

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

April 9, 2018

Committee Members Present

Phil Wert, Nick Imbesi, Andrew Kearney, Christin Kelley, Robin Horman, Mark Ratcliffe, Aaron Gantz, Cathy Hoffman

Committee Members Absent

Brett Bagenstose, Dean Rohrbach

Visitors Present

None

Call to Order

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

Public Comment

None

Approval of the Minutes

Moved by Mr. Imbesi and seconded by Ms. Horman to approve the minutes of March 12, 2018.
Motion carried.

BID Status Update

Mr. Wert said that the next meeting of the Steering Committee will be held on April 16th.

Foreclosed & Blighted Residential Properties Update:

- 520 Franklin – A permit was not pulled for the furnace that was installed. Codes will contact the owner to follow up.
- 306 Sycamore – The property was sold for \$95,000.
- 122 S. Second – Listed for Sheriff Sale; has been vacant a long time.
- 411 Franklin – Codes will be asked why the property has been condemned.
- 214 Playground – Property has been cleaned up and placard removed 3/20/18. Remove from list.
- 311 Spruce – The electricity has been shut off and there are multiple exterior violations. Codes will be asked for more information

The committee discussed how best to move forward with the abandoned properties. Mr. Imbesi said that he had liked Mr. Rohrbach's suggestion from last month regarding a five-step process in assessing the property. Mr. Wert spoke about the County's procedures in dealing with blighted properties. He also noted that in Pennsylvania, State law dictates how to deal with

blighted properties and suggested that the Pennsylvania Downtown Center could probably assist if we reach out to them.

Significant/Vacant West Reading Commercial Properties Update:

- Narrow Fabrics Building – Construction is ongoing; the restaurant “B2” has been named for the premises.
- VF Building – Construction is ongoing; VF will be moved in within weeks and construction will continue on the rest of the building.
- 301 Penn – Still available for lease.
- 707 Penn – Nothing new to report at this time.
- 501 Penn – Although the Zoning Hearing Board approved the expansion of the building, the owner has not applied for the zoning permit nor submitted land development plans.

Strategic Planning Discussion and Committee Member Expansion

Discussion centered around creating new commercial properties, architectural design standards, etc. It was suggested that the logical area to focus on for commercial/retail would be N. 6th Avenue and the 700 block of Reading Avenue.

Expansion of the Committee ensued, and it was recommended that additional committee members have expertise in economic development. Suggestions were made that included representation from the banking world and the former member of other municipal economic development committees. Ms. Kelley suggested establishing revolving credit (loan fund) for property owners who want to improve their property, replace a sign etc.

Also discussed:

- The Eye on West Reading Case Study – eyeonmainstreet.com
- Tower Health’s announcement regarding Drexel University establishing a medical school.
- Joint Comp Plan - A draft was sent out today. Should be complete within a few months.
- New restaurant in the Borough – Hawaii Kitchen.
- Parking solutions - what has been already done and what the next steps should be.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Hoffman