

**Borough of West Reading
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

July 8, 2019

Committee Members Present

Philip Wert, Nicholas Imbesi, Andrew Kearney, Robin Horman, Christin Kelley, Aaron Gantz, Mark Ratcliffe, John Woodward, Benjamin LaManna and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

Visitors Present

None

Call to Order

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

Public Comment

None

Approval of the Minutes

Motion made to approve the Economic Development Committee minutes of June 10, 2019 by Robin Horman and seconded by Nicholas Imbesi. **Motion carried.**

Residential Properties Update

Mr. Wert provided an update on the sale of new townhomes within the first phase of The Villas at Narrow and noted that three of the six homes have been sold, one is under agreement and two remain on the market.

BID Status Update

Mr. Ratcliffe noted reworking of the BID plan and a decision to move forward with a final draft since Julie Fitzpatrick, the main contact from the PDC, has been traveling. Mr. Ratcliffe stated that once the RFP is in place there will be specific goals to achieve. Proposals are being collected and are due by the end of the week. Discussion ensued regarding the number of votes needed to get the BID in place.

Significant/Vacant West Reading Commercial Properties Update

- 301 Penn Avenue – A kitchen and bath design company is progressing through the process of operating within this space.
- 416 Penn Avenue – The second floor 'Nitro' bar/lounge plans to open at the end of the month.
- 428 Penn Avenue – A rendering of a new building is on display onsite, however plans have not yet been submitted.
- 433 Penn Avenue – Schweitzer's Service Center is currently for sale with nothing new to report.
- 445, 447 and 449 Penn Avenue – The Codes Department issued a letter to the owner and tenant about the residential use on the first floor. An update is needed from Cathy Hoffman.
- 637 Penn Avenue – The owner of Mixx continues to seek a buyer and is planning to occupy the space until the lease expires.
- 707 Penn Avenue – Property is expected to be converted into retail space, there was nothing new to report.
- 711 Penn Avenue – The owner of this property indicated that a Jamaican restaurant intends to occupy this space and is slowly progressing towards that goal.

- 723 Penn – Mi Casa Su Casa is progressing through the process of operating within this space. Ms. Horman expressed concern regarding recent activity at this location.

Ms. Horman departed the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Mr. Ratcliffe noted that the Main Street office has moved to the North 6th Avenue property, a travel agent is moving in and the building has been painted.

Strategic Planning Discussion

- John Woodward provided an update as to the Berkshire Heights stake holders meeting, it was noted that the deal fell through to create a grocery store in the vicinity of 8th and Reading Avenues. Also, a presentation had been held at the Library and Mr. Woodward noted two property owners that would experience access difficulties due to the removal of on-street parking along 4th Street, however property values should increase once the new medical school construction has been completed. Mr. Ratcliffe also attended this presentation and stated a number of items that were being discussed would complement West Reading.

Ms. Gantz and Mr. Ratcliffe departed the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

- The anticipated delivery date of the Reading Avenue/Buttonwood Gateway project architect design is July 26th. Due to the July 31st multimodal grant deadline, Mr. Imbesi indicated a desire to take the time that is necessary to properly plan for these improvements and possibly tie-in with plans of Wyomissing Borough by applying for a multimodal grant next year.
- Christin Kelley offered to reschedule a meeting with the PHMC to discuss a HARB design strategy, however she will be unable to head these discussions due to scheduling demands.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia Madeira