

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

April 18, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at the West Reading Fire Department on Tuesday, April 18, 2023 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Jennifer Bressler, Patrick Kaag, Denise Drobnick, and Zachary Shaver; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Solicitor Joan London; 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; Engineer Tom Unger; Fire Marshal Mark Burkholder; Assistant Fire Chief Jason Witman (via Zoom); Fire Police Lieutenant Lance Parmer; Sergeant Chad Marks; Police Officers Kyle Bohn, Jesse Stock, Nicholas Karetas; Public Works employees Michael Jacko, Jamie Flickinger, Joshua Morris, William Riegel, Austin Grassley; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS:

Karen Livingood, Resident
Tina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner
James Beane, Resident
Blake Tobias, Resident
Anthony Tucci, Western Berks Ambulance
John Phillips, Wyomissing Chief of Police
TowerDIRECT EMS
Wyomissing Fire Department
Cumru Township Fire Department
Brecknock Township Fire Company
Shillington Fire Company
Walnuttown Fire Company
Western Berks Fire Department
Adamstown Fire Company
Reading Area Water Authority
West Side Regional EMA
Pennsylvania Task Force 1
Pennsylvania State Police
Reading Police Department
Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz, State Representative

Ty Gardner, Resident (via Zoom)
James Rogers, Resident
Charles Aden, Resident
Michael Fesh, Resident
Stephen Powell, Township of Spring Chief of Police
Eric Weaknecht, Berks County Sheriff
Reading Fire Department / EMS / Canteen
Township of Spring Fire Rescue Services
Boyertown Area Fire & Rescue
Kenhorst Fire Company
Muhlenberg Township Fire & Rescue
Exeter Township Fire Department
Boyertown Salvation Army Canteen
Norco Fire Company
Berks County Mental Health/DD
Rapid Relief Team
Berks County Department of Emergency Services
Bern Township Police Department
Cumru Township Police Department

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**
Mr. Lineaweaver noted an executive session held this evening at 6:30 p.m. to discuss personnel matters as it relates to performance.
3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:**
There were no amendments to the agenda.

4. **COMMENDATIONS:**

- a. **Borough Council / Mayor** – Mr. Lineaweaver expressed his gratitude and eternal gratefulness towards the numerous agencies, organizations, and individuals that aided our community during the Palmer incident on Friday, March 24, 2023 and beyond. He read aloud a joint commendation from himself and the Mayor recognizing the agencies, organizations, and individuals that were both in attendance and unable to join the meeting.

Mr. Lineaweaver noted that the co-sponsored fund established in less than 24 hours between the Berks County Community Foundation and the United Way of Berks County has raised nearly \$700,000 from over 1,500 donors and dispersed nearly \$500,000 to those effected by the tragedy, such as families that lost loved ones and those that lost their homes.

Commendations were also provided to the West Reading Police, Fire, Fire Police and Public Works Departments. Mr. Lineaweaver vowed to never complain of being tired again after witnessing the Fire Chief's and other first responders' dedication, noting the need to encourage breaks, only to return in a few hours to continue their efforts until everyone was accounted for. Mr. Lineaweaver noted that members of the Public Works Department were almost immediately on scene and throughout the night giving the jackets and sweatshirts off their backs to those that had nothing coming out of the building. The Public Works Department was tasked with clearing the roadway to allow access to heavy machinery.

Mr. Lineaweaver also recognized the Borough Manager, Dean Murray, for his countless hours ensuring the safety, wellbeing and recovery of our Borough, its residents, its employees, and its departments, and honoring his incredible compassion, leadership, and service during times of need for those who live and work in our municipality.

Mayor Kaag recognized Council President Lineaweaver for his dedication as a public servant to the Borough of West Reading and presented him with a commendation.

Mrs. Bressler departed the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

- b. **State Representative Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz** – Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz thanked Borough Council and the Mayor for thanking all our neighbors and friends that came on that tragic evening. As a public servant you never know when a tragedy will strike or how you would handle any given situation. After witnessing the genuine care and compassion for life exhibited by Borough Council and the Mayor, persevering until everyone was found, and everyone displaced had a place to stay she presented citations as a token of appreciation to the following:
- West Reading Fire Department – Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz read highlights of the Citation noting the unforeseen challenges the West Reading Fire Department volunteers were faced with on March 24, 2023 and their exemplary, tireless efforts to help their community save lives.
 - West Reading Borough Council was recognized for their tireless coordinated communication efforts and critical support to the community.
 - Borough Manager Dean Murray was recognized for his efficient management of an emergency response for this tragic event.
 - Fire Chief Chad Moyer was recognized as a volunteer to the fire department that provided aid to his neighbors and efficient coordination of rescue and recovery efforts.

- Chief of Police Wayne Holben was recognized for his coordination of the West Reading Police Department to rush to the scene to provide aid to all first responders.
- Public Works Director Kerry Grassley was recognized for his swift mobilization of public works members to support first responders and their tireless efforts to save lives.
- Mayor Samantha Kaag was recognized for her selfless act as a volunteer firefighter and her compassion and courage while maintaining her composure in the midst of so much tragedy. Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz noted the amazing team afforded to the Mayor and her enjoyment of witnessing what a community is truly about. Mayor Kaag shared her appreciation of Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz's efforts to check in with her from time to time during the last few weeks offering her support.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers wished to thank all the first responders, most of which have left the meeting, noting his appreciation of their efforts.

Mrs. Bressler re-joined the meeting at 7:49 p.m.

Mrs. Livingood noted her personal and emotional experience surrounding the R.M. Palmer tragedy following her twenty-five-year service as an office worker. She could not express enough gratitude towards the Borough Residents who gathered beautifully to help in any way during a time of need.

Ms. Shenk expressed her gratitude to the Borough Council and the Mayor for their efforts during the recent tragedy. As a business leader and resident, Ms. Shenk noted efforts that are underway to host a Bingo and Elvis fundraiser event in the West Reading Ballroom this Saturday to donate a goal of \$20,000 to the disaster relief fund. Ms. Shenk indicated that amazing prizes have been donated by local and neighboring businesses.

Mayor Kaag thanked the businesses and residents for coming together as a wonderful community and hopes this will continue in the future. It was noted that an influx of food donations was shared with local shelters.

6. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve the March 21, 2023, regular meeting minutes, the March 25, 2023 special meeting minutes, and the March 28, 2023, second meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

7. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Ordinance 1163 Rental Property Amendment** – Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration to adopt an amendment to the Rental Property Ordinance in its entirety.

Motion to adopt an amendment to the Rental Property Ordinance. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Ordinance 1164 Special Purpose Parking Zones Amendment** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted the proposed addition of a handicapped parking space to the 100 block of South Second Avenue.

Motion to adopt an amendment to designate a handicapped parking space within the 100 block of South Second Avenue. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Ordinance – Borough Manager Authority to Lend Out Fire Police** – Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration to advertise an amendment to allow the Borough Manager to act on requests for fire police services.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of an amendment to supplement Section 65-7 Specific Powers and Duties of the Borough Manager to include the authority to lend out Borough Fire Police and execute documentation. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Ordinance – Stop Intersections Amendment** – Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration to advertise an amendment to modify yield intersections to stop intersections approaching Delaney Circle.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of an amendment to modify yield intersections to stop intersections on Reading and Tulpehocken Avenues approaching Delaney Circle. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **Resolution 2023-5 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration to extend the local disaster emergency through the May Council meeting.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2023-5 extending the Proclamation of the Local Disaster Emergency until the May 17, 2023 Borough Council meeting. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- f. **Resolution 2023-6 Bulk Refuse Collection Policy** – Mr. Lincoln noted discussions by the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee to modify the bulk trash collection policy to better manage tipping fees at the landfill. Research indicates that neighboring municipalities offer a tag system where residents can purchase a tag for bulk item collection. The proposed policy would provide residents with the convenience of placing up to two items per week out for collection on any regular trash collection day as opposed to the first Friday of the month. The tags would be purchased at Borough Hall at a cost of \$15 each and noted specifically to the items being discarded. Mr. Wert requested clarification on the trash hauler contract inclusion of one item per month per household. It was decided to table the proposed policy until the contract can be reviewed.

8. **CONSULTANT'S REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Ms. London stated that she had nothing new to report that is not otherwise covered on the agenda.
- b. **Engineer's Report** – Mr. Unger noted the receipt of five bids for the 2023 road projects on April 14, 2023. He is pleased with the bid results being significantly lower than estimated. Mr. Unger reported a reduction in paving costs since last fall. The roadways slated for improvement are S. Seventh Avenue from Penn Avenue to Reading Hospital, Sycamore Road from Fifth Avenue to Parkview Road, the intersection of Parkview Road and Sunset Road, and Bruce Alley from Franklin Street to Spruce Street. Mr. Grassley noted savings of roughly \$136,000 from what had been budgeted and recommended milling and repaving the Borough Hall parking lot with a portion of these savings. The Reading Hospital will be contacted to determine their interest in funding their portion of the parking lot in conjunction with Borough Hall.

Motion to accept the five bids received on April 14, 2023, for the 2023 road projects as presented in the bid tabulation. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Ms. Shenk departed the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Motion to award a contract for the 2023 road projects to the lowest qualified bidder H&K Group, Inc. in the amount of \$314,644. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.** Mr. Lineaweaver abstained from this vote based on a potential conflict of interest with his employer.

Mr. Unger referred to the garage pump station flow diagram and the influx on the day following the R.M. Palmer incident. He recommended that any added expenses associated with this spike be reported to the Borough's insurance agent for reimbursement. Mr. Grassley reported that the fire service line located in the basement had been destroyed by the explosion.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Unger departed the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

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

Mr. Lineaweaver stated that the American Diner raised \$3,600 in funds to support first responders' recovery and relief efforts the day following the tragedy. These funds were to be distributed equally, \$900 each, to the West Reading Fire Department, West Reading Police Department, Western Berks Ambulance Association, and the Berks County Community Foundation's West Reading Disaster Recovery Fund.

Motion to accept the Council President's report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

a. **Code Department Officials** – Mr. Murray noted that Cathy Hoffman plans to retire on April 28th and requested consideration to appoint Chad Moyer as the Code Department Manager and Zoning Officer.

Motion to appoint Chad Moyer as the Code Department Manager and Zoning Officer effective April 29, 2023. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Murray requested consideration to appoint Andrew Weber as Code Enforcement Officer.

Motion to appoint Andrew Weber as Code Enforcement Officer. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

b. **Letters of Resignation** – Mr. Murray requested consideration to accept a letter of resignation from Jason Witman.

Motion to accept a letter of resignation from Jason Witman as Police Administrative Aide/Parking Enforcement Officer. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Murray requested consideration to accept a letter of resignation from Carl Garman.

Motion to accept a letter of resignation from Carl Garman from the Pension Fund Committee. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

c. **Open Records Officer** – Mr. Murray requested consideration to appoint Chad Moyer as an Alternate Open Records Officer.

Motion to appoint Chad Moyer as an Alternate Open Records Officer effective April 29, 2023.

Moved by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Shaver.

Motion carried 7-0.

11. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Kaag referred to her report noting the following:

Mayor Kaag read aloud her report thanking the first responders, organizations, residents, community members, and staff that came together as a team to provide safety, guidance, and compassion to those in need during the R.M. Palmer tragedy.

Mr. Lineaweaver thanked the Mayor for her leadership and guidance, stating that she has been a bedrock to our community.

Motion to accept the Mayor's report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

12. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Holben echoed the Mayor's report noting the phenomenal amount of resources that were available during the tragedy.

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley referred to his report and offered to answer any questions. He noted that the pool was recently painted by staff members. It was reported that the previously outsourced painting of the pool took place roughly ten years ago at a cost of \$90,000.

Mr. Lineaweaver recommended spreading the word about the new sewer line jetting services offered to residential properties during instances of sewer backups.

Mr. Kaag thanked Mr. Grassley for the numerous occasions he has saved money by performing tasks in-house since he took the lead of this department. He noted an improvement in staff morale as witnessed by the entire staff reporting to duty during the tragedy.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his written report and thanked Borough Council, the Borough Manager, and all Department Heads for their support during the tragedy. As a lifetime resident he couldn't be prouder of his community.

A final inspection of the Engine/Rescue 64 replacement generated a list of items to be addressed. Delivery of the truck to the Harrisburg Fire Expo on May 19th is on track with delivery to West Reading immediately following the Expo. Chief Moyer indicated that following a month of training the vehicle will then be placed into service near the end of June. Mr. Wert inquired as to a planned ceremony for this event. Chief Moyer indicated that traditionally the vehicle is pushed into the garage and offered to plan an event. Mr. Shaver thanked Chief Moyer for administering the tedious and time-consuming task of building a new truck.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer shared the Code Department’s endorsement of a bulk trash tag collection system for ease of enforcement. Grass height and tree encroachment violations will be a focus of attention in the coming months. Mayor Kaag shared her appreciation of the new report to Council. Mr. Moyer indicated that he intends to mimic his Fire Chief report by sharing a few paragraphs on projects or commonly occurring violations.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – In the absence of Mr. Ratcliffe Mr. Lineaweaver reviewed the highlights of his report noting the following:

- Amanda Levering Corwin was hired part-time to assist with their three major events.
- Craft Pretzel & Beer Festival is scheduled for April 29th with twenty more vendors than last year for a total of 50 vendors.
- The vendor form is online for the upcoming Art on the Avenue event.
- Five people are interested in being a part of the business promotions committee.
- They are still waiting for word on the Hometown grant application from T-Mobile.
- The two DCED grant applications were awarded for lighting and gateway improvements. A request has been made to First Energy for additional funding of lighting improvements.
- The Janssen/Wyomissing Foundation grant for codes has been approved.
- They are also working with the county to apply for cares funding.
- Results of the BID survey were shared.

Motion to accept the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

13. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Equity Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce** – Mrs. Bressler noted a meeting that was held on April 13th between herself and Ms. Drobnick to discuss a draft resolution on non-discrimination while work continues to draft an ordinance. The resolution has been presented to the Council President and Borough Solicitor for review prior to submitting to Borough Council for approval.

Mr. Lineaweaver indicated that the resolution should be presented for approval next month before raising the Pride Flag at Borough Hall.

Motion to accept the Equity Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly noted an action item to approve a list of hires for the pool and playground programs as well as amendments to certain rates that were approved last month. Mr. Esterly reported that the Playground Manager is a teacher from the Reading School District.

Mr. Lineaweaver provided an overview of the list of hires noting lifeguards ranging from \$10.25 to 10.75 per hour; concession stand workers from \$10.50 to \$11.50 per hour; playground leaders ranging from \$10.00 to \$12.50 per hour; and front desk staff at \$10.00 per hour. Amended rates were for Sarah Althouse, Head Guard at \$12.00 per hour; Cynthia Sandoval, Lifeguard at \$11.75 per hour; Hailey Schmeck, Water Safety Instructor/Lifeguard at \$12.25 per hour. Mr. Esterly reported this brings a total of seventeen lifeguards with an additional interview scheduled for Friday.

Mr. Kaag thanked Mr. Esterly and Ms. Drobnick for the well-received changes to events.

Mr. Esterly thanked the Public Works Department for their assistance in establishing a fence to contain the fish for the Fishing Rodeo. Mr. Kaag was thanked for being the Easter Bunny for the Easter Egg hunt that took place at the firehouse one week after the R.M. Palmer tragedy. Mr. Kaag stated that R.M. Palmer was honored during this event for providing candy donations. A Disc Golf Tournament is scheduled for this Sunday, and the pool cleanup is planned for May 8th.

Mayor Kaag thanked Mr. Esterly for stepping into the role of Recreation Director so well. She also thanked Mr. Kaag for applying for and receiving grant funding and assisting in the removal of downed trees from the creek area.

Ms. Drobnick is excited to work with the energized commission that is currently working on a delightful summer concert series. June will be Vines & Vibes, July will be Pride & Vibes with a battle of bands, and August is a Salsa event. Free Meditation and Yoga will begin on May 6th in the park on Saturday mornings. Ms. Drobnick requested consideration to approve the commission's request to move the meeting time from 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Motion to approve the list of new and returning hire applicants and amended rates. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to authorize the advertisement to modify the Recreation Commission meeting time to 6:00 p.m. effective May 2, 2023. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Planning Commission** – The April Planning Commission meeting was cancelled.
- d. **Economic Development Committee** – The April Economic Development Committee meeting was cancelled.
- e. **Environmental Advisory Council** – The March Environmental Advisory Council meeting was cancelled.
- f. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Lincoln noted a lengthy discussion on bulk trash collection as reviewed earlier tonight, as well as continuing discussions on sidewalk repairs. The Mayor plans to attend a webinar next month hosted by the Pennsylvania Association of Boroughs on sidewalk safety to provide feedback to the committee during the May meeting.

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- g. **Shade Tree Commission** – Mr. Kaag noted the ongoing regular discussions surrounding tree planting, trimming, removal and watchlist. Mayor Kaag reported a request for branch trimming on Playground Drive. Mr. Grassley indicated that he plans to contact the homeowner tomorrow. Mr. Kaag shared the intent to plant flowering trees as a living R.M. Palmer memorial near the walking bridge at the Fire Department.

Motion to accept the Shade Tree Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- h. **Safety Committee** – The April Safety Committee meeting was cancelled.

14. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Financial Statement Ending 3/31/2023** – There were no questions or comments.
- b. **Payment Approval Report 3/22/23 to 4/14/23 and 4/15/23 to 4/18/23** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 3/31/2023, and Payment Approval Reports of 3/22/23 to 4/14/23 and 4/15/23 to 4/18/23. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

15. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There were no public comments.

16. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary