

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

**February 8, 2021**

**Committee Members Present**

Philip Wert, Nicholas Imbesi, Aaron Gantz, Mark Ratcliffe, Cathy Hoffman, Andrew Kearney, and John Woodward.

**Visitors Present**

Thomas Hill and Melinda O'Neil

**Call to Order**

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

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Approval of the Minutes**

Motion made to approve the Economic Development Committee minutes of December 14, 2020 moved by John Woodward and seconded by Mark Ratcliffe. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Wert noted that Christin Kelley has resigned from the committee. He also thanked Melinda O'Neill for submitting a letter of interest to fill this vacancy.

**Residential Properties Update**

A discussion took place about property values in the Borough that continue to increase, are stable and healthy.

Nothing new to report on the Villas at Narrow property.

**West Reading Commercial Properties Update**

- 301 Penn – Office suite for lease – Mendez Flooring has submitted a zoning application to move into this space. It will be their new showroom.
- 416 Penn – Motor Club opening in early 2021 – No new update on when it will be opening.
- 428 Penn – Updated plans have been received and shouldn't take long for conditional conditions to be approved. Construction likely to begin soon and by the end of the year a new building will be there.
- 433 Penn – Schweitzer's Service Center property – Mark Ratcliffe has reached out to their attorney for more information about this property.
- 438 Penn – Building sold for \$316,000 to a homemade furniture group.
- 450 Penn – No longer for sale. The Subway sign is gone and the building is vacant. It was noted that someone from the Borough should reach out to see if they will list the building for sale again.
- 501 Penn – Sunoco – Application for a liquor license was submitted. A hearing took place in November and Council rendered a decision in January to deny the application.
- 633 Penn – The Art Room is being opened by Brian Adams and should be open soon.
- 635 Penn – East Ridge Outfitters is closing and looking for a new tenant.

- 643 Penn – Willow Creek Brewing is now open and doing well.
- 713 Penn – Still looking for a new tenant.
- 720 Penn – Vacant
- 723 Penn – Vacant looking for a tenant.
- 726 Penn – Sold for \$430,000.
- 22 N. Sixth – CK Tours closed. CRF is hiring an agent to assist in finding a new tenant.

### **Strategic Planning Discussion/Wyomissing Update**

Mr. Woodward shared that Wyomissing Borough is still working on a zoning overlay district to boost economic development. The overlay map has been sent to Berks County Planning Commission for review. Mr. Woodward also shared that the Crown Plaza Hotel is looking to add 55 year and older residential apartments to the hotel. The hotel would save about 100 rooms.

Strategic plan was discussed by Mr. Ratcliffe:

- Mr. Ratcliffe shared that the Derck and Edson plan is complete and we are now working on rebranding efforts.
- He noted that a traffic study is being done currently at the intersection of 6<sup>th</sup> and Penn Avenue for a potential pocket park. A temporary pocket park would be put in so funds could be raised for a permanent one.

Mr. Wert added that the Planning Commission is beginning to look at design standards for Penn Avenue. The Planning Commission is trying to get ideas together on how to best approach design standards. He noted that outside help will most likely be needed.

Aaron Gantz brought up Keystone Innovation Zones and will be sharing more information with us next month. These zones are meant to be paired with higher education, and can offer tax credits.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Imbesi  
Borough Manager