking Meter** – The end of year estimate of \$13,243 is below the budgeted \$21,000, the proposed 2023 budget was \$16,000.

Mr. Lincoln inquired as to the reason for lower revenue in the parking ticket line items to determine if there is more compliance or insufficient staffing. Chief Holben thought that there is more compliance since the new parking enforcement officers issued a number of parking tickets at the onset of employment. It was also noted that the parking meter kiosks were down on a number of occasions. It is hopeful that the new ParkMobile App will alleviate lost revenue when the kiosks are inoperable.

- **01-361-100 Public Safety Police Services** – The end of year estimate of \$6,563 exceeds the budgeted \$2,000, the proposed 2023 budget was \$6,563.
- **01-361-110 Police Report Photo Copies** – The proposed 2023 budget has been lowered to \$2,500 based on the new compliance parameters that prohibit supplying information from third parties such as CARFAX.
- **01-361-113 Aggressive Driver Enforcement** – The end of year estimate of \$4,580 exceeds the budgeted \$4,500, the proposed 2023 budget was \$5,000.
- **01-361-114 Drug Task Force** – This new GL Code was budgeted at \$500 for 2023 for over-time reimbursement from the District Attorney's office when an officer contributes time towards the drug task force.
- **01-361-183 National Night Out** – The end of year estimate of \$1,392 exceeds the budgeted \$1,000, the proposed 2023 budget was \$1,000.
- **01-361-184 Crime Prevention** – This new GL Code was budgeted at \$1,000 for 2023 to sell hats and shirts.
- **01-387-100 Private Contributions** – The year end estimate of \$0 is below the budgeted \$1,000, the proposed 2023 budget was \$1,000.
- **01-387-410 K-9 Program Donations** – The year end estimate of \$7,500 is below the budgeted \$10,000, the proposed 2023 budget was \$8,700.
- **01-387-413 Bike Program Donations** – The year end estimate of \$5,500 was from a one-time e-bike donation, there was \$0 budgeted for 2023.
- **01-391-410 Sale of Police Vehicle** – The year end estimate of \$5,500 exceeded the budgeted \$5,000, the proposed 2023 budget was \$5,000.

### **Police Expenses**

**01-410-121 Salary of Chief** – The year end estimate of \$54,923 is below the budgeted \$84,769. The proposed 2023 salary of \$110,210 included an increase of eight percent should contract required training be completed.

**01-410-123 Salary of Sergeants** – The year end estimate of \$240,000 was below the budgeted \$290,655 due primarily to the promotion of Chief Holben from Sergeant. The proposed 2023 budget for Sergeant salaries was \$299,376.

**01-410-131 Salary of Patrolmen** – The year end estimate of \$945,100 is below the budgeted \$953,803 due primarily to an officer's deployment to active duty. The 2023 budget with a new hire was proposed at \$1,017,420.

**01-410-133 Desk Clerk Wages** – The year end estimate of \$73,803 is below the budgeted \$76,271, the proposed 2023 budget for two full-time aides was \$94,124.

**01-410-134 Parking Enforcement Wages** – The year end estimate of \$80,512 exceeds the budgeted \$69,148, the proposed 2023 budget was \$73,442. Mayor Kaag inquired as to the completion of annual reviews, Chief Holben indicated that this has not yet been completed.

**01-410-135 Shift Differential** – The year end estimate of \$9,374 is below the budgeted \$12,000, the proposed 2023 budget was \$11,000.

**01-410-137 Sick Time Pay Out** – The year end estimate of \$2,850 is below the budgeted \$4,700. This benefit is not included in the new contract; therefore, nothing was budgeted for 2023.

**01-410-138 Officer in Charge** -The year end estimate of \$10,600 exceeds the budgeted \$6,600, the proposed 2023 budget was \$5,000.

**01-410-171 Overtime** – The year end estimate of \$276,872 exceeds the budgeted \$191,151 primarily due to three officers being on leave under the Heart and Lung Act. The proposed 2023 budget was \$230,000.

**01-410-172 Holiday Pay** - The year end estimate of \$124,500 exceeds the budgeted \$121,439. The proposed 2023 budget based on officer raises was \$128,235.

**01-410-174 Overtime for Special Events** – The year end estimate of \$23,900 exceeds the budgeted amount of \$20,000, the proposed 2023 budget was \$24,617.

**01-410-190 Civil Service Testing** – The year end estimate of \$6,500 exceeds the budgeted amount of \$1,000. This is due to the entry level officer and supervisor testing processes. There was nothing budgeted for 2023. Mayor Kaag recommended consideration be given to budgeting funds annually in anticipation of multiple Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) participants.

**01-410-193 Hiring Police Chief** – The year end estimate of \$3,991 is below the budgeted \$8,606, there were no funds budgeted for 2023.

**01-410-194 Hiring Cost for Full-Time Officer** – Chief Holben indicated that none of the \$1,000 that was budgeted has been used to date. However, in anticipation of hiring an officer in the near future these funds will be expended. The proposed 2023 budget was \$2,000. Chief Holben noted a lack of interest to fill police officer positions and recommended to be competitive in the hiring process that Council consider funding police academy and/or testing fee expenses. Mayor Kaag inquired as to the cost of attending the police academy, Chief Holben estimated \$8,000. Mr. Lincoln inquired as to the potential value of an applicant being responsible for testing fees to ensure their commitment to obtaining the position, Chief Holben confirmed based on his personal experience.

**01-410-196 Health and Accident Insurance** – Based on the year-end estimate of \$429,600 and the estimated 6% increase in premiums the amount budgeted for 2023 was \$455,376.

**01-410-222 Crime Prevention Supplies** – The year end estimate of \$1,000 matches what had been budgeted. The amount budgeted for 2023 was \$2,000 to cover the expense of purchasing hats and shirts.

**01-410-232 Memberships** – The year end estimate of \$2,800 matches what had been budgeted. The amount proposed to budget for 2023 was \$8,800 due to the reallocation of ammunition and Berks County Emergency Response Team (BCERT) memberships.

**01-410-242 Ammo and Weapon Supplies** – The year end estimate of \$12,000 matches what had been budgeted. The proposed 2023 budget was \$7,500 with plans to annually upgrade the aging taser inventory.

**01-410-243 COVID** – The proposed 2023 budget was \$1,000 for supplies to clean an officer's vehicle following COVID exposure.

**01-410-252 Technology Fees** – The year end estimate of \$80,000 matches what had been budgeted. The proposed 2023 budget was \$102,161 to include:

- A backup system to support the Body Worn Camera (BWC) footage. The two options that are being reviewed are a Datto backup system with an initial equipment cost of \$4,123 and a monthly service fee of \$1,658 totaling \$24,019 for the first year, or a cloud storage system through Watch Guard with an initial first-year cost of \$14,280 and subsequent annual costs of \$12,780 for fifteen BWC's. Should additional cameras be added to vehicles this annual expense would increase. Mr. Lincoln inquired as to the end user experience between the two options. Chief Holben indicated that end user steps are similar between the two options.
- Replacement of the current server that is at maximum capacity. The estimated cost of \$24,000 would be divided between the police and administration departments.
- A 12 T backup system to the new server would incur an \$8,435 equipment fee as well as a recurring monthly service fee of \$2,158, whereas an 8T backup system would incur a \$4,123 equipment fee and a recurring monthly service fee of \$1,658. It was thought that an 8T device should be sufficient, and if an upgrade was needed up to three-years from the install date the device could be sold back less \$200.

**01-410-306 Canine Grant Expense** – Grant funds were received from the Berks County Community Foundation in 2022 in the amount of \$7,500. The amount budgeted for 2022 was \$6,500 with the intent to apply for another grant in 2023.

**01-410-314 Legal Services** – The year end estimate of \$15,000 exceeds the budgeted amount of \$10,000, the proposed 2023 budget was \$10,000.

**01-410-320 Communication Expense** – The year end estimate of \$37,950 is within the budgeted amount. The proposed 2023 budget was \$46,520 based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) agreement with the County of Berks dispatching services.

**01-410-327 Computer Maintenance** – The year end estimate of \$3,700 is below the budgeted \$5,000. The proposed budget for 2023 was \$14,600 to replace half of the desktop workstations, with the remainder to be replaced in 2024. Also, the record management software system CODY will be migrating to a web-based system by the year 2025. A discount of \$5,000 is being offered through January 31, 2023 on an unknown cost of the new system. Mr. Lincoln recognized the benefit in acquiring a new program prior to the old program becoming obsolete and recommended taking advantage of the discount regardless of the unknown expense.

**01-410-336 Vehicle Replacement** – Three vehicles were replaced this year that were financed through a three-year lease program of four annual payments of \$35,000. A quote of \$2,000 was

received today to transfer the License Plate Reader (LPR) system. The 2022-year end estimate of \$38,495 is below the budgeted \$54,000. The proposed 2023 budget of \$65,000 would fund the second \$35,000 annual payment and purchase two additional replacement vehicles.

**01-410-373 Maintenance and Repairs** – The year end estimate of \$11,425 exceeded the budgeted \$10,000, the proposed 2023 budget was \$10,000.

**01-410-740 Major Equipment Purchase** – The year end estimate of \$7,700 exceeds the budgeted \$4,000. The 2023 budget was proposed at \$23,400 to fund the server and two new parking enforcement handheld devices.

**30-410-000 Police Capital Expenditure** – Chief Holben is obtaining a quote to upgrade the alarm system. Mr. Lincoln recommended considering upgrades to the administration portion of the building for better pricing.

8. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Leaf Picker Sale** – Mr. Murray requested consideration to list the leaf picker for sale on Public Surplus.

Motion to approve listing the leaf picker for sale on Public Surplus. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Bleachers** – Mr. Murray requested consideration to draft an agreement to allow the Wyomissing Area School District to use the small bleachers for football playoff games.

Motion to approve the drafting of an agreement to allow the Wyomissing Area School District to use the small bleachers. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Property Appraisal** – Consideration was requested to proceed in retaining Belair Real Estate for an appraisal of a potential real estate acquisition. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

9. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers requested clarification on the leaf picker that is being listed for sale, confirming that this piece of equipment required three crew members to operate.

10. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary