

BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP/COUNCIL MEETING
November 24, 2020

West Reading Borough Council held a Budget Workshop and Council Meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, November 24, 2020 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Jennifer Bressler, Patrick Kaag, Samantha Kaag and Ryan Lineaweaver; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Public Works Director Dean Murray; Recreation Director Helen Moyer; Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Police Chief Stephen Powell; Code Department Manager Cathy Hoffman; Borough Manager Nicholas Imbesi; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS Karen Livingood, Resident

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 8:14 p.m. via Zoom, which was followed by Roll Call.

A delay in calling the meeting to order was caused by the Conditional Use Hearing which was held prior to this meeting to consider an application of an intermunicipal liquor license transfer.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

FINALIZE BUDGET

Mr. Imbesi referred to items 1 through 9 of an email from the Treasurer, dated November 18, 2020 that reflected revisions to the budget and offered to answer any questions.

Mr. Wert inquired as to a drop in the tax increase of 0.25 mil. Mr. Imbesi stated that the general fund tax increase was reduced from 0.50 mil to 0.25 mil, bringing the total proposed tax increase for the year 2021 to 1.00 mil.

Mr. Lineaweaver appreciated the estimated curbing repair costs for the proposed 2021 and 2022 road projects.

Chief Powell requested confirmation of the proposed parking violation fines. It was confirmed that the following fine increases, as discussed during the September 22, 2020 budget meeting, have been incorporated into the budget:

- The \$15 fine for paid parking violations would increase to \$25.
- The Penn Avenue area free two-hour parking limit would increase to a three-hour limit while increasing the fine from \$30 to \$50.

The parking violation revisions would begin on January 1, 2021, and it was noted that modifications to the street signs would be required. Mr. Murray indicated that stickers would be applied to the existing signs to revise the free parking time limit. Mr. Wert requested that this information be shared with the Main Street Manager to notify business owners of the revised free parking regulations.

ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS

- **Ordinance 1129 Handicapped parking space amendment** – There were no questions or comments regarding the amendment.

Motion to approve Ordinance 1129 Handicapped parking space amendment. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Resolution 2020-24 Refuse and Recycling Service Fee** – This resolution would fix the fee imposed upon owners of all properties in the Borough at eighty-five dollars per quarter, effective January 1, 2021.

Mr. Lincoln noted that the increased rate for the twelve scheduled visits to each property per month breaks down to \$2.50 per collection day, which is still a competitive rate.

Motion to approve Resolution 2020-24 Refuse and Recycling Service Fee. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Ordinance – 2021 Sewer Rate Amendment** – Per budget discussions, this amendment would increase the 2021 residential sewer rate 5% and the commercial sewer rate 7%.

Motion to advertise an ordinance amendment to the proposed 2021 standard sewer meter rates. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Ordinance – 2021 Tax Rate Amendment** – Per budget discussions, this amendment would increase the 2021 general purpose tax of 0.25 mil to 7.25 mils; the infrastructure tax of 0.25 mil to 0.75 mils; and the fire protection purpose tax of 0.50 mil to 2.85 mils.

Motion to advertise an ordinance amendment to the proposed 2021 tax rates. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

NEW BUSINESS

- **Board of Appeals Vacancy** – Mr. Imbesi noted two letters of resignation that were received from Mr. Lineaweaver and Mr. Kaag. As members of Council whom receive compensation by the Borough, these resignations were required in that membership of the board may not be employees of the jurisdiction. Mr. Imbesi requested Council to accept these letters of resignation.

Motion to accept the letters of resignation from the Board of Appeals for Patrick Kaag and Ryan Lineaweaver. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Imbesi reported that three letters of interest have been received to fill the vacancies on the Board of Appeals and requested Council's approval to appoint Terry Siggins, Cody Rhoads and Robin Horman to the board. Mrs. Horman would be appointed as an alternate member.

Motion to appoint Terry Siggins and Cody Rhoads as members of the Board of Appeals and Robin Horman as an alternate member of the Board of Appeals. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Animal Control Services** – Mr. Imbesi stated that per the Safety Net Sanctuary contract agreement, a ninety-day notice is required to cancel the annual contract renewal. The fee associated with a breach of contract was unknown.

Chief Powell reported that the Police Department does not have any complaints regarding Safety Net Sanctuary's service and there was minimal transport time logged to the Fleetwood location for the year.

Mr. Wert noted the following key differences to the services that are provided by Safety Net Sanctuary versus the Animal Rescue League:

- Enforcement of dog laws by a humane officer.
- Limited hours of operation.

A cost comparison between the two animal control services was \$2,500 for Safety Net Sanctuary and \$4,212 for the Animal Rescue League. Community cat trap, neuter and release services is an option through the Animal Rescue League at an added cost. It was decided to avoid breaching the Safety Net Sanctuary contract and to begin reviewing service options earlier next year.

Motion to renew the Animal Control Services Agreement with Safety Net Sanctuary for the year 2021 at a cost of \$2,500. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Closure of Borough Hall to the Public** – Mr. Imbesi requested Council's permission, as a precautionary action to protect essential services and borough staff, to close the Administration office of Borough Hall to the public beginning on Monday, November 30, 2020 due to the substantial spread of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania.

Motion to authorize the closure of the Administration office of Borough Hall to the public, as a safety precaution, effective Monday, November 30, 2020. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mrs. Moyer inquired as to closing the Bicentennial House to rentals if the Borough Hall will be closed to the public. It was decided that from a liability stand point the COVID-19 Waiver, as drafted by the solicitor, indemnifies the Borough, placing all responsibility on the applicant.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Mr. Gombach thanked the Borough Manager, Borough Treasurer and the consultant from the Center for Excellence in Local Government for their efforts in preparing the budget.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary