

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

September 14, 2020

Committee Members Present

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

Visitors Present

Jack Gombach

Call to Order

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Public Comment

None

Approval of the Minutes

Motion made to approve the Economic Development Committee minutes of July 13, 2020 by Mark Ratcliffe and seconded by Cathy Hoffman. **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, the next set of homes are to begin construction by spring of 2021.

Significant/Vacant West Reading Commercial Properties Update

- 301 Penn Avenue – The property owner hired a constructor to make a vanilla envelope inside. Still no new tenant.
- 408 Penn Avenue – Added to the list due to being vacated.
- 416 Penn Avenue – Motor club opening early 2021.
- 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 have sold.
- 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. This is a 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 reopened
- 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.
- 639 Penn Avenue – Dressed in Love Bridal just opened.

- 643 Penn Avenue – Willow Creek Brewing will open this fall.
- 707 Penn Avenue – Nothing new to report. Residential property to watch.
- 715 Penn Avenue – Rise up Café recently opened.
- 720 Penn Avenue – This property is for sale and is being added to the agenda.
- 22 N Sixth Avenue – CT tours closed; this space is available.
- 36 N. Sixth Avenue – El Morro Café closed and B-Green Deli is opening soon.

General Discussion

- A general discussion took place about the five-year strategic plan from Derck and Edson, along with train service returning and 11 acres that the Borough owns along the river. It was noted that all of these components are coming together, and the Borough and the WRCRF need to ensure the proper steps are followed. It was also noted that the WRCRF may be seeking a Main Street Designation. Mr. Wert shared that the WRCRF has brought on Jim Hartling as an implementation consultant and that Derck and Edson was directed to help rebrand the WRCRF's West Reading message.
- It was also shared that the WRCRF has hired a new grant writer to apply for grants for the WRCRF.
- A conversation took place about the River Front property owned by the Borough and how the Borough and the WRCRF can leverage this to their advantage.
- Painting of the West Reading Railroad Bridge was discussed. A property owner in the Borough is willing to begin a donation fund to contribute towards repainting of the bridge.

Strategic Planning Discussion/Wyomissing Update

Mr. Woodward shared that the Berkshire Mall has been bought by a new owner. Wyomissing Borough met with the new owner to discuss their plans for the property. They are going to try to obtain two new anchor tenants to revitalize the mall.

Mr. Woodward also mentioned that Wyomissing Borough plans to revise certain Zoning Overlay areas within the Borough.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Imbesi
Borough Manager