

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

March 13, 2023

Committee Members Present

Philip Wert, Chair

Dean Murray, Borough Manager

Aaron Gantz

Mark Ratcliffe

Ben LaManna

Robin Horman

Mayor Samantha Kaag

Staff Present

Cathy Hoffman

Visitors Present

Council Member Patrick Kaag

Call to Order

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of the Minutes

Motion to approve the February minutes was moved by Robin Horman and seconded by Ben LaManna.

Motion carried.

Residential Properties Update

- Rental properties continue to command high rental fees.
- The need for additional housing in the Borough was discussed, with particular regard to potential renovation/redevelopment of areas in the Borough. The historical firehouse at 430 Franklin is for sale and the possibility of creating additional housing was discussed. Parking would be an issue.

West Reading Commercial Properties Update

- 416 Penn – The Motor Club is actively hiring so it's opening will be happening soon.
- 433 Penn – There is no new information.
- 438 Penn – Prime Tobacco Zone will be opening soon.
- 450 Penn – The property remains available for rent.
- 525 Penn – Legacy Cigar Lounge is slated to open in May.
- 530 Penn – The property is still vacant.
- 607 Penn – DeLune will be relocating here from S. 5th Avenue.
- 643 Penn – The entire property is being sold to the owners of "Willow Creek Brewing".
- 725 Penn – Winnie Tea Bar held a soft opening last week.
- 10 S. 5th – Tristan and Sons Cheesecakes (and smoothies) are working toward opening.
- 12A S. 5th – KARA custom engraving will be occupying this space.
- 101 S. 5th – Brooklyn Place has opened.

Strategic Planning Discussion

- Wyomissing Report – There was no report.
- Strategic Planning Next Steps
 1. Shopping Center Update – The bank drive-through has been removed and the adjacent retail space is being updated.
 2. Design Standards – Mark and Phil continue to work on this project.
 3. Façade Program – Five businesses have taken advantage of the program however no substantial renovations have been done.
 4. BID update – The work is ongoing in preparation for the BID and Mark has met with 25 business owners, 21 of whom are in favor of the BID. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the inaccurate information that is being shared by certain merchants on the Avenue who are vehemently against the BID.
 5. Delaney Circle discussion – No new information at this time.

Old/New Business

There was no new information to discuss.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hoffman
Zoning Officer