

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

**June 13, 2022**

**Committee Members Present**

Philip Wert, Chair	Mayor Samantha Kaag
Dean Murray	Heidi Reuter
Mark Ratcliffe	Melinda O'Neil

**Staff Present**

Stephanie Burkholder

**Visitors Present**

There were no visitors present

**Call to Order**

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Approval of the Minutes**

Motion made by Mr. Murray and seconded by Mayor Kaag to approve the minutes of May 9, 2022. Motion carried.

**Residential Properties Update**

Residential rentals were discussed and Mr. Wert stated that the new townhouses have been rented. The estimated cost for them is around \$2,500 per month. Medical students will soon be coming to the area in the next few weeks and they will be looking for housing which would be close to the medical school.

**West Reading Commercial Properties Update**

- 416 Penn – Motor Club should be opening in Spring of 2023.
- 428 Penn – Mr. Wert and Mr. Ratcliffe are scheduled to visit the building and take a tour on 6/14/2022. Mr. Wert believes the cost for rent could be around \$2,300 per month for the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor apartment.
- 433 Penn – Request was made to Council and the Planning Commission by Mr. Schweitzer to have some changes made with regards to zoning so he could sell the property to someone who would be interested in putting a convenience store at that location. Council had declined to make those changes.
- 450 Penn – Work is currently being done on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.
- 611 Penn – Refillable Goods LLC is open and is doing well. They are planning on attending the EAC meeting possibly in July to discuss ways for everyone to utilize sustainability.
- 20-22 N. Sixth – Trisha's Cheesecakes was to open in May 2022 and they aren't sure when they will be open as this is still a work in progress and is taking longer than anticipated.

Mr. Wert stated that Taaki Ramen is doing very well and they have expanded their menu. Mr. Ratcliffe also stated that Noodle should be opening at the end of June.

Mr. Wert stated that he and Mark Evans of Derck and Edson will be giving a presentation at the PA Downtown Centers' Annual Convention which is to be held at the end of the month where Mr. Wert will be the co-speaker to talk about downtown catalysts.

Mr. Wert advised that John Woodward who represents Wyomissing Borough, is stepping down from the Economic Development committee due to health concerns.

### **Strategic Planning Discussion**

1. **Shopping Center Update** – Mr. Wert provided an update on the TIFF and that this committee includes members from West Reading, Wyomissing Area School District and the County of Berks. The first meeting was held recently to discuss the plan for the shopping center. A meeting is scheduled in August which John Pacione from NAI Keystone will be there to represent the developer of the shopping center. They're looking for feedback from everyone so they can inform the developer of what funds are needed.
2. **Design Standards** – Mr. Ratcliffe is currently working on obtaining funds from both the Wyomissing and Jansen Foundations to assist the borough in making these costly zoning changes.
3. **Façade Program** – The amount of funds that the WRCRF would provide towards the façade program increased from \$1,500 to \$2,500 to encourage an interest to apply for façade improvements.
4. **BID Update** – Mr. Ratcliffe, Mr. Dougherty and Mr. Wert attended a meeting with Julie Fitzpatrick from the PA Downtown Center to determine the next steps.
5. **Delaney Circle** – Mr. Wert advised that the Traffic & Infrastructure Committee is considering alternate short-term and long-term redesign ideas for the traffic circle.
6. **Community Garden** – The former Community Garden site on S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue has been vacated to allow redevelopment by the property owner. It was stated that Mr. Wert and Mayor Kaag met with the owner recently who requested suggestions on what types of improvements would do well at that location. It was noted that there may be a demand for age restricted housing or housing for medical students. In order to meet parking requirements for these types of uses a variance would need to be requested or arrangements made for available off-street parking nearby.

### **Old/New Business**

Mr. Wert stated that plans for the West Reading Shopping Center would include about 180 to 190 apartment units which would consist of 1- and 2-bedroom apartments. Currently the assessed value of the shopping center is just a little over \$2 million. Once the improvements have been made the assessed value would then be roughly \$27 million.

Gateway/Railroad Bridge – Mr. Ratcliffe stated that he and Mr. Kozo met with Goggle Works and discuss a plan for the gateway project. Goggle Works seems interested in working with the borough on this project.

Mr. Ratcliffe advised that he's working on obtaining grant funding to install new LED street light heads for Penn Avenue that would include speakers to play Christmas music or announcements. Some other features would include traffic counters and high-tech lighting. The cost is \$120,000 to replace the light heads on Penn Avenue, additional funds would be needed to replace twelve lights on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Delaney Circle and Cherry Street.

### **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Mr. Murray and seconded by Mr. Ratcliffe to adjourn the meeting at 6:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Burkholder  
Administrative Clerk