

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

September 15, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, September 15, 2020 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Patrick Kaag, Ryan Lineaweaver and Jennifer Bressler; 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; Code Department Manager Cathy Hoffman; Engineer Tom Unger; Main Street Manager Mark Ratcliffe; Deputy Fire Marshal Mark Burkholder; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Member Samantha Kaag was unable to attend.

VISITORS: (In attendance via Zoom Meeting)

Karen Livingood
Christina Shenk
Brian Adams

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 requested a moment of silence to remember those impacted by the COVID-19 virus locally and across the country.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**
On behalf of all Penn Avenue retail establishments Ms. Shenk requested Council's permission to host a one-day sidewalk sale in an effort to boost sales and potentially generate additional foot traffic for the restaurants along Penn Avenue. Council members noted that sidewalk sales do not normally generate large crowds, which would allow social distancing guidelines to be adhered to, and were in support of temporarily waiving sidewalk sale restrictions.

Ms. Shenk requested additional information on the new commercial fire safety inspection regulations, specifically as to how this came about and why another municipality has been contracted to perform these inspections. Mr. Imbesi reported that due to a number of large fires along Penn Avenue and long-term business establishments that have not been inspected since opening their doors to the public, Borough Council entered into an intergovernmental cooperation agreement with the Township of Spring more than a year ago. The Township of Spring has an established program with certified individuals and this agreement allows West Reading Borough to pass the actual, direct expenses through to the property owner. Mr. Wert noted his experience with a recent commercial inspection of his Penn Avenue property where a few items were found that were unknown issues and his gratefulness for the peace of mind this provides as a property owner.
3. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:** Motion to approve the August 18, 2020 Council meeting minutes and August 25, 2020 budget meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

4. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Resolution 2020-18 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – This Resolution would extend the declaration expiration date to the October Council meeting, allowing the ability to apply for emergency disaster funding.

Motion to approve Resolution 2020-18 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency through October 20, 2020. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **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 shared the Narrow Fabric subdivision owner’s request to reduce the line of credit for grading, sidewalk, E&S control and open space fees in the amount of \$33,868.42. Mr. Unger noted that due to space limitations the new Elm Street townhomes were constructed with three-foot wide public sidewalks as opposed to the four-foot wide ADA compliant sidewalk. Also, the existing sidewalk adjacent to lot 58 along Tulpehocken Avenue has not been replaced but is in good shape. It was decided to table this request for further review of ADA sidewalk width regulations.

Updated cost proposals for the Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge are being prepared and should be available for the October Council meeting. Mr. Unger noted that one vendor is a COSTAR vendor.

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

6. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Gombach noted an executive session that was held at 6:30 p.m. this evening to discuss contracts 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. **Waiver of Conflict of Interest** – Mr. Imbesi reported that Kozloff Stoudt Attorneys counsels UGI Corporation and has requested an informed consent waiving the inherent conflict of interest involved in representing both the Borough and UGI in the matter of an agreement to connect a UGI gas line to the Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge.

Motion to grant a waiver of conflict of interest allowing Kozloff Stoudt Attorneys to represent the Borough and UGI in the Parkview Road Pedestrian Bridge agreement. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Donation** – Mr. Imbesi shared information regarding a \$500 donation that was received from Al’s Treehouse to be shared with the Fire and Police Departments for their professional services rendered during an incident on the evening of July 15, 2020.

- c. **Budget Schedule** – The remaining 2021 budget meeting schedule was shared with Council members.

- d. **Right-to-Know Requests** – Mr. Imbesi shared information pertaining to the amount of time and expense incurred by the Borough this past month to fulfill these requests. A total of eight hours of Borough staff time was spent this month bringing a two-month total cost to tax payers to \$553.12 as well as additional unknown costs associated with legal reviews. Two of the requests received this month required an extension of thirty days to review and respond.
- e. **Animal Control Services** – Information received from Safety Net Sanctuary and the Animal Rescue League was shared with Council for 2021 budgeting purposes. It was noted that a decision is not needed this evening, and that this would be discussed further during the October 27th budget meeting.
- f. **October Council Meeting** – Mr. Imbesi noted that the October Council meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, October 21st to allow attendance to the annual Center for Excellence in Local Government open house. The open house was cancelled this year due to the pandemic and he requested Council's feedback on advertising a meeting change to Tuesday, October 20th. It was decided to save the expense of advertising and meet as scheduled on Wednesday, October 21st.
- g. **Meter Reader Upgrade** – Mr. Murray shared updated costs associated in upgrading the meter reading devices and software. A new less expensive option was recently released that would allow this upgrade, including sixty replacement meter heads for the monthly accounts totaling \$18,800. The amount that had been budgeted for 2020 for this upgrade was \$25,000.

Motion to authorize the purchase of meter reading upgrades. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Lineaweaver requested information regarding the amount of services provided by Safety Net Sanctuary for the year to date for budget discussion considerations.

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- 9. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Kearney reported that \$15,000 has been raised over the past two years through the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation to help facilitate the purchase or lease of a police vehicle. Mayor Kearney indicated that he would continue to raise money for this purpose.

Secondly with regards to trick-or-treating, Mayor Kearney read the following statement: The Borough of West Reading cares about your safety and your health. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mayor of West Reading has decided to cancel the annual 3-hour Borough sanctioned trick-or-treating evening. If you decide to venture out to trick-or-treat in the Borough of West Reading or welcome trick-or-treaters at Halloween time, please practice the safety protocols we have been using since March of this year; sanitize, wear a mask and keep a safe distance. Also, please be very careful walking around the Borough in the dark. When crossing Borough streets, be sure there is no traffic. Until then, be safe and take care of yourself as best as you possibly can.

Mr. Lincoln stated that in the past during Borough sanctioned trick-or-treating events there was an increased police presence and wondered if this would also be available during the Halloween timeframe. Chief Powell indicated that additional staffing has been scheduled.

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

10. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** - Chief Powell referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions.

Chief Powell inquired as to Council's thoughts on enforcement of overnight parking within the municipal parking lot along Franklin Street. Mr. Lincoln indicated that this is not a priority at this time, and it was decided to only enforce parking within this lot during business hours.

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

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Murray referred to his written report and noted that PennDOT will begin repaving Penn Avenue Wednesday night. PennDOT plans to perform patch work during daytime hours and had requested to close a three-block area. Mr. Murray negotiated daytime restrictions of only one block per day. Therefore, one-block closures and parking restrictions will be in place on Thursday, Friday and Monday during daytime hours.

Mr. Lincoln inquired as to the fire department door repairs. Mr. Murray indicated that it is a new issue that a motor failed on a travel limit switch. The rollers and springs have now been set properly and are no longer causing issues.

Mr. Kaag remarked as to the projected mechanic savings of \$50,000 for 2020. Mr. Murray indicated that the intent is to save enough to cover the mechanics wages. Also, it was noted that a fleet inspection station should be operational in the near future.

Per last week's budget meeting discussion, Mr. Murray provided a more definitive quote for the sewer jet machine, which is approximately \$23,000. A replacement bucket truck quote should be available later this week.

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

- d. **Fire Department** - Chief Moyer referred to his written report and reported that a replacement traffic control vehicle has been located. A 2009 Chevrolet utility van has been looked over by the Borough Mechanic and would be a good vehicle for Traffic Police emergency scenes and Borough events. A total cost to purchase the van and outfit it with lighting, radio installation and lettering is \$17,450. The amount budgeted within the 2020 Capital fund was \$25,000 for this expenditure. Chief Moyer requested Council's permission to move forward with this purchase.

Motion to authorize the purchase of a budgeted replacement traffic control vehicle. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

- e. **Code Department** - Mrs. Hoffman referred to her report and offered to answer any questions. Mr. Kaag inquired as to the sign violations. Mrs. Hoffman stated the violations pertained to posters that were illegally placed along Penn Avenue, B2 Bistro's curbside pickup signs and miscellaneous signs around the Borough.

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

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** - Mr. Ratcliffe requested a motion to approve the previously discussed sidewalk sale.

Motion to temporarily suspend sidewalk sale restrictions on Saturday, September 26, 2020 with a rain date of Saturday, October 3, 2020. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Ratcliffe referred to his report and noted that business on Penn Avenue is still going strong. In the business development section of his report there are eight businesses that have closed due to the pandemic with eighteen new businesses that have moved into the Borough this year.

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

11. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mrs. Moyer referred to the Recreation Commission report and stated that in lieu of trick-or-treating this year the Recreation Commission will be offering Halloween treat bags for drive-thru pickup at the pavilion on Friday, October 30th. Mrs. Moyer requested candy donations for this event to avoid the use of Borough funds. Also, a scarecrow decorating contest will be judged on October 11th. The requested history of resident versus non-resident pool membership information for 2021 budgeting purposes will be provided in the near future.

Mr. Gombach shared a Girls on the Run request for track use. Council discussed social distancing guidelines that should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and a policy that would allow staff members to make these decisions. Mr. Becker recommended following the state guidelines and requiring a signed participation indemnification.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager and Recreation Director to make determinations on event requests occurring in Borough facilities while following safety guidelines issued by the CDC and obtaining a signed participation indemnification. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

- b. **Planning Commission** – This September Planning Commission meeting was cancelled.

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert noted discussions last night regarding the five-year strategic plan. Implementation of these ideas are being discussed by this committee as well as the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation and Borough Administration. Good things are likely to occur over the next five to ten years. Mr. Gombach shared his excitement and motivation to build up the community.

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

- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag reported that the August 30th Community Garden cleanup event was productive and shared plans for another cleanup event scheduled for September 27th in preparation of the Borough wide International Coastal Cleanup event scheduled for October 4th from 10am to 2pm. Mural discussions for the wall adjacent to the garden are ongoing.

Mr. Gombach requested more information about block captains. Mr. Kaag shared discussions on engaging the community block-by-block to address items such as trash cleanup on a more regular basis, similar to that of the highway adoption program as well as extending community assistance to neighbors in need.

Motion to accept the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Moved** by Mr. Lineaweaver and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Lincoln noted that most items have been covered elsewhere on the agenda tonight and inquired with Mr. Imbesi as to the status of the parking kiosk repairs if they are operational again. Mr. Imbesi reported that they are currently in operation. Penn Avenue paving will begin tomorrow night, and the granite handicap ramp repairs along Penn Avenue have been completed. Mr. Murray reported that Penn Avenue pavement markings will be reapplied each day during the repaving project however it is unknown as to PennDOT's plans to install thermoplastic markings. Parking in alley discussions are ongoing while a map of restrictions is being built. Mr. Kaag is researching curb repair policies to replace curbing in cooperation with residents as opposed to fully placing this burden on property owners. Also, this committee will be reviewing traffic control changes and infrastructure items within the five-year strategic plan.

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

- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – The September Shade Tree Commission meeting was cancelled.

- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Murray referred to the safety meeting minutes and offered to answer any questions. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lineaweaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- h. **Finance Committee** – The September Finance Committee meeting was cancelled.

12. TREASURER'S REPORT:

- a. **Financial Statement Ending 8/31/2020** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Financial Statement ending 8/31/2020. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Payment Approval Report 8/19/20 to 9/10/20 & 9/11/20 to 9/15/20** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the Payment Approval Report 8/19/20 to 9/10/20 & 9/11/20 to 9/15/20.

Moved by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **PMRS 2021 Borough Pension MMO** – Mrs. Rentschler shared the non-uniform municipal minimum obligation of \$55,415 and noted that the state provides the Borough \$88,000 for this pension plan.

Mr. Lincoln inquired as to a comparison to last year's contribution. Mrs. Rentschler stated that it is 5% of the annual salaries of active employees.

Motion to accept the Minimum Municipal Obligation of \$55,415 for the Non-Uniform Borough Pension Plan. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

13. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There were no public comments.

14. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary