

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

January 16, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Members Zachary Shaver, Denise Drobnick, Bethany Bower, and Zanna Leiendecker; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Fire Chief and Code Department Manager Chad Moyer; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler (via Zoom); Borough Manager Dean Murray; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Recreation Director Michael Esterly; Engineer Pamela Stevens; Junior Council Person Mark-Handy Phanor (via Zoom); Main Street Manager Nick Price; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS:

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| James Rogers, Resident | Karen Livingood, Resident (via Zoom) |
| Ty Gardner, Resident | Charles Aden, Resident |
| Suzanne Thompson, Resident | Anthony Tucci, Western Berks Ambulance (via Zoom) |
| Lance Farmer, Fire Police (via Zoom) | Lauri Ahlskog, South Central Transit Authority (via Zoom) |

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Lineaweaver noted that an executive session was held at 6:30 p.m. this evening to discuss the potential acquisition of real property.
3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** There were no amendments to the agenda.
4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers provided an update on his diligent Business Privilege Tax research noting 252 delinquent accounts that Berkheimer Tax Innovations is pursuing. There were roughly 106 new accounts added to the roster in 2023. Mr. Rogers requested a meeting with the Council President, Code Department Manager, Borough Manager and Mayor following the meeting to discuss a new policy in 2024 where the Code Department Secretary would request proof of licensure and paid taxes prior to scheduling rental inspections.

Mr. Aden shared plans of a community open house that is scheduled on Thursday, January 25, 2024 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at State Representative Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz's district office located at 1111 Penn Avenue in Wyomissing.
5. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve the December 19, 2023 and January 2, 2024 meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**
6. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**
 - a. **Ordinance 1180 Accessible Parking Space Designation** – Consideration was requested to adopt an amendment to accessible parking space designations as advertised.

Motion to adopt an amendment to relocate an accessible parking space within the 400 block of Chestnut Street and add an accessible parking space within the 300 block of Linden Lane. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Ordinance 1181 One-Way Streets & Stop Intersections** – Consideration was requested to authorize the advertisement of amendments to the one-way flow of traffic on Holland Square and Juniata Street with respective stop intersections.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of amendments to the one-way streets and stop intersections to include Holland Square and Juniata Street. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Resolution 2024- Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – Consideration was requested to extend the local disaster emergency.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-4 extending the Proclamation of the Local Disaster Emergency until the February 20, 2024 Borough Council meeting. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Resolution 2024-5 Berkheimer Tax Innovations Liaison** – Consideration was requested to designate the treasurer and assistant treasurer as recipients of confidential tax information.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-5 appointing the treasurer and assistant treasurer as recipients of confidential tax information. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

7. **CONSULTANT'S REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker indicated that he had nothing new to report that is not otherwise covered on the agenda.

- b. **Engineer's Report** – Ms. Stevens reviewed the following items:

- A high estimate had been received for the 2024 Road Projects; therefore, it was decided to include Park Alley as an alternate on the bid specifications to ensure that primary road projects can be completed this year. Bid results should be available for consideration during the February meeting.

Motion to authorize the engineer to advertise the 2024 road projects with a base bid and Park Alley as an alternate. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- The Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) year 8 Green Light-Go grant awarded project professional service agreement has been prepared for design, bidding, and construction administration services.

The year 9 application is due in February with plans to apply for a full scope of work for the traffic signals located at 7th Avenue and Parkside Drive North, 7th Avenue and Reading Avenue, and 8th Avenue, Hill Avenue and Reading Avenue. The initial cost estimate is in the amount of \$193,521.20 with a Borough match of \$48,380.30.

- The Commonwealth of PA Financing Authority (CFA) grant funded security camera upgrade project contract is being assembled, the contract should be signed by Berkshire Systems Group, Inc. soon. Upgrades would begin at Borough Hall with Penn Avenue upgrades planned in the spring. Grant funding for Delaney Circle security camera improvements could be applied for this fall.

- Pickleball Court parking plans have been approved by the City of Reading. Striping of angled parking spaces should take place in the spring.
- Recommended language updates to Chapter 363 Sewers and Sewage Disposal were provided to ensure the borough is capturing all tapping fees during instances of change in use. Authorization to advertise an amendment was requested along with a review by the solicitor. Additional revision requests will be presented to the infrastructure committee for water and sewer tapping fees as well as industrial users.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of an amendment to Chapter 363 Sewers and Sewage Disposal to amend language to include changes in use, flow, and strength of sewage discharges, and to include a review by the borough solicitor. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Lance Farmer joined the meeting at 7:24 p.m.

- Ms. Stevens provided a timeline of the grant funded 500 block of Spruce Street water main replacement project that would be designed, permitted, and placed out for bid in 2024, constructed in 2025 and repaved in 2026. She alerted Council to an aspect of construction that includes a valve replacement within the Fifth Avenue intersection and provided an option to minimize the impact to the 2024 budgeted paving project of Fifth Avenue. The grant effective date is unknown at this time, therefore, Ms. Stevens requested authorization to proceed with the design and permitting phase.

Motion to authorize the engineer to proceed with the design and permitting phase of the water main replacement project on the 500 block of Spruce Street. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- Ms. Stevens offered to investigate grant opportunities for a water line replacement project on South Sixth Avenue between Penn Avenue and Franklin Street. Mr. Grassley noted the length of time to await grant funding notification and completion of the project bringing the potential repaving of Sixth Avenue to 2030.

Motion to authorize the engineer to investigate water main replacement grant funding that would include full width paving. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- Candlewood Suites will be receiving another notice of violation urging them to continue work on a permanent structural design and permitting of their retaining wall that is in poor condition.

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

8. COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

Mr. Lineaweaver stated that he had nothing new to report that is not already on the agenda.

9. BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:

- a. **Civil Service Commission Membership** – Mr. Murray requested consideration to create three alternate positions on this board per Borough Code regulations. It was noted that one member of the commission may be a member of council.

Motion to create three voting alternate member positions with six-year terms to the Civil Service Commission. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Water Service Connection Regulations** – Mr. Murray requested authorization for the solicitor to review an ordinance that would establish regulations regarding the management and operation of water service connections to the water system. It was noted that the ordinance would support the new Department of Environmental Protection Lead and Copper Inventory standard mandates.

Motion to authorize the solicitor to review an ordinance to establish regulations regarding management and operation of water service connections to the water system. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Ms. Stevens departed the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

10. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Kaag reviewed her report noting the following:

- On January 2nd she attended the Reorganization meeting.
- On January 5th she attended an event in Valley Forge where President Biden delivered a speech.
- Multiple meetings were held this week to discuss various topics with the Chief of Police, notably the hiring of an officer with Act 120 certification.
- Two snow emergencies were declared this past month with the help of Chief Tornielli and Mr. Grassley.

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

11. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – In Chief Tornielli's absence Mayor Kaag offered to answer any questions regarding the report and referred to the two action items.

A request to authorize the preapproval of college tuition reimbursement in 2024 per the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Motion to authorize the preapproval of Officer Kyle Bohn to attend classes and receive college tuition reimbursement in 2024. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

A request was made to execute a Police Service Dog and Handler Maintenance Training Agreement for 2024 for Officer Brandon Breitenstein and K-9 Zea.

Motion to execute a Police Service Dog and Handler Maintenance Training Agreement for 2024 with Progressive K-9 Academy, LLC. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley referred to his report and offered to answer any questions. Mr. Lineaweaver noted difficulty in scheduling interviews for the part-time position this past month and plans to bring this action item forward to Council next month.

Mr. Kaag inquired as to the electrical connection to the R.M. Palmer Memorial Garden. Mr. Grassley reported that New Castle Lawn and Landscape installed the transformer that is ready for connection.

Mr. Kaag inquired as to stormwater controls in the vicinity of the memorial garden. Mr. Grassley noted that the new system sufficiently handled the recent rain and snowstorms.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. He noted the previous interested party to purchase the old engine fell through and requested consideration of auctioning the engine on Public Surplus with a reserve not below \$30,000. Chief Moyer noted that should an interested party that inquired about the engine through Brindlee Mountain Fire Apparatus' listing win the Public Surplus auction, the borough would be obligated to furnish Brindlee Mountain Fire Apparatus' 10% commission.

Motion to approve an auction of the 2000 Seagrave Pumper Engine on Public Surplus with a reserve. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer referred to his written report and offered to provide further clarification on the proposed sewer amendments. He noted that the property owner of 158 Penn Avenue has requested 90 days to review and formulate a plan on how to proceed now that the insurance company provided a report.

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

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – Mr. Price offered to answer any questions regarding his report. There were no questions or comments. Mr. Lineaweaver reviewed the list of requested event dates and road closures for 2024.

- **Pretzel and Beer Fest** – Saturday, April 27, 2024 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with Penn Avenue road closure of the 500 through 700 blocks from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- **Art on the Avenue** – Saturday, June 15, 2024 from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. with Penn Avenue road closure of the 400 through 700 blocks from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- **Fall Fest** – Saturday, September 21, 2024 from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. with Penn Avenue road closure of the 400 through 700 blocks from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- **2nd Fridays** – Event dates of April 12, May 10, June 14, July 12, August 9, September 13, October 11, November 8, and December 13 with South Sixth Avenue road closure from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Kaag noted that the South Sixth Avenue road closures would require her approval while the Penn Avenue road closures would require PennDOT approval. Mayor Kaag approved the South Sixth Avenue road closures as requested.

It was noted that the Farmers' Market South Sixth Avenue road closure dates would require the Mayor's approval.

Motion to approve the list of 2024 event dates and road closures as presented. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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

12. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Equity Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce** – Mr. Lineaweaver indicated that leadership of this taskforce is being reconfigured, more information will be provided at a later date.
- b. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly referred to his written report and requested consideration of two action items. The 2024 Recreation Calendar of Events was presented for approval noting the return of Karaoke events, the fishing rodeo, and a family dance event. Mr. Lineaweaver noted that the Vines & Vibes event would require approval of the sale of alcoholic beverages. The Karaoke events that are hosted at the 3rd & Spruce Drafthaus would not require Council's approval.

Motion to approve the 2024 Recreation Calendar of Events as presented, including the sale of alcoholic beverages during the Vines & Vibes event. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Esterly requested authorization to advertise the seasonal employment opportunities for the upcoming season.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of seasonal recreation employment opportunities. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Esterly shared the winning results of the Holiday Decorating Contest:

- 1st Place: 400 Ann Street
- 2nd Place: 406 Playground Drive
- 3rd Place: 432 Oak Terrace

Mr. Lineaweaver indicated that he and Mr. Esterly are wrapping up the details to allow electronic registration for the pool and playground programs. Residents would need to provide proof of residency in order to receive resident rates.

Motion to accept the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Price departed the meeting at 7:47 p.m.

- c. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted that the commission continues to work through form-based codes with Derck & Edson, LLC, this month's topics of discussion included format changes such as renumbering.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert recapped meeting discussions and the flux of businesses on the Avenue. It was noted that the new Noodl restaurant that closed has a new lease agreement established already. The new Main Street Manager is working with Goggleworks to present a new design for the gateway railroad bridge to request Norfolk Southern's approval. It was noted that the bridge has some corrosion that would need to be addressed. Mr. Lineaweaver provided a progress report noting a request of three artists who are familiar with West Reading to craft designs to present to Council and the community for feedback. In lieu of painting the railroad bridge, it was thought that a framed structure could be mounted to the bridge to support panels that can be repaired or replaced individually as needed.

Motion to accept the Economic Development Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **Environmental Advisory Council** – The December Environmental Advisory Council meeting was cancelled.
- f. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Kaag shared a recommendation from the committee for the placement of a bus shelter on South Seventh Avenue near the Reading Hospital "T" Building entrance. It was noted that the hospital contacted the South Central Transit Authority (SCTA) to request movement of the bus stop and to provide a shelter due to visitors waiting inside the building during inclement weather and rushing to the bus stop when the bus arrives. The right-of-way transit shelter agreement has been reviewed and approved by both the borough and transit authority solicitors. Also, the site plan has been updated to show that the proposed placement of the shelter would not affect the clear site triangle. Mr. Grassley expressed concern about the bus blocking a lane of traffic and recommended using two existing parking spaces as the bus stop. Mr. Moyer noted that an ADA compliant eight feet wide by five feet deep loading platform is required in front of the shelter. Ms. Ahlskog indicated that the dwell time at this stop would be brief and only when people are waiting to board the bus. It is unfortunate that the valet driveway had not been constructed large enough to support transit bus access.

Motion to approve the placement and execution of an agreement with the South Central Transit Authority to locate a bus shelter along South Seventh Avenue. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Kaag noted an additional topic of note being the review of speed concerns on Reading Avenue near Sixth Avenue with data being collected to review next month.

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

- g. **Shade Tree Commission** – The December Shade Tree Commission meeting was cancelled.
- h. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Murray noted review of a Hazardous Communication video this month based on how to handle certain situations.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- i. **Western Berks Ambulance** – Mr. Tucci provided an update noting that in the future a new report format will be providing additional information each month. Also, they are seeking grant funding to become certified to medically care for police dogs.

Motion to accept the Western Berks Ambulance report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

13. TREASURER'S REPORT:

- a. **Financial Statement Ending 12/31/2023** – Mr. Wert expressed the importance of reviewing the year financially, noting that the Council and staff have brought the year to an end with savings of roughly \$350,000. Conservative budget planning has kept expenditures low. Water rates were increased this year as a pass-through increase from the water authority. Road and infrastructure projects were completed last year, a recreation program was provided to support the quality of life for residents all while working within our means to accomplish goals. Mr. Lineaweaver reported that three straight years have ended in the positive while budgeting a deficit.
- b. **Payment Approval Report 12/20/23 to 1/12/24 and 1/13/24 to 1/16/24** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 12/31/2023, and Payment Approval Reports of 12/20/23 to 1/12/24 and 1/13/24 to 1/16/24. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 7-0.**

14. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Rogers inquired as to the action taken earlier this evening regarding sewer lines. Mr. Wert stated that the amendment pertains to the use of property. In a recent instance a residential use was converted to a restaurant use which generates additional flows and strengths of flow. Mr. Moyer indicated that the current wording of the ordinance does not allow the borough to capture tapping fees on changes in use, only for new or proposed structures. The amendment would allow charges to be assessed during instances of changes in use based on a sewer Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU) schedule.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary