

Borough of West Reading
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
November 8, 2021

Committee Members Present

Philip Wert, Andrew Kearney, Robin Horman, Dean Murray, John Woodward, Heidi Reuter, Ben LaManna

Staff Present

Cathy Hoffman

Visitors Present

Denise Drobnick

Call to Order

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of the Minutes

Motion made by Dean Murray and seconded by Robin Horman to approve the minutes of October 14, 2021. Motion carried.

Residential Properties Update

The construction of the nine remaining townhomes, The Villas at Narrow, continues with indoor work being the focus currently.

West Reading Commercial Properties Update

- 301 Penn – Mendez Flooring's new space remains under construction.
- 416 Penn – Motor Club has not yet re-opened. Nitro bar may be open by February 14th with the restaurant possibly opening in late 2022.
- 428 Penn – The structure is currently being framed. Due to the location of the lot, the construction process is more challenging.
- 433 Penn – Schweitzer's Service Center property is currently being offered for sale at \$875,000. There was some discussion regarding assistance from the County to incorporate that property into our Master Plan.
- 450 Penn – The property remains undeveloped with the owner in no hurry to begin renovations.
- 635 Penn – There may be a new tenant soon.
- 20-22 N. Sixth – A property management firm has moved into the third floor however nothing has been established for the first floor although there has been some interest.
- 36 N. 6th – A ramen restaurant will open soon.

Strategic Planning Discussion

Wyomissing Report

Mr. Woodward asked for an update on the shopping center and Mr. Wert said that there is a developer that may move forward with a major development if the project can obtain a TIF. The project would include the complete leveling of the site and construction of retail on the first floor with two or three levels of apartments above. A parking garage would also be included however in order to finance it, a

TIF would be necessary. He added that the County is involved as well through the Industrial Redevelopment Authority.

Also noted was a report at Wyomissing's Economic Development meeting presented by John Buccinno of NAI Keystone detailing the availability of the Reider property at 521 Van Reed Road. It was also noted that the Friendly's property was recently purchased by Hamid Chaudhry. Discussion ensued regarding development of the Wyomissing properties located in the Wilson School District, including the Berkshire Mall. Redevelopment of problem properties in both municipalities was also noted.

Strategic Planning Next Steps

- **Pocket park on N. 6th** - The pocket park is on hold until decisions about the shopping center are finalized.
- **Design standards update** – The detailed proposal from Derck & Edson that will assist with Form-Based Codes is being held up due to lack of funding. State funding had been anticipated, however with the outcome of the census, West Reading may be redistricted which will create issues politically for the funding.

Old/New Business

- Kevin Kozo has delayed plans for the proposed railroad bridge project until the building at 428 Penn is complete.
- Also briefly discussed was the use of stimulus funds.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m. by motion made by Dean Murray and seconded by Robin Horman and carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hoffman
Code Enforcement Department