

Borough of West Reading
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

August 14, 2023

Committee Members Present

Philip Wert, Chair	Melinda O'Neil
Dean Murray, Borough Manager	Robin Horman
Mark Ratcliffe, WRCRF Manager	Aaron Gantz

Staff Present

Stephanie Burkholder

Visitors Present

There were no visitors.

Call to Order

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of the Minutes

Motion made by Ms. Gantz and seconded by Mr. Ratcliffe to approve the minutes of June 12, 2023. Motion carried.

Residential Properties Update

Mr. Wert advised that prices of residential homes haven't changed much, and some homes have been purchased for the purpose of being rehabbed. He had stated that homes are being rented especially to Drexel School students. It was stated that the median list price for homes has increased in the past couple of years and West Reading is currently below the median price whereas the median prices in Allentown, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia are much higher.

West Reading Commercial Properties Update

- 416 Penn – The Motor Club. No official opening date.
- 433 Penn – Schweitzer's Service Center. There's a possibility of a sale in the future, no further details available at this time.
- 438 Penn – Prime Tobacco Zone. Lots of work is being done on the property, no opening date available.
- 450 Penn – Former Subway location. Façade work is being done, there may be a Bubble Tea establishment going here, nothing confirmed.
- 525 Penn – Legacy Cigar Lounge. Scheduled to open September 1st.
- 530 Penn – A Zoning permit application has been submitted for a photography studio, may be opening soon.
- 719 Penn - Barley Mow. They are still in the process of renovating their second floor.
- 400 Penn - Former Benchwarmer's location. A Bubble Tea Bar may be going in.

Strategic Planning Discussion

- Wyomissing Report – There was no report from Wyomissing.
- Mr. Wert advised of apartments that are planning on being built behind the former Friendly's location in the Berkshire Heights area.

Strategic Planning Next Steps

1. Shopping Center Update – Mr. Ratcliffe stated that the owner of the shopping center plans to do some refacing of the building.
2. Design Standards – Mr. Wert advised that the Planning Commission met with Derck & Edson, LLC and they are planning on working with them on a hybrid-based codes update for the zoning ordinance. Work is slated to begin in September and will take several months to complete.
3. Façade Program – Mr. Ratcliffe advised that the program ended last month, and he is currently submitting applications for reimbursement.
4. BID Update – Looking at other options just in case this doesn't work out.

Old/New Business

Railroad Bridge – Mr. Ratcliffe advised that they have received grant funding for painting of the Railroad Bridge. The plans and illustrations will be reviewed before approval is granted. Mr. Ratcliffe stated that he's currently working with Berks Art Council to prepare a design competition for ideas and pricing.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Burkholder
Administrative Clerk