

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

February 21, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, February 21, 2023 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Members Jennifer Bressler, Patrick Kaag, Denise Drobnick, and Zachary Shaver (via Zoom); Mayor Samantha Kaag; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Fire Chief and Building Code Official Chad Moyer; Police Chief Wayne Holben; Recreation Director Michael Esterly; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler (via Zoom); Borough Manager Dean Murray; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln was unable to attend.

VISITORS:

Karen Livingood, Resident
Tina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner
Suzanne Thompson, Resident
Charles Aden, Resident

Ty Gardner, Resident (via Zoom)
James Rogers, Resident
Lance Parmer, Fire Police

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.

2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Mr. Lineaweaver noted an executive session that was held today at 6:30 p.m. to discuss personnel matters as it relates to performance, potential hiring of a police administrative aide and/or parking enforcement officer, and a potential workers' compensation claim. It was noted that Borough Council will reconvene to executive session immediately following tonight's business meeting without anticipated action to review the potential acquisition of real property and assessment appeals.

3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:**

There were no amendments to the agenda.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers shared his confusion about the amount of Business Privilege Tax that has been collected from Lamar Advertising per month for the number of billboards in the Borough. He has shared his concerns with Berkheimer Tax Innovations.

Ms. Shenk shared her concerns of the recent zoning approval of a smoke shop within the 400 block of Penn Avenue and the type of clientele that would be attracted to the area, and rumored games of skill. Mr. Wert explained the process of Borough Council adopting a Zoning Ordinance with the interpretation and enforcement by an appointed Zoning Officer. A use or business cannot be banned from being located within the municipality's jurisdiction; however, the business location can be regulated. The Zoning Hearing Board is a quasi-judicial body that renders decisions on specific types of land use appeals and applications. Mr. Moyer attested to the Zoning Officer's review of the application in question noting that the applicant proposed to sell pre-packaged food, which would be classified as a convenience store that is prohibited in the Central Business District. Also, the Zoning Officer referenced within the zoning permit that state

law prohibits games of skill being located within the proposed use circumference to the West Reading Elementary Center.

Mr. Aden introduced himself as the District Office Director for State Representative Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz reporting that their office is now open near the Wyomissing Post Office. A brochure was provided with contact information and Mr. Aden noted a property tax rebate event that is planned tomorrow in Spring Township.

5. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve the January 17, 2023, regular meeting minutes, and the January 24, 2023, special meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

6. **CONSULTANT'S REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker stated that he had nothing new to report that is not otherwise covered on the agenda.
- b. **Engineer's Report** – In Mr. Unger's absence Mr. Murray reviewed the two proposed action items:
 - Mr. Murray shared the list of proposed 2023 paving projects of South Seventh Avenue from Penn Avenue to Spruce Street, and Sycamore Road from Museum Road to Parkview Road. Should funds be available bids will also be requested for Bruce Alley from Wayne Avenue to Franklin Street, and Park Alley from Playground Drive to Parkview Road. Mr. Grassley noted that a bid is being requested for the portion of South Seventh Avenue from Spruce Street to where the Reading Hospital stopped paving to discuss the possibility of sharing this expense with the hospital.

Motion to authorize the engineer to advertise to receive bids for the 2023 Road Paving projects. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- The Chapter 94 Municipal Wasteload Management Annual Report was prepared by the engineer's office and authorization was requested to direct the Borough Manager to sign the report. Mr. Kaag noted an error in the email address for Mr. Murray.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager to sign the Chapter 94 Report for contributory flow to the Joint Municipal Authority of Wyomissing Valley. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Lineaweaver noted that the Green Light-Go grant application has been submitted.

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

7. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:**

Mr. Lineaweaver indicated that he had nothing new to report at this time.

8. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:**

- a. **2023-2024 Road Salt Contract** – Mr. Murray requested consideration to authorize the execution of an extension to the Berks Cooperative Purchasing Council Road Salt contract.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager to execute a contract with the Berks County Cooperative Purchasing Council to extend the Eastern Salt Company Road Salt contract for the 2023-2024 season. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Fire Police Assistance** – Mr. Murray requested consideration to allow the West Reading Fire Police to assist Virginville Fire Company during a benefit for fallen firefighters. Mayor Kaag stated that Virginville Fire Company often assists West Reading Fire Police during our large events.

Motion to allow the West Reading Fire Police to assist the Virginville Fire Company during a benefit for fallen firefighters on Saturday, February 25, 2023. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)** – Mr. Murray noted receipt in the 1970's of grant funds that were used in the parkland area. The tot-lot had been moved across the street to build the firehouse which occupies the previously designated parkland area. To avoid repayment of grant funds, DCNR is assisting in the replenishment of parkland. The engineer is needed to appraise the property to ensure the tot-lot or value of grant funding has been retained.

Motion to authorize the engineer to assist in the property appraisal as required by the DCNR to replenish the required parkland that was used to build the firehouse. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Finance Committee Resignation** – Mr. Murray noted receipt of a letter of resignation from Mr. Lockyer from the Finance Committee. A fourth member of this committee is needed to establish a quorum.

Motion to accept the letter of resignation from Mr. Lockyer from the Finance Committee. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Police Administrative Aide** – Mr. Murray requested authorization to advertise the position of police administrative aide.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of a police administrative aide position. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- f. **Fire Police Assistance Requests** – Mayor Kaag thought that it would be beneficial to allow the Borough Manager to authorize requests for Fire Police assistance. It was noted that requests for assistance are usually received in short order, which makes it difficult to align with monthly Borough Council meetings. Mr. Becker indicated that an ordinance would need to be drafted to grant this authority to the Borough Manager.

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

9. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Kaag referred to her report noting a few events this past month such as:

- Gathering the events committee to discuss red line days in the coming year.

- Met with Pamela of the Camel Project and attended their Certified Prevention Specialist program to discuss how the community can implement a stop bullying initiative.
- Met with the City of Reading Mayor's Chief of Staff Felix Freytiz to keep an open line of communication between Reading and West Reading.
- Attended the 2nd Friday on the Avenue event and had dinner with Martha of the Art Plus Gallery at Spoonful Thai Bistro.
- Attended the Galentine's on the Avenue event that was well attended drawing foot traffic further down the Avenue.
- Attended the Gem on Penn holistic walk that brought 130 participants.
- Attended the Recreation Commission Winter Karaoke event last weekend. The event was well attended. Mr. Esterly reported the total amount raised during this event was \$1,806.54. He thanked 3rd & Spruce Drahtaus for providing the facility and funding the Disc Jockey.

Motion to accept the Mayor's report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

10. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Holben referred to several action items but first noted the selection of three virtues by the officers that represent the department. The three virtues selected were: Integrity, Respect, and Compassion.

Consideration was requested to order the one 2023 budgeted vehicle at a cost of \$58,516.

Motion to authorize the ordering of one budgeted 38-34 vehicle replacement totaling \$58,516. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Chief Holben requested consideration to authorize the Council President to sign the PCCD subgrant award notification. The award amount is \$153,988.

Motion to authorize the Council President to execute the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) subgrant award notification. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Chief Holben requested consideration to begin purchasing the PCCD grant awarded items. An overview of items were police vehicle cameras with cloud storage; an update to the Cody reporting system software; replacement of laptop and desktop computers; movement of the license plate reader from an older vehicle to a replacement vehicle; and a new server.

Motion to authorize the purchase of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency grant awarded items. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Chief Holben requested consideration to grant an officer's request to use their sick bank to care for a family member.

Motion to approve an officer's request to use sick time from their own bank to assist in taking care of a family member. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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. Grassley referred to his report and offered to answer any questions noting that his report is a brief synopsis of the monthly activities of the department.

Mr. Grassley requested consideration to offer the first Saturday of the month during the months of April through November as yard waste drop off. This program was more heavily used last year now that the trash hauler is not removing this type of material. Mr. Lineaweaver noted that excess refuse funds are being used to repave alleyways this year.

Motion to approve a yard waste disposal program at the Borough Garage on the first Saturday of the month from 9:00 a.m. to Noon during the months of April through November. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Grassley requested permission to advertise for a seasonal Public Works member to assist with extra curb replacement activities for up to 24 hours per week through Memorial Day.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of a seasonal Public Works employee. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Grassley shared information on two bids he received for the replacement of Truck #18. A replacement Ford truck could take up to eighteen months to receive, a Dodge truck would be available in four to five months at the same cost. Borough Council left the decision to Mr. Grassley.

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

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his report and stated there were no action items. An update was provided on the progress of assembling the new Engine/Rescue 64. The body has been mounted to the chassis and images are available on Facebook. The final inspection is now slated for mid to late March. A Chicken BBQ is planned on April 2nd, Chief Moyer offered to take ticket orders this evening.

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

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer offered to answer any questions regarding his report. There were no questions or comments. Mr. Moyer officially thanked Borough Council for bringing on the new Code Enforcement Officer. He has only been on duty for a couple of days, he is working out well and seems well suited to the position.

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

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – In the absence of Mr. Ratcliffe Mr. Murray referred to his written report and noted an action item to approve the 2023 Event Calendar. Mr. Lineaweaver noted the following event dates and road closures:

- Craft Pretzel and Beer Festival – April 29, 2023 – Penn Avenue Road Closure – 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

- Plein Air West Reading – June 12-17, 2023
- Art on the Avenue – June 17, 2023 – Penn Avenue Road Closure – 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- Sidewalk Sale – August 5, 2023
- Fall Festival – September 16, 2023 – Penn Avenue Road Closure – 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- Farmers' Market
 - January to April 1st & 3rd Sunday – 6th Avenue Road Closure – 10:00 a.m. to Noon
 - May through December Every Sunday – Penn Avenue & 6th Avenue (6th Avenue Road Closure) – 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Motion to approve the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation list of 2023 events and road closures. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

11. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Equity Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce** – Mrs. Bressler reported that a meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, March 2nd.
- b. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly noted the upcoming events of Rides and Vibes on March 11th, the Easter Egg Hunt on April 1st, and the Fishing Rodeo on April 15th. Donations are coming in from Palmer Chocolates, Clover Farms, Tom Sturgis Pretzels, Asher's Chocolate and Cabela's to offset the cost of these events. A thank you went out to Jared of 3rd & Spruce Drafthaus for hosting the karaoke event last weekend.

The list of 2023 events requested to include the sale of alcoholic beverages was presented to Borough Council for consideration. Mr. Lineaweaver listed the following requested events:

- Winter Karaoke Competition at 3rd & Spruce Drafthaus on 2/19/23
- Disc Golf Tournament on 4/23/23
- Concert in the Park/Plant Fest on 6/18/23
- Concert in the Park/Battle of the Bands on 7/2/23
- Concert in the Park on 8/20/23
- Karaoke Competition on 9/3/23
- Disc Golf Tournament on 11/24/23

Motion to approve the 2023 list of events to include the sale of alcoholic beverages in the park area. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Esterly requested permission to advertise the seasonal recreation positions to include the pool, playground, and concession stand.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of Recreation seasonal employment opportunities. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Esterly requested consideration to approve the following list of 2023 Pickleball Tournament dates as requested by Mr. Shields:

- June 2-4 Fromuth Open
- October 6-8 Lotto Open

It was noted that a request has not been made to include alcohol in the park for the tournament events. Mr. Esterly will request a schedule of league dates from Mr. Shields.

Motion to approve the 2023 Pickleball Tournament dates as requested. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Ms. Drobnick thanked the volunteers and community for attending the Recreation events. The goal is for the events to be self-sustaining, and this year is off to a great start.

Motion to accept the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert indicated that several ordinance amendments should be coming forward to Borough Council soon such as the Animals Code Red/Code Blue, Rental Occupancy, and Wireless Communication Facilities. Uniform Construction Code and Zoning amendments will follow. Mr. Lineaweaver also noted per January's second Council meeting discussions an amendment to the prohibited sign ordinance section.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert noted, as expected with any ecosystem, there is turnover. Like a healthy ecosystem, when one shop closes another one takes its place. Noted changes were Ezekiel 47 has moved on and a new cheesecake and dessert business will be occupying this space, the West Reading Deli & Grocery has moved on and Brooklyn Place now occupies this space serving authentic New York style deli items and beverages. Winnie Tea Bar should be opening soon in the 700 block of Penn Avenue, and Adrienne Beck Photography now occupies the space on North Fourth Avenue. The Motor Club appears to be ready to open soon.

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

- e. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag noted a review of member goals and several good ideas that the board will be working towards. Mrs. Bressler offered her assistance in establishing a Community Fridge. Funds from the Healing the Planet grant will be used to remove downed trees in the creek bed before the Kids Fishing Rodeo event on April 15th. A Spring Free Market is planned on June 24th and an Earth Day event is planned on April 22nd. The BBB cleanups have begun due to the warm winter weather. These events will be held on the 3rd weekend of every month, and everyone is invited to attend.

Motion to accept the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

f. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – In the absence of Mr. Lincoln Mr. Kaag recapped the following discussions:

- Upgrades to the audio/video equipment in Council Chambers that has been delayed to mid-March.
- Various Delaney Circle safety improvements were discussed.
- Implementation of an incentive type program for homeowners to repair sidewalk panels that have been heaved by Borough tree roots continued with regards to funding this type of program. The reaffirmation of sidewalk repair guidelines and allotment of funds within the 2024 budget for an incentive type program was tabled until implementation parameters are gathered. It was recommended to bring the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee, Code Enforcement Department, and Shade Tree Commission together to define these parameters.
- Grant funding of a replacement variable message sign and repairs to the existing sign within the 200 block of Penn Avenue were discussed.
- Bulk trash collection options were reviewed, and a ticket purchase system was found to be favorable with regards to the ability to place items out with regular trash collection as opposed to waiting for the first Friday of the month. The fee to residents for each item is currently under review.
- PennDOT's offer to fund mowing of the cloverleaf area six times per year for a total annual compensation of \$6,800 was discussed. Mr. Grassley indicated that he would prefer a maintenance schedule of every other week to best maintain the gateway to the Borough and the safety of emergency personnel that need to access this area as well as removing line-of-sight issues for motorists. Additional seasonal manpower within the Public Works Department was recommended to maintain the roughly 10-acre area. Mr. Grassley noted that he will be requesting an additional Public Works employee to be included in next year's budget.

Motion to approve taking on the responsibility of mowing three quadrants of the cloverleaf area for the 2023 through 2025 mowing season as outlined in the map and compensation schedule provided by PennDOT. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

g. **Shade Tree Commission** – Mr. Kaag noted the monthly review of planting, trimming, removals and watchlist trees. Mr. Grassley recapped a meeting with Bartlett Tree Experts to review Borough trees, noting the areas in need of trimming and how to assess the health of a tree. A service that Bartlett offers would number every tree in the Borough and grade each tree noting the approximate age of the tree, and if it is in a state of decline.

Motion to accept the Shade Tree Commission report. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

h. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Murray reported that the committee is making strides in updating the handbook. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

12. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Financial Statement Ending 1/31/2023** – There were no questions or comments.
- b. **Payment Approval Report 1/18/23 to 2/16/23 and 2/17/23 to 2/21/23** – Mr. Lineaweaver inquired as to a \$15,265.67 expenditure for repairs to Ladder 64. Chief Moyer noted an incident on the north side of the Borough last July when Ladder 64 was turning off of Elm Street into an alleyway that collided with rocks. This was an insurance claim.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 1/31/2023, and Payment Approval Reports of 1/18/23 to 2/16/23 and 2/17/23 to 2/21/23. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

13. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers inquired as to the tot-lot that was referred to earlier in the meeting. Mr. Murray reported that this is an in-kind replacement. Currently DCNR is requesting a cost estimate for the ground area now occupied by the firehouse. Documentation is all that is needed currently.

Mr. Aden requested permission to place State Representative Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz's brochures in both English and Spanish on the welcome table in the lobby. Mr. Lineaweaver recommended that Mr. Aden place them on the table this evening.

14. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Motion to recess to an executive session at 8:41 p.m. without anticipation of any action to review the potential acquisition of real property, pending litigation and assessment appeals.

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

Borough Council reconvened at 9:30 p.m. No action was needed at this time.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:31 p.m. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary