

BOROUGH OF WEST READING – BOROUGH COUNCIL

March 24, 2015 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its second regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, March 24, 2015 with the following persons present: Vice President Philip C. Wert; Council Members Elizabeth L. Heckler, Nathalie R. Kulesa, Grace M. Craze, Christopher C. Lincoln, Carl G. Garman; Mayor Valentin Rodriguez, Jr.; Borough Manager Richard J. Sichler; Police Chief Stephen D. Powell; Administrative Assistant Cathy L. Hoffman.

VISITORS:	John Woodward	CRF Board Member
	Andy Moletress	CRF Board Member
	James T. Rogers	Resident
	Dean Rohrbach	Elm Street Manager
	Karen & Jim Livingood	Residents
	Keith Fox	Resident
	Christin Kelley	Main Street Manager
	Robin Horman	CRF Board Member
	Bryce Matthews	NAC Chair
	Suzanne Thompson	Resident
	Oswald Herbert	Resident
	Kristin Kramer	Resident
	Mark Burkholder	Fire Chief
	Becca Gregg	Reading Eagle

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Philip C. Wert called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

John Woodward apologized for the tone of the last interaction between the CRF and members of Council. He said there are details remaining to resolve – how much funding the CRF can raise, the CRF attorney, the contribution to the Borough, and the composition of members of the CRF. He said that the bigger picture is that the CRF is getting things done for the taxpayers of the Borough. Mrs. Heckler said that her concern is the lack of representation by residents. Mr. Woodward said that the NAC Board is comprised of residents, however the meetings are not well attended.

James T. Rogers asked for a copy of the PDC assessment conducted for Elm Street and Mr. Rohrbach provided the document. Mr. Rogers said he attended the last CRF meeting and commented that one of the members doesn't live in the Borough nor own a business in the Borough. He suggested that if the CRF needs assistance, they could look to other various initiatives in the County, including the Penn Corridor. Mr. Rohrbach responded by explaining the difference between the PARR project and other similar programs in the area.

Keith Fox said that his opinion of the CRF has not changed since his comments some months ago to Council and reiterated that he does not feel they are succeeding.

3. **INTERVIEWS, NOMINATIONS AND SWEARING IN OF COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Mr. Wert said that at the March 17th meeting, Mr. Gallen resigned his seat however his resignation was not formally accepted. **Moved** by Mrs. Kulesa and seconded by Ms. Craze to accept Mr. Gallen's resignation. **Motion carried.** Discussion ensued regarding the fact that the resignation was received as an email and was not actually signed. After looking further at the Borough Code, Mayor Rodriguez stated that it is not necessary to have the signature with the resignation, and that even unsigned it

would become effective once accepted by Council at a public meeting.

Mr. Wert then spoke about the vacant seat on Council and indicated that letters of interest were received from three individuals: Suzanne Thompson, Kristin Kramer and Stephen DeLucas (who was not able to attend the meeting).

Suzanne Thompson spoke about her commitment to the community and noted that she is a registered candidate in the upcoming election for Council.

Kristen Kramer spoke about her involvement in the community, both in West Reading and beyond as well as her fundraising background and her future endeavors and noted that she also is a candidate in the upcoming election.

Mr. Wert then asked for nominations. **Moved** by Ms. Craze and seconded by Mrs. Kulesa to appoint Suzanne Thompson to the vacant seat.

In favor of the motion: Ms. Craze, Mr. Garman, Mrs. Heckler, Mrs. Kulesa

Against the motion: Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Wert

Motion carried.

Mayor Rodriguez then swore in Ms. Thompson and she took her seat at the Council table.

4. **NOMINATION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

A nomination was made for Mr. Wert to become Borough Council President.

Moved by Mr. Garman and seconded by Mrs. Kulesa to appoint Mr. Wert as Borough Council President.

Motion carried.

A nomination was made for Mr. Garman to become Borough Council Vice-President.

Moved by Mrs. Heckler and seconded by Ms. Craze to appoint Mr. Garman as Borough Council Vice President. **Motion carried.**

5. **WRCRF COOPERATION AGREEMENT**

Mr. Wert said that copies of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center assessment had been distributed to Council for their review. He noted that several recommendations were made and Mr. Rohrbach reviewed the information briefly with Council.

Discussion ensued regarding the possible repercussions if the recommendations are ignored. Mr. Rohrbach then handed out a document detailing some of the work completed by the CRF and a flowchart showing the structures within the CRF:

- 111 properties improved
- \$356,631. in investments has been made through grants under the Façade Program and the Home Security Program

Mr. Moletress said that he, along with Mr. Rohrbach and Ms. Kelley had worked on the document as a means of documenting how much has been accomplished, partially because of the questions from Council about how the money has been used. The document illustrates how the Borough and the CRF works together. It was noted that without the CRF's 501(c)3 status, much of the grant funds would not be attainable but conversely, without the Borough, many of the CRF programs would not exist.

Mr. Moletress continued to explain the information in the handout and noted that the only funds given

by the Borough this year have been for Mr. Rohrbach's salary. He also noted that all members of the CRF are volunteers that spend a great deal of time with all aspects of the CRF. Mr. Moletress said that he himself has logged over 600 hours working with the CRF and the PARR program.

Mr. Rohrbach said that they are demonstrating that the CRF is moving in the right direction and taking steps to be a better organization. Mayor Rodriguez spoke about most of the contentious issues being in the past, and that in the last year that he has been involved with the CRF, there has been a new transparency and much has changed. He said that he feels the CRF is at a point where they are interested in incorporating the Borough in a more substantive way.

The Cooperation Agreement was then discussed at length with both sides specifying their issues of concern.

The breakdown of the funding was discussed and Mr. Sichler said he didn't think this was an item that could be decided immediately therefore he said he would put a list together and come up with a figure, and define the in-kind services.

Mr. Garman added that he would like to see the recommendations made by the PDC incorporated in some way in order to track the progress made by the CRF. One of these items was providing administrative support to the Elm Street Manager, and it was noted that this can be done either by staff or volunteers. Ms. Craze offered her services in this regard.

It was decided that the changes will be incorporated into the agreement with an Exhibit 'A' which will be distributed to Council for review.

6. **DROP ORDINANCE - ADVERTISING**

Chief Powell stated that the proposed Deferred Retirement Option Plan Ordinance has been reviewed by the West Reading Police Officers Association and they are prepared to move forward with the ordinance as written and presented to Council.

Moved by Ms. Craze and seconded by Mrs. Kulesa to advertise the DROP Ordinance. **Motion carried.**

7. **BANKING SERVICES**

Mr. Sichler explained that M&T Bank has proposed a fraud protection bundle package that will protect the Borough from fraudulent ACH (Automated Clearing House) electronic transactions. The cost would be a maximum of \$50 per month. He also noted that the Borough will be consolidating accounts in order to protect funds. Consideration is also being given to moving credit processing services from Santander Bank to M&T Bank in order to save fees that are currently being paid.

Moved by Ms. Craze and seconded by Mr. Lincoln to move forward to accept the fraud protection at a cost of not more than \$50 per month. **Motion carried.**

8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Council recessed to Executive Session at 9:02 p.m. to discuss ongoing personnel issues. When the meeting reconvened at 9:37 p.m., no action was taken.

9. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

James T. Rogers spoke about the amount of funds spent on legal fees for the issues with former Chief Fabriziani.

Oswald Herbert spoke about his concern regarding the railroad oil tank cars that are parked for extended periods of time in or near the Borough and asked if the Borough could do something through an ordinance to prevent it. Chief Burkholder said that the County is working on this issue however there is probably not much that can be done. It was also noted that Tom Bausher, the EMA Director is also looking into it.

10. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Moved by Ms. Craze and seconded by Mrs. Heckler to adjourn the meeting at 9:42 p.m. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hoffman
Administrative Assistant