

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

September 12, 2022

Committee Members Present

Philip Wert, Chair	Mayor Samantha Kaag
Dean Murray	Heidi Reuter
Mark Ratcliffe	Melinda O'Neil
Aaron Gantz	Jack Gombach (phone)
Benjamin LaManna	Robin Horman

Staff Present

N/A

Visitors Present

Dan Horman

Call to Order

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of the Minutes

Motion made by Heidi Rueter and seconded by Ben LaManna to approve the minutes of June 13, 2022.
Motion carried.

Residential Properties Update

Villas at Narrow were talked about in short length, seems like most units now are inhabited. Paving to start shortly on Elm Street and will then be dedicated to the Borough. The Villa's update will be removed going forward.

West Reading Commercial Properties Update

- 416 Penn – Motor Club is planned to open in Spring of 2023.
- 428 Penn – Mr. Wert and Mr. Murray toured this impressive addition to Penn Avenue. There is current interest from one couple for one of the apartments, we should know soon about potential tenants. The Noodle shop on the first floor does not currently have an opening date.
- 433 Penn – The Zoning Hearing Board was scheduled to meet and has now been delayed, update to follow next month.
- 450 Penn – Work continues at this property with no new updates other than windows are covered and workers are there on a regular basis. The owner seems to be working on the apartments first.
- 720 Penn- Little Lotus Children's Boutique should be scheduling a ribbon cutting ceremony soon.
- 529 Reading – Reiki Balance moved to this location and is settling in nicely.
- 20-22 N. Sixth – Trisha's Cheesecakes seems to be doing well, they had a very successful Art on the Avenue Day.

Mr. Ratcliff and Mr. Wert discussed Kimberton Whole Foods and their potential soft opening in late October. Kimberton seems to want to be involved with West Reading Borough even though they are located in Wyomissing Borough. It is pretty exciting to have a grocery store close enough for Borough residents to walk for groceries.

Strategic Planning Discussion

1. **Shopping Center Update** – Mr. Wert provided an update on the TIF committee that includes members from West Reading, Wyomissing Area School District and the County of Berks. The first meeting was held to discuss the plan for the shopping center. Developers provided drawings that were not well received based on the lack of planning and understanding the Borough's zoning regulations for new buildings/businesses. The developer intends to review the sketch plan further to accommodate the TIF Committee comments.
2. **Design Standards** – Mr. Ratcliffe is working on obtaining funds from both the Wyomissing and Jansen Foundations to assist the borough in making these costly zoning changes.
3. **Façade Program** – There are currently a few people that took advantage of new increase in funding to the façade program, it's a work in progress and Mr. Ratcliff will keep us updated.
4. **BID Update** – Mr. Ratcliffe is working with Julie Fitzpatrick of PA Downtown Center and Derck and Edson.
5. **Delaney Circle** – Mr. Wert reported that the Traffic & Infrastructure Committee is considering a paint schedule around the circle for traffic calming for the safety of pedestrians and commuters alike.
6. **Community Garden** – Mr. Wert and Ms. Kaag provided a brief discussion about the old garden and the potential of the new garden site behind the Fire Company. MS4 improvements need to be completed by the Borough crew prior to establishing a new garden which should be ready for next year's planting season. It was noted that the owner of the old garden site along Second Avenue is considering their options for this site.

Old/New Business

A quick update about Franklin Manor indicated the units are being occupied and the owners are being cooperative with the Code Department and Fire Marshal thus far. Individual keys have been provided for each police vehicle for emergency access.

Gateway/Railroad Bridge – Mr. Ratcliffe stated that he met with Goggle Works to discuss a plan for the gateway project. Goggle Works seems interested in working with the borough on this project, however, there may be costs attached. Therefore, other options are being reviewed.

Mr. Wert noted the loss of John Woodward from the committee who represented Wyomissing Borough and the potential of a replacement. Mr. Woodward stepped down for health reasons.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. Ratcliff and seconded by Mr. LaManna to adjourn the meeting at 6:59 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Dean E. Murray
Borough Manager