

BOROUGH OF WEST READING – BOROUGH COUNCIL

April 18, 2017 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, April 18, 2017 with the following persons present: Council President Carl G. Garman; Vice President Nathalie Kulesa; Mayor Valentin Rodriguez, Jr.; Council Members Grace M. Craze, Christopher C. Lincoln, Suzanne Thompson, Philip C. Wert Nicholas Imbesi; Solicitor Charles Haws; Police Chief Stephen D. Powell; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Fire Chief Mark Burkholder; Public Works Director Dean Murray; Recreation Director Helen Moyer; Engineer Tom Unger; Borough Manager Cathy L. Hoffman.

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| VISITORS: | Karen Livingood | Resident |
| | Amber Rambo | Resident |
| | James T. Rogers | Resident |
| | Oswald Herbert | Resident |
| | Nick Johnson | GVC |
| | Audrey Schaeffer | Resident |
| | Travis Herbert | Resident |
| | Mark Woodward | Property/Business Owner |
| | General Manager | Savage L&B Dodge |
| | Reporter | Reading Eagle |

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Carl G. Garman called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.

Mr. Garman also announced that an Executive Session had been held immediately prior to the Council meeting to discuss personnel and acquisition of real estate.

Certificate of Appreciation Presentations: Mayor Rodriguez presented certificates of appreciation to Travis Herbert, for his volunteer snow removal service and to the General Manager of Savage L&B Dodge for their donation to the Buttonwood streetscape.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mark Woodward, owner of West Reading Tavern requested permission to close 6th Avenue between Penn Avenue and Cherry Street on August 12th from 12 noon to 5:00 p.m. for a “French Fry Fest”. He stated that several other restaurants on the avenue would be participating as well. He also asked for the five parking spaces between 6th Avenue and 614 Penn Avenue to be closed as well. The actual closure would be between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Mr. Lincoln to approve the French Fry Festival event on August 12th and close 6th Avenue between Penn and Cherry between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. **Motion carried 7-0.**

James T. Rogers, commented about street sweeping signs being mounted too close to the ground as well as being located on a stop sign post. Mr. Murray said he would investigate.

Amber Rambo spoke at length about property maintenance issues, dogs being chained in front yards, speeding vehicles, vehicles parked on grass, political signs etc. She said that the Borough should consider new dog regulations, as the City of Reading has recently done.

Audrey Schaeffer asked if the ‘no left turn’ signs were going to be removed for Cherry Street.

Karen Livingood spoke about pedestrians not curbing their dogs and asked Chief Powell if it was legal to carry pepper spray in order to protect herself from dogs

3. **MS4 DISCUSSION:**

Nick Johnson, Engineer with Great Valley Consultants spoke to Council concerning the upcoming changes to storm sewer regulations. He also talked about the Wyomissing Creek Watershed Coalition, a group of eight municipalities who have been working toward containing outfalls and removing pollutants to the Wyomissing Creek since 2010. The Coalition has devised a cost sharing arrangement that would raise \$2,000,000 over the next five years to raise funds for capital improvements. The cost to the Borough would be about \$18,600 per year. Mr. Johnson also noted that Best Management Practices (BMP) will require the elimination of 10% of pollutants. After some discussion, it was **moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Imbesi to accept the cost sharing proposal for the Wyomissing Creek Watershed Coalition. **Motion carried 7-0.**

4. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Moved by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Mr. Lincoln to approve the Council minutes of March 21, 2017. **Motion carried 7-0.**

4. **ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS:**

a. **Ordinance 1072** – The proposed ordinance will reinstate left turns from 5th Avenue to Cherry Street that were implemented as part of the Buttonwood Street Bridge detour. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Imbesi to advertise Ordinance 1072. **Motion carried 7-0.**

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

a. **Proposed Snow Removal Ordinance Amendment** – At the last meeting, Council had discussed the issue of property owners not clearing their sidewalks and it was suggested that fines should be more severe. After some discussion, it was decided that the Traffic Committee should review this and make a recommendation to Council.

6. **CONSULTANTS' REPORTS:**

a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Haws had no specific report to give other than items found elsewhere on the agenda.

b. **Engineer/Code Enforcement Report** – Mr. Unger spoke about the following:

- The Parkview Road Bridge permit has been approved. Proposals for the repair of the bridge will now be requested.
- The Buttonwood Street paving project has been completed. Due to the fact that the base of the streets was concrete, much less milling was required, therefore the project came in at \$42,317.47 under budget. The total cost of the project was \$86,568.53. Additional streetscape improvements were discussed. It was recommended that because the project was completed much less than the engineering estimate, some of the funds should be expended on additions of trees and lighting as well as repair of sidewalks.
- The VF/Equus annexation will be discussed at the May meeting. An update was given concerning the J.E.A.P. meeting that was held on April 17th.
- The grant for the Sunset Alley project was approved. As soon as the grant documents are received, the project can be advertised. Because of the grant being awarded, plans to improve an additional alley can move forward.

- The hydrant training has taken place so the flow tests can now be completed.
- The water line replacement project on Spruce between 6th and 7th and the valve replacement project at 6th and Franklin are being prepared.
- The Codes Department and Zoning report is also included in the written report.

Moved by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Ms. Craze to accept the Engineer's Report. **Motion carried 7-0.**

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

- a. **IT Update** – Mrs. Hoffman gave an update concerning the phone installation project, cabling project, installation of two new switches and the door access project. It was noted that only exterior doors have been activated as part of the door access project however it was suggested that the door from the administration lobby to the office should also be added to the system. **Moved** by Mrs. Kulesa and seconded by Mr. Imbesi to obtain an estimate for the addition of the administration door. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Council also discussed the website and General Code projects.

Moved by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Ms. Craze to approve the Borough Manager's report. **Motion carried 7-0.**

8. **MAYOR'S REPORT:**

Mayor Rodriguez referred to his written report that was distributed just prior to the meeting. The school crossing guard issue was discussed at length and after much debate, it was recommended that the Traffic Committee should review the information.

Moved by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Ms. Craze to approve the Mayor's Report. **Motion carried 7-0.**

9. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Powell referred to his written report and noted the following:
- Two handicapped parking spaces have been reviewed with a recommendation to approve at 231 Tulpehocken Avenue and 503 Chestnut Street. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Imbesi to approve the handicapped parking spaces and advertise the ordinance. **Motion carried 7-0.** It was also noted that the ordinance will include the removal of a handicapped parking space in front of 704/708 Penn Avenue.
 - Officer Wayne Holben was the recipient of a grant.
 - Lane restrictions on the Penn Street Bridge will begin in May along with the closure of the ramp from westbound 422 into the City.
 - Losses to the police pension in 2015 and 2016 were briefly discussed and it was recommended that an additional \$50,000 be earmarked for the Police Minimum Municipal Obligation.
 - Speeding on Buttonwood has become an issue. It was reported that over 50 citations were issued because of complaints that were received immediately following the opening of the bridge.

Moved by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Craze to approve the Police Department Report. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Public Works** – Mr. Murray referred to his written report and the following was discussed:
- During a recent power outage, the generator at the Hall failed to operate as expected however it was serviced to determine that there was nothing wrong with it – a switch was tripped. It was also noted that the new door access system has a battery that will function for 24 hours.

Moved by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Ms. Thompson to approve the Public Works Director's Report. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Mark Burkholder referred to his written report. There were no questions.
- Moved** by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Ms. Craze to approve the Fire Department Report. **Motion carried 7-0.**

d. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation Report**

Mr. Rohrbach was not in attendance however a written report was provided. Mr. Wert reviewed the following:

- Upcoming events were briefly reviewed.
- An RFP has been written as part of the BID process.
- The 6th Avenue Streetscape grant has been awarded. The project will be put out for bids.
- An "Adopt-A-Block" program has been suggested to continue the Earth Day work throughout the year.

Moved by Ms. Craze and seconded by Ms. Thompson to approve the WRCRF report. **Motion carried 7-0.**

10. **COMMITTEE/COMMISSION REPORTS:**

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mrs. Moyer referred to her written report and noted these items:

- Upcoming events include:
April 29th – Berks Children & Youth 5K Run and May 5th – Father Daughter Dance.
- An additional list of staff to be hired for the summer was presented. **Moved** by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Ms. Thompson to approve the list of summer recreation hires as presented. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Moved by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Ms. Thompson to approve the Recreation Commission Report. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert referred to the minutes of April 5th and noted the following:
- Plans submitted by Equus for the Designer Place site will be reviewed at the next meeting.
 - The blighted property at 627 Franklin will be sent to the County for review by the Blighted Property Committee.

Moved by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Imbesi to approve the Planning Commission report. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert reviewed the following:

- The property at 301 Penn Avenue has been sold to the owner of the adjacent property.
- The former A-Z property has been purchased however plans for the property have not been identified.

- Other new businesses are being established on the 400 block of Penn.
Moved by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Ms. Thompson to approve the Economic Development Committee report. **Motion carried 7-0.**
- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Wert reported that new member Jenna Hiester has been a great addition to the Council. He also mentioned that recycling cans still need to be ordered and that member Amber Rambo-Laity will be attending the EAC conference in May, in Lancaster.
Moved by Mrs. Kulesa and seconded by Mr. Lincoln to approve the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Motion carried 7-0.**
- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committees** – Mr. Lincoln referred to draft minutes and noted the following:
 - Representatives from RACC were in attendance to request the installation of directional signs for the Miller Center for the duration of the Penn Street Bridge construction. The signs (fabricated by PennDOT) are proposed to be 2' x 3' and would be placed approaching Delaney Circle to direct traffic to Buttonwood Street. It was the Committee's recommendation to approve the placement of the signs. **Moved** by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Ms. Craze to approve the placement of the Miller Center signs for the duration of the construction. **Motion carried 7-0.**
 - A joint meeting was held with the Infrastructure and Shade Tree Committees to discuss the impact of shade trees on adjacent sidewalks and curbs. Much discussion ensued with no decision being made concerning the proposed procedures and the lifting of the moratorium. This will be discussed further at the April 25th meeting.
 - Met-Ed street light conversions was also discussed with no decision being made. A long discussion ensued regarding the possible buy-back of the street lights.
Moved by Ms. Thompson and seconded by Ms. Craze to approve the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee reports. **Motion carried 7-0.**
- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – Mr. Murray briefly reviewed the minutes of the April 11th minutes.
Moved by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Ms. Craze to approve the Shade Tree Commission report. **Motion carried 7-0.**
- g. **Finance Committee** – Ms. Thompson reported that the Committee had met on April 17th and reviewed the topics discussed, such as the payment report and a memo from Accounting Specialist Donal Renninger. The minutes for the meeting had not yet been prepared. There was also prolonged discussion concerning the enabling ordinance for the Committee with regard to changing the composition of the Committee to permit more than two Council members. A motion was introduced to approve the proposed changes and advertise the amended ordinance was passed with a 6-1 vote. **In favor of the motion** – Mr. Wert, Mr. Imbesi, Ms. Thompson, Ms. Craze, Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Garman. **Against the motion** – Mrs. Kulesa
Moved by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Mr. Lincoln to approve the Finance Committee Report. **Motion carried 6-1.**
- h. **Safety Committee** – There were no questions concerning the Safety Committee minutes.
Moved by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Imbesi to approve the Safety Committee report. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- i. **Pension Committee** – Mrs. Rentschler reported that the Pension Committee had met on April 17th and as a result, minutes have not yet been prepared. Doug Werley from Thomas Anderson Associates was in attendance along with Joe Scott of PSAB-MRT and Jeff Herb from Morgan Stanley. Mr. Werley spoke about the substantial amounts that were lost in 2015 and part of 2016 and indicated that it would take a very long time to make up the loses to the police pension. He recommended that the Borough contribute as much as they can each year in addition to the MMO. Mr. Scott and Mr. Herb spoke about the investment side of the plans which are earning at 4%. It was also noted that if an additional officer is hired before July 1st, \$8600 in additional state aid will be received.

Moved by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Ms. Craze to approve the Pension Committee report.

Motion carried 7-0.

11. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Revenues with Comparison to Budget** –Mrs. Rentschler noted that the budget report reflects the first quarter of 2017 and added that the budget transfers have been completed. She reported that a \$5000 donation had been received from the L.O.V.E. Team and that \$110,744 has been received from Liquid Fuels. Also, the \$610,500 contribution was received from the Hospital but was not included on the March 31st financial report. There were several items which were questioned:

- Electricity for the pool (budgeted amount should be \$12,227, not zero)
- Zoning Hearing costs – may have come out of the wrong G/L code
- Building and Supplies – the almost over budget amount reflects bills that came in late in 2016 which should have been included in the 2016 budget, not 2017

Moved by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Ms. Craze to approve the Revenues with Comparison to Budget Report for the three months ending March 31st, however not including the items that were questioned. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Payment Approval Report** – All items questioned by Council were explained by Mr. Murray or Mrs. Rentschler. **Moved** by Ms. Craze and seconded by Mr. Imbesi approve the Payment Approval Report for the periods of 3/22/2017 – 4/13/2017 and 4/14/17 – 4/18/17. **Motion carried 7-0.**

12. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Executive Session had been held prior to the meeting with one action item. **Moved** by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Mrs. Kulesa to allow Sgt. Keith Phillips to donate 50 hours to the sick bank.

Motion carried 7-0.

13. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There was no public comment.

14. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Moved by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Imbesi to adjourn the meeting at 11:05 p.m. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Hoffman, Borough Manager

