

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

**June 16, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.**

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, June 16, 2020 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Jennifer Bressler and Nicholas Gardecki (arrived 7:26 p.m.); 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 Members Patrick Kaag and Samantha Kaag were unable to attend.

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

Karen Livingood	Carl Garman	Douglas Zeeger (arrived 7:26 p.m.)
Candace Reyes	Tina McDonough	Elisa Orquiza (arrived 7:42 p.m.)
Kim Collins	Mark Burkholder	Tina Koch (arrived 8:16 p.m.)
Maurice Brown	Amber Rambo (arrived 7:26 p.m.)	

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call. Mr. Gombach announced that the advertised cable franchise renewal hearing scheduled for tonight has been postponed until the July 21, 2020 Council meeting.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Karen Livingood noted that Council Member Nicholas Gardecki has been absent from Council meetings for the past six months and asked when we could expect Mr. Gardecki's return to the Council table or what action could be taken. Mr. Becker indicated that Council could add this item to the agenda to discuss a course of action.

Mrs. Livingood asked Council to consider allocating the cancellation of pool season savings towards repairs to the stone decking in the rear of the Pavilion. Mr. Imbesi reported that tax revenues are being monitored for impacts resulting from the pandemic. A full six-months of revenue information will be available next month and would provide a better knowledge of the ability to expend funds towards various projects that have been placed on hold.

Mrs. Livingood thanked the Public Works Department for their street sweeping efforts on Sycamore Road, and noted that she visited her neighbors to remind them to remove their cars from the street to facilitate a curb-to-curb cleaning.

Kim Collins requested Council to consider the enactment of an ordinance that would prohibit modifications to vehicle exhaust systems that create unnecessary noise pollution. Mr. Wert indicated that this is addressed to some degree in the Noise Ordinance. However, enforcement can be difficult. It was recommended that Ms. Collins contact the Police Department for further information.

3. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:** Motion to approve the May 19, 2020 Council meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 4-0.**

4. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Resolution 2020-11 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – This Resolution would extend the declaration expiration date to the July Council meeting, allowing the ability to apply for emergency disaster funding.

Motion to approve Resolution 2020-11 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency through July 21, 2020. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Mr. Imbesi provided an update to the application for funding through PEMA and FEMA and reported that the grant portal has been temporarily disabled. Once the portal is operational Mr. Imbesi will apply for funding.

- b. **Resolution 2020-12 Fixing Charges for Industrial Wastes** – It was noted that these fees are established by the Joint Municipal Authority and are a pass-through expense.

Motion to approve Resolution 2020-12 Fixing Charges for Industrial Wastes. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 4-0.**

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 shared information pertaining to the five bids that were received for the Sycamore Road ADA ramp project:

• Reamstown Excavating, Inc.	\$42,550
• Heim Construction Co., Inc.	\$48,075.99
• Bertolet Construction Corp.	\$59,700
• Construction Masters Services, LLC	\$67,905
• G&B Construction Group, Inc.	\$105,600

Reamstown Excavating, Inc. was the lowest reputable bidder whose bid came in below the engineer estimate of \$52,500. Mr. Unger recommended awarding the project to Reamstown Excavating in the amount of \$42,550 if Council wishes to proceed with the project.

Mr. Murray noted that \$40,000 was budgeted for this project, the curb ramp cost of the project would total \$37,900 with the extra funding for curb or sidewalk repairs as needed. Mr. Murray also stated that a catch basin located near one of the handicap ramps is in need of curb repairs.

Motion to accept the Sycamore Road ADA ramp reconstruction project bids. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Motion to award the Sycamore Road ADA ramp project to Reamstown Excavating, Inc. in the amount of \$42,550. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Mr. Lincoln inquired as to a counter proposal for UGI to install a gas line across the Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge. Mr. Unger stated that this information should be gathered within the week. Mr. Lincoln indicated that this would be discussed during the next Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting to allow the committee members to provide some direction for Council next month.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 4-0.**

6. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Gombach reported that an executive session was held on Friday, June 12, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. to discuss personnel matters. An executive session was also held at 6:15 p.m. this evening to discuss possible litigation and personnel matters.
7. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Mr. Gombach stated that he had nothing new to report at this time.
8. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:**
  - a. **Pandemic Update** – Mr. Imbesi reported that Borough Hall is now open to the public. We are asking that everyone who enters the building wears a properly fitted face mask. The Codes office is still working remotely and can be contacted via telephone or email. Once the County enters into the Green Phase of the pandemic the Code Department will resume operations within Borough Hall.
  - b. **Financial Strategic Update** – The CELG and Mr. Imbesi are working through this information and hopes to have something for Council next month.
  - b. **Individual Yard Sales** – Mr. Imbesi requested Council's feedback on allowing individual residents to host yard sales now that the County has entered into the Yellow Phase. Mr. Lincoln asked where the responsibility lies in ensuring social distancing and all other factors that come into play. Mr. Becker recommended adding content to the yard sale permit that would indemnify the Borough. Council agreed to allow private yard sales while noting within the permit that the Borough expects residents to be responsible in practicing social distancing and disinfecting items that are handled by the public.

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 4-0.**

9. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Kearney noted the two recent protests that were held within West Reading remained peaceful thanks to the Police Department and Police Chief's preparations. The entire Police Department's performance was admirable.

Mayor Kearney also noted that the pandemic has affected every day decisions for everyone and that constant vigilance is needed to refrain from large gatherings and to continue frequent hand washing and disinfecting in an effort to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Motion to accept the Mayor's report. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Council Member Nicholas Gardecki joined the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

10. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** - Chief Powell referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. Mr. Wert requested Chief Powell to provide guidance to the residents in how to report a noise complaint to the Police Department. Chief Powell noted an increase in the number of quality-of-life complaints received by the department, partly due to the recent stay-at-home order. Chief Powell recommended residents call the Police Department at any time of the day to allow an officer to address the complaint.

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Murray referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. Mr. Lincoln stated that during street sweeping activity storm debris has collected along Fifth Avenue near Spruce Street and Oak Terrace. Mr. Murray indicated that additional staff members are now available and an extra crew member will be sent out ahead of the street sweeper to collect the larger debris prior to sweeping. Mr. Lincoln wanted to reiterate to residents that large hedge clippings are not to be placed in the street for collection. Mr. Murray confirmed and requested that branches from Borough trees be placed within the planting strip for collection.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** - Chief Moyer referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. Mr. Lincoln inquired as to the recent door repair at the Fire Department and wondered if this was a recurring issue or a new issue. Mr. Moyer referred to the Public Works Director who indicated that it was the rear bay door which was a new issue.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- d. **Code Department** - Mrs. Hoffman was unavailable for comment. Mr. Wert noted the lengthy daily reports from the Property Maintenance Officer indicating that the Code Department is enforcing regulations. Mr. Wert recommended that once the minutes are approved residents may request a copy of this report to understand the substantial amount of work that is being done.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** - Mr. Ratcliffe noted the efforts made by Main Street, Council and Borough Staff to offer additional seating options for restaurants along Penn Avenue through the creation of Parklets. However, following discussions with local business owners it has been decided that it is a little too late to go to that expense. An additional seating area has been offered in front of 614 Penn Avenue by the restaurant owner that has not yet opened his business.

The Craft Pretzel and Beer Festival event scheduled on July 25<sup>th</sup> has been cancelled. Main Street is working towards some sort of Art on the Avenue event even if it is virtual.

Mr. Gombach and Mr. Lincoln requested a copy of the five-year plan to be able to review and comment. Mr. Ratcliffe indicated that the plan is currently in a draft format and he would send the plan to Council so they can review.

Motion to accept the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

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

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mrs. Moyer shared some suggestions for children activities in lieu of the cancelled pool and playground programs:
- The Council on Chemical Abuse is hosting a weekly summer camp challenge
  - Kickball or water balloon games
  - Fourth of July porch decorating contest

- Scavenger hunt

Council shared their concerns on maintaining social distancing as well as sanitation of implements and liability issues. It was recommended to review the summer camp guidance information and require participants to sign a waiver.

Motion to accept the summer activity programs while following CDC guidelines and requiring a participation waiver. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Public use of the basketball and tennis courts were discussed at length. Due to the inability to limit access to only the tennis court area and to limit the amount of social contact, it was decided to deny the request to open these areas at this time.

Food vendor trucks stationed at the Pavilion were discussed. It was recommended that the Recreation Director work with the Main Street Manager to support our local businesses first.

Maurice Brown made a recommendation to open the concession stand at the pool to local businesses for their use on a weekly basis.

Motion to accept the Recreation Director's report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert provided a recap of the first meeting held since March. There are a few businesses that are closing along Penn Avenue, and a business that plans to reopen. Two businesses that were planning to open in March are looking to open their doors soon. There are two businesses that may be transferring ownership to allow the business to remain in West Reading. In general, properties in the Borough are selling quickly and at a respectable price. During the last twelve months property sales have increased more than 7%. Mr. Wert is optimistic that the Borough's resiliency factor may be a bit higher than other communities and hopes that next year at this time the economic scare might be more of a memory than a concern. He also said that the Borough has things to be grateful for and to look forward to.

Motion to accept the Economic Development Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – The committee met last week and some items of discussion to note are the Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge, which was mentioned earlier under the Engineer's report. The committee is working to negotiate with UGI to determine what contributions they will provide to install a gas main across this bridge. Mr. Unger is working to put these numbers together, and hopefully be able to discuss this at the July meeting to bring information to Council next month. We are still aiming for a fall construction of that pedestrian bridge. Updates will be provided accordingly.

MobileNOW who was the Borough's paid parking provider for the parking lot on Penn Avenue has gone out of business. The Borough is now using Flowbird, which is up and running. The committee is working towards obtaining additional signage that will hopefully be provided by Flowbird. The local quote that was received was fairly high to purchase thirty additional signs.

Parking in alleys throughout the Borough is being reviewed. The alleys are different widths, some allow parking, some do not, and there are times for parking restrictions that are varied throughout the Borough. The committee also plans to compare the street sweeping schedule with the time restricted parking for trash collection in the alleys to avoid an overlap of times when parking is prohibited on both the alley and street side of homes.

Mr. Wert asked if a standardization of alley parking would be created based on the width of the alley. This is being considered, theoretically the existing ordinance was enacted in that manner, however, there may be instances where the regulation is outlined in the ordinance and not signed in the field.

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- e. **Public Safety Committee** – Mr. Imbesi reported discussions regarding the Parklet idea for restaurants and safety issues surrounding this feature. As Mr. Ratcliffe noted earlier in this meeting, restaurant owners are abandoning this idea.

Motion to accept the Public Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

## 12. TREASURER'S REPORT:

- a. **Administrative Aide Position** – Mrs. Rentschler referred to a personnel item that was to be discussed during the executive session held earlier this evening and recommended hiring Kemberly Soria as soon as her temp-to-hire service agreement has been completed. Ms. Soria has been working with the Borough for approximately four months and has been doing a good job. It was recommended to hire Ms. Soria at the rate she is currently receiving from Gage Personnel, which is \$15 per hour.

Motion to hire Kemberly Soria to the Administrative Aide position at a rate of \$15 per hour. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- b. **Financial Statement Ending 5/31/2020** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Financial Statement ending 5/31/2020. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- b. **Payment Approval Report 5/20/20 to 6/11/20 & 6/12/20 to 6/16/20** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the Payment Approval Report 5/20/20 to 6/11/20 & 6/12/20 to 6/16/20. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Mr. Wert departed the meeting at 8:16 p.m.

## 13. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Collins requested that once Council returns to hosting meetings in person at Borough Hall that the option for residents to attend the meeting via a Zoom meeting remains to allow residents that cannot be present at Borough Hall to participate. Mr. Gombach agreed to explore these options and encouraged more resident participation to maintain transparency and responsiveness.

Mr. Brown concurred with Council's decision to close the pool this season due to the pandemic. However, Mr. Brown recommended orchestrating a pool membership based on time slots as an alternative. This would allow only certain areas of the pool to be open to members and only twenty-five members per timeframe to reduce the logistics of staffing and areas to be cleaned. The thought is to utilize a portion of the area and generate revenue for the summer season. Mr. Brown also asked if it would be possible for members of organizations outside of the Borough, such as the swim team, to use Borough land for non-water related summer activities while adhering to Borough sanctioned

restrictions. Mr. Gombach reiterated Council's decision to close the pool for the 2020 season following an extensive discussion surrounding items such as safety and finances. The main concerns were liability and mitigation of risk, as well as the pool not generating enough revenue to cover expenses. Mr. Becker thanked Mr. Brown for his thoughtful suggestions, but stated at the end of the day the Borough is looking to keep the Borough safe and be responsible. It was also noted that the length of time needed to prepare the pool for opening and the lack of staff members make this an impossible task.

Council Member Nicholas Gardecki apologized for his extended absence and noted his contemplation of his future on Borough Council for quite some time. Mr. Gardecki's schedule has been historically problematic and he is unsure if he is well suited to continue in this roll. Therefore, Mr. Gardecki tendered a verbal resignation from Borough Council. Mr. Gombach thanked Mr. Gardecki for his service. A quorum was unavailable to accept Mr. Gardecki's resignation at this time. Mr. Becker recommended a resignation letter be tendered to take action at the next Council meeting.

14. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary