

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

June 08, 2020

Committee Members Present

Philip Wert, Nicholas Imbesi, Andrew Kearney, Robin Horman, Mark Ratcliffe, John Woodward, Cathy Hoffman.

Visitors Present

None

Call to Order

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Public Comment

None

Approval of the Minutes

Motion made to approve the Economic Development Committee minutes of March 9, 2020 by Robin Horman and seconded by Mark Ratcliffe. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Residential Properties Update

Mr. Wert provided an update concerning the Villas at Narrow. All the current homes being constructed have already sold. The units are almost done and ready. At this time, it is not clear when the next nine homes will be constructed.

Significant/Vacant West Reading Commercial Properties Update

- 301 Penn Avenue – The property owner hired a constructor to make is a vanilla envelope inside. Still no new tenant.
- 408 Penn Avenue – Added to the list due to being vacated.
- 416 Penn Avenue – No further update at this time. Waiting for the bar to open upstairs.
- 428 Penn Avenue – Construction has now been delayed until 2021. A sign has been erected advertising the available space.
- 433 Penn Avenue – Nothing new to report at this time.
- 445, 447 and 449 Penn Avenue – Nothing new to report at this time.
- 450 Penn Avenue – Subway franchise and building are still for sale. Subway has been closed during the pandemic.
- 501 Penn Avenue – Court case is still pending for game of skill machines.
- 530 Penn Avenue – Rebel Hive Meadery is now open.
- 544 Penn Avenue – New business opening soon called Coral Reef Connection. Large online business that wanted to open a brick and mortar store.
- 550 Penn Avenue – Flourish Café is closing
- 612 Penn Avenue – New candy store is doing well.
- 614 Penn Avenue – New Greek restaurant called Mazi is opening soon. They are waiting until the green phase to open.
- 615 Penn Avenue – Rice will be reopening. This is property is being removed from the agenda.
- 633 Penn Avenue – Looking for a new tenant.

- 635 Penn Avenue – East Ridge Outfitters is going out of business and is looking for a new tenant.
- 637 Penn Avenue – The former Pollock building is added to the agenda.
- 707 Penn Avenue – Nothing new to report. Residential property to watch.
- 715 Penn Avenue – Gourmand is closing, the building has a new owner.
- 720 Penn Avenue – This property is for sale and is being added to the agenda.

General Discussion

- The committee talked extensively about the West Reading Shopping Center property taxes. At this time, all parties interested in the shopping center haven't been able to make the numbers work.
- The committee spoke about housing in West Reading. Members noted that houses are moving very quickly. In addition, it was noted that little to no rental units are available at this time. The committee also discussed housing prices, and how they continue to increase.
- Painting of the West Reading Railroad Bridge was discussed. A property owner in the Borough is willing to start a donation fund to help repaint the bridge.

Strategic Planning Discussion/Wyomissing Update

John Woodward gave the Wyomissing update. Mr. Woodward informed the committee that the bid prices for the 4th street project came in far under budget. He mentioned that they already received a 2-million-dollar grant for 4th street, and want to further discuss working with West Reading. Mr. Woodward also talked about assessments and the medical school.

The CRF received the draft plan from Derck and Edson. Mr. Wert noted he had a lengthy discussion with Mark Evans from Derck and Edson about zoning. It was also noted that some of the suggestions in the draft report are ideas we would have never thought of without their help.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Imbesi
Borough Manager