

Borough of West Reading
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

May 8, 2023

Committee Members Present

Philip Wert, Chair
Dean Murray, Borough Manager
Aaron Gantz

Mayor Samantha Kaag
Robin Horman

Staff Present

Stephanie Burkholder

Visitors Present

There were no visitors

Call to Order

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:18 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of the Minutes

Mayor Kaag advised that the March 2023 minutes had her listed as being a visitor and not a committee member. Mr. Wert advised to make the change to the minutes to reflect the mayor's presence at the last meeting and to table the approval of the minutes for now as there were not enough committee members present.

Residential Properties Update

Mr. Wert advised that the Planning Commission is currently looking into short-term rentals (i.e., Airbnb/Vrbo) within the Borough and Mayor Kaag stated that there are a few of those in the borough currently. Mr. Wert stated that according to the Zoning Officer there are a couple of existing short-term rentals and that they have obtained the necessary licenses, permits, paid their inspection fees, etc. Mr. Wert had asked Mr. Moyer recently to see if there was anything pertaining to a short-term rental ordinance that may not already exist in the Rental Property Ordinance.

Mr. Wert also advised that he received notification from someone who was looking into purchasing a home in the borough for a family member and the prices of homes for sale are higher than they've been in the past several years.

West Reading Commercial Properties Update

- 416 Penn – The Motor Club is looking to hire for their establishment.
- 433 Penn – Schweitzer's Service Center. There is nothing new to report.
- 438 Penn – Prime Tobacco Zone. Additional work had been done to the property than what was portrayed on the permit that was issued. They had been asked to stop work and obtain a new permit to include the more extensive project.
- 450 Penn – Former Subway. There was nothing new to report. Mr. Wert stated he would like to have Mr. Moyer attend the next meeting since Codes is pretty familiar with the businesses in the borough.
- 525 Penn – Legacy Cigar Lounge. Scheduled for May opening.

- 530 Penn – Available for rent.
- 643 Penn – Willow Creek Brewing recently purchased this property.
- 607 Penn – DeLune's has moved to this location.
- 10 S. 5th – Tristan and Sons Cheesecakes (and smoothies) had taken over the lease from Ezikiel and they just celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Mayor Kaag advised that Trish's cheesecakes had talked about the possibility of moving into the former Subway building.

Strategic Planning Discussion

- Wyomissing Report – Phil stated that Michele Bare may be providing information from Wyomissing Borough since there have been some new things happening in the area especially where the former Friendly's restaurant is located and in the area of the medical school at the former VF Outlets.

A discussion ensued regarding the R.M. Palmer's property as far as what's going to happen to it once the investigation is complete and the possibility of redevelopment if it were to come down to that.

Strategic Planning Next Steps

1. Shopping Center Update – There was nothing new to report other than the drive thru being torn down.
2. Design Standards – This is still in the redevelopment stages. Funding has been secured through the Wyomissing Foundation and Henry Janssen Foundation.
3. Façade Program – Mr. Ratcliffe was not in attendance and will have to provide an update on this.
4. BID update – There was nothing new to report.
5. Delaney Circle discussion – There was nothing new to report.

Old/New Business

Mr. Wert didn't have anything to report on recently opened or new businesses. There was nothing new to report on the railroad bridge as Mr. Ratcliffe will have to provide this update at the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Burkholder
Administrative Clerk