

Borough of West Reading ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

August 9, 2021

Committee Members Present

Philip Wert, Mark Ratcliffe (by phone), Andrew Kearney, Robin Horman, Dean Murray

Staff Present Cathy Hoffman

Visitors Present Jack Gombach, Denise Drobnick

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

The approval of the May minutes was postponed until the next meeting.

Residential Properties Update

The construction of the nine remaining townhomes is well underway with foundations being installed and framing already beginning. As long as the weather cooperates, they should be completed by the end of the year.

West Reading Commercial Properties Update

- 301 Penn – Mendez Flooring's new space is under construction. There was a question about who would occupy their previous location.
- 416 Penn – Motor Club has not yet re-opened, however an event is planned during the PDC annual conference being held in Reading this year.
- 428 Penn – Site preparation has begun.
- 433 Penn – Schweitzer's Service Center property – no change at this time. It was suggested that the Borough purchase the property.
- 450 Penn – Former Subway. SOLD on 1/7 for \$250k. – No new update.
- 508 Penn – 'Picturesque' clothing store opening soon.
- 611 Penn – Gem on Penn. The rock and jewelry shop is now open.
- 615 Penn – Spoonful Thai Bistro will be opening soon; replacing Rice Modern Thai.
- 635 Penn – Former Eastridge Outfitters will now house an axe throwing venue.
- 703 Penn – 'Lucky Finds' Consignment shop is opening soon.
- 713 Penn – The Bar Cart is open and thriving.
- 723 Penn – Texture Curl Bar now open.
- 726 Penn – Vacant. Looking for tenant. Possible personal training business coming.
- 20-22 N. Sixth – No new tenants. A Visitor Center has been suggested along with a tourist-type shop and public restrooms. This will be discussed further at the CRF meeting.

Suggestions have been made for Penn Avenue to curtail the loud music being played in vehicles and eliminate double parking. Establishing designated parking for food delivery service vehicles should alleviate much of the double parking.

Strategic Planning Discussion

- Wyomissing Report - Mr. Woodward was not in attendance however it was noted that Kimberton Whole Foods will be moving into the space beside Sly Fox at the Knitting Mills.
- Strategic Planning Next Steps
 1. Rebranding strategy through D&E – The rebranding is in place.
 2. Pocket park on N. 6th – Will be on hold until the Shopping Center makes some changes.

3. Design standards – A proposal has been prepared by Derck and Edson however funding is needed in order to proceed. A request has been made by Representative Rozzi and Senator Schwank for assistance on behalf of the Borough.

A \$25,000 Façade Grant has been secured from the State and these funds are designated for Penn Avenue. Much discussion will be required to determine the parameters for where the funds will go and for which uses. The State has already indicated that it cannot be used for repairs or maintenance to stairs or railings.

Old/New Business

Mayor Kearney commented that the wine walk and sidewalk sale both went very well in bringing shoppers to the Avenue. He also noted that he believes it's time to re-establish the COVID Taskforce in order to protect everyone in the Borough.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hoffman

Code Enforcement Department