

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

**May 19, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.**

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Patrick Kaag, Jennifer Bressler, and Samantha Kaag; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Police Chief Stephen Powell; Borough Manager Nicholas Imbesi; Public Works Director Dean Murray; Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Recreation Director Helen Moyer; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Engineer Tom Unger; Main Street Manager Mark Ratcliffe; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Member Nicholas Gardecki was unable to attend.

**VISITORS:** (In attendance via Zoom Meeting)

Karen Livingood  
Heather Skrypski  
James Diffendal

Esther Hummel  
Amber Rambo  
Mark Burkholder

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom, which was followed by Roll Call. Mr. Gombach requested a moment of silence to remember those impacted by COVID-19 within the County and across the Country.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Heather Skrypski noted an incident that happened earlier today behind the fire station where a German Shepherd, that appeared to be off leash, was allowed to maul a groundhog. Ms. Skrypski indicated that a report was made to an officer in the vicinity and expressed concern for children playing in the area. Chief Powell indicated that he would review the report tomorrow while in the office and touch base with the complainant.
3. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:** Motion to approve the April 21, 2020 Council meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mrs. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**
4. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**
  - a. **Resolution 2020-9 Extension to Real Estate Tax Flat Rate Filing Period** – Berks County extended the flat rate filing period through September 30<sup>th</sup> and requested municipalities to do the same.  
Motion to approve Resolution 2020-9 Extension of the Real Estate Tax Flat Rate Filing Period through September 30, 2020. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**
  - b. **Resolution 2020-10 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – This Resolution would extend the declaration that expires effective today.  
Motion to approve Resolution 2020-10 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency Proclamation through June 16, 2020. **Moved** by Mrs. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**
5. **CONSULTANT’S REPORT:**
  - a. **Solicitor’s Report** – Mr. Becker stated that he had nothing to report other than items that are covered elsewhere on the agenda.
  - b. **Engineer’s Report** – Mr. Unger reported that bid documents have been prepared for the seven ADA curb ramps along Sycamore Road and requested Council’s permission to advertise and receive bids for this project.

Motion to advertise and receive bids for seven ADA curb ramps along Sycamore Road. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Meetings have taken place recently to discuss the Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge. The previously prepared cost estimates for a pre-engineered fabricated 6' wide pedestrian bridge spanning 80' in length, constructed of self-weathering steel need to be reviewed now that steel prices have increased, aluminum may be a less expensive option. Decking material alternatives must be reviewed, whereas grading options of wood may be most cost effective. A new rough project estimate of \$150,000 to \$200,000 would cover the cost of the bridge including the abutment work, railings, permitting and installation. UGI indicated that they are currently negotiating a contribution to the Borough towards the cost of the bridge. Mr. Imbesi indicated that a meeting has been scheduled with the Traffic and Infrastructure Chairman next week to discuss bridge options and pricing. Additional time was requested to bring an educated dollar amount to Council for consideration. Mr. Unger noted that UGI is looking to begin their gas main installation project across the pedestrian bridge in the fall of this year.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Mrs. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

6. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Gombach noted an executive session that was held earlier tonight at 6:30 p.m. to discuss personnel, labor and litigation matters.
7. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Mr. Gombach stated that he has nothing new to report this month.
8. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Teamsters Contract** – Mr. Imbesi requested Council's approval to a one-year Public Works agreement between Teamsters and the Borough.

Motion to approve the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Borough of West Reading and Teamsters Local Union No. 429, extending the Public Works contract through December 31, 2021. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **PEMA Grant Agreement** – In order to be eligible for public assistance funds a lengthy agreement with PEMA and FEMA must be submitted.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager to sign the Public Assistance Grant Program Agreement between the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Community Yard Sale** – Mr. Imbesi requested Council's feedback on hosting a community yard sale on June 20<sup>th</sup>. It was recommended to cancel the spring community yard sale in hopes of the ability to host the regularly scheduled fall yard sale. Also, it was suggested to deny any requests for yard sale activity within the Borough during the pandemic. Reopening guidelines would be reviewed for yard sales once the County has moved into the Yellow Phase.
- d. **Penn Avenue Granite Handicap Ramp Repairs** – Mr. Imbesi requested permission to extend the property owner funding deadline from June 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup> to lessen the financial burden on property owners at this time. Mr. Murray recommended continuing with plans to make these repairs prior to PennDOT's paving project. Council agreed to continue with plans to repair the granite handicap ramps along Penn Avenue while allowing additional time for property owners to fund their portion of the repair costs.

- e. **Summer Basketball League** – Mr. Imbesi shared Mr. Kuhn’s request to officially cancel the summer basketball program.

Motion to approve the cancellation of the summer basketball program. **Moved** by Mrs. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- f. **Paid Parking App** – Mr. Imbesi reported that MobileNOW! has ceased operations and dissolved their business. An alternate paid parking app provider is being pursued.

Motion to accept the Borough Manager’s report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- 9. **MAYOR’S REPORT:** Mayor Kearney summed up his thoughts regarding the numerous decisions that need to be made, his stance is always to protect human health.

Mayor Kearney thanked Borough residents for their participation on Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 p.m. by ringing bells (or whatever noise maker they could find) in recognition of the selfless contributions made by our first responders and healthcare providers. Area churches also participated in this recognition by ringing Church bells. Bells Across Pennsylvania Day was an effort of the Pennsylvania State Mayors’ Association to unite our citizens.

Avenues Magazine has requested a small opening article for their upcoming edition regarding the feel of the business world in West Reading. Fine-tuning of the article is being reviewed for accurateness.

Lastly, Chief Powell sent an email to all West Reading Borough Police Officers in recognition of Police Memorial Week expressing his appreciation for each one of them as officers and outstanding people, and thanked them for choosing to serve the Borough of West Reading. Mayor Kearney shared his agreement to Chief Powell’s statement and conveyed that we have an exemplary group of Police Officers.

Motion to accept the Mayor’s report. **Moved** by Mrs. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

#### 10. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** - Chief Powell referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Murray referred to his written report and noted an additional item for Council’s consideration. A local business approached him to offer sharing the cost to repave a section of Cherry Street, acknowledging that most damage to the roadway has been caused by truck activity for their business. The amount would not exceed \$7,500 for each party. Council agreed to take advantage of this opportunity to share this expense.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Mrs. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** - Chief Moyer referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Code Department** - Mrs. Hoffman was unable to converse due to technical difficulties and Mr. Imbesi offered to answer any questions. Mr. Lincoln inquired as to a resolution to the issues with the garage at 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Kline Street. Mr. Imbesi indicated that this is an ongoing situation that is being handled by the Code Department. Mr. Wert noted that the daily reports from the Property Maintenance Officer portrays a thoroughness in his efforts to address situations during the pandemic. Mr. Lincoln appreciates the information shared within this report to appropriately answer questions or comments from residents.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** - Mr. Ratcliffe addressed the MobileNOW! issue and noted that the kiosks were preloaded with the Flowbird App. New signs have been ordered and the change in Apps will be promoted once businesses are allowed to reopen.

Rumors surrounding Penn Avenue business closures have been researched and Winedown is the only closure, Curious Consignments is planning to retire and hopes to sell the business.

Since the County is still in the Red Phase, Art on the Avenue cannot take place on June 20<sup>th</sup>. An alternate date of August 22<sup>nd</sup> was requested. Mr. Ratcliffe hopes that the three large events are achievable this year and desires to push the dates back at this time as opposed to cancelling the events.

Motion to approve the alternate date of August 22, 2020 for the Art on the Avenue event, including Penn Avenue road closure. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Ratcliffe requested Public Works assistance to install high school art or graduation banners along Penn Avenue.

Parklets information had been provided by Mr. Ratcliffe to Council just prior to the meeting as an opportunity for restaurants to utilize either a parking space or Cherry Street for additional seating to maintain social distancing while dining. Mr. Murray indicated that PennDOT plans to pave Penn Avenue during the month of July, making construction of dining spaces within a parking space cost prohibitive. Flexibility and creative thinking are needed to maintain social distancing guidelines while reopening small businesses to encourage economic growth.

Motion to accept the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Chief Powell reported that Bethany Lutheran Church will be hosting a curbside pickup food drive from the park area tomorrow at 1:00 p.m. The food drive was moved to this location because they are expecting double the clientele. The Police Department will be assisting the flow of traffic through this area during the food drive.

11. **COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:** Most meetings were cancelled during the month of May due to the Stay-at-Home order.

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mrs. Moyer referred to her written report regarding options to modify the playground program and pool season to potentially offer these services to residents this summer. Council members discussed the unfortunate reality that even if the County moves into the Yellow Phase, pools and playgrounds are to remain closed. Likewise, the basketball, tennis

courts and playground areas are to remain closed until the County moves into the Green Phase and this Phase would still require physical distancing restrictions.

Motion to cancel the summer playground program and pool season. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mrs. Moyer reported that the Recreation Commission is currently working on alternative methods to help keep children active this summer including activities such as virtual tours, scavenger hunts and food drives.

Motion to accept the Recreation Director's report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Lincoln shared information from the brief meeting held last week. The Parkview Road Bridge project is moving forward, a meeting is scheduled next week with the engineer to discuss details pertaining to the bridge to keep the project moving towards a fall construction date. Subsequent to Council's decision to delay the Pine Street paving project the Committee plans to use this time to review cost sharing options to fund curb replacements. The information gathered may identify options to update the Borough policy, which would be brought to Council for consideration.

Mrs. Bressler inquired about the street sweeping program and parking enforcement. It was noted that parking enforcement has been suspended until the County moves to the Yellow Phase. However, the number of vehicles parked on the streets at that time will be reviewed to potentially extend the suspension of parking enforcement.

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Mrs. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

## 12. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Financial Statement Ending 4/30/2020** – Mrs. Rentschler shared an update to the financial statement with regards to real estate taxes that have been collected to date. A large deposit was made at the beginning of May bringing the total percentage of taxes collected to 93%.

Motion to accept the Financial Statement ending 4/30/2020. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Payment Approval Report 4/22/20 to 5/14/20 & 5/15/20 to 5/19/20** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the Payment Approval Report 4/22/20 to 5/14/20 & 5/15/20 to 5/19/20. **Moved** by Mrs. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Maillie Audit Services Proposal** – Mrs. Rentschler referred to the proposal for audit services for three years with minimal annual increases. It was noted that staff have been very pleased with their services and Maillie's rates are competitive.

Motion to approve Maillie Audit Services Proposal for the years ending December 31, 2020, 2021 and 2022. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

## 13. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no public comments.

Mr. Gombach noted that a meeting with the Center for Excellence in Local Government (CELG) to review the Borough's finances was an eye-opening experience. This information brought a real

understanding of the steps needed to control the Borough's destiny. Council plans to rise to the occasion to ensure the financial health of the community. Efforts will be made to cut expenses and find new forms of revenue; however, millage rate increases may be necessary to avoid a reduction to Police or Public Works services. Mr. Wert requested that the community share their suggestions on this aspect with Borough Council.

14. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 p.m. **Moved** by Mrs. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary