

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

September 10, 2018

Committee Members Present

Philip Wert, Nicholas Imbesi, Andrew Kearney, John Woodward, Robin Horman, Benjamin LaManna, Christin Kelley, Cathy Hoffman

Committee Members Absent

Aaron Gantz, Dean Rohrbach, Mark Ratcliffe

Visitors Present

Eric Weaver

Call to Order

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Public Comment

None

Approval of the Minutes

Moved by Nick Imbesi and seconded by Robin Horman to approve the minutes of August 13, 2018.
Motion carried.

BID Status Update

Mr. Wert spoke about the Steering Committee's recent work session with Julie Fitzpatrick which had been long and arduous however good progress had been made.

Foreclosed & Blighted Residential Properties Update:

None currently

Residential Property Sales and Rental Report:

Mr. Rohrbach's report was briefly reviewed. It was noted that the sale price for properties in the Borough remain remarkably high with them remaining on the market for only a few days. Discussion ensued regarding the idea that younger purchasers want to be in walkable locations with good quality of life. It was also noted that many properties are being purchased by LLCs which is a cause for concern. An update was also given for the Lofts at Narrow (both rental and commercial components), the intersection improvements at 7th and Walnut, and the Knitting Mills project.

Significant/Vacant West Reading Commercial Properties Update:

- Narrow Fabrics Building – Construction is ongoing.
- VF Building – Tower Health will be updating the southern façade by adding a covered entrance and a lighting feature that will extend up the face of the building.
- 301 Penn Avenue – No update currently available.

- 445, 447 and 449 Penn Avenue – A letter should be sent to the owner of 445 informing them that the first floor use as residential is non-conforming and should only be used for commercial use.
- 501 Penn Avenue – Construction has begun on the addition.
- 611 & 609 Penn – There are code violations existing as well as property maintenance issues.
- 707 Penn Avenue – No update on the potential construction.
- 715 Penn Avenue – The property should have a new tenant soon.
- 166 Franklin Street – Renovations continue.
- 23 S. 6th Avenue – No update.
- 52 S. 5th Avenue – Eternal Lotus Tattoo has opened.

Strategic Planning Discussion

No discussion.

Old & New Business

- A BBQ restaurant has been proposed for the Chef Alan's location that would include on site smokers providing the meat for the restaurant as well as other locations (potentially). Discussion ensued concerning the issues raised by residents several years ago when a BBQ shop was located at 4th and Penn. The owner (in discussions with the Zoning Officer) has indicated that the smoke emitted by burning wood would be no different than Nonno Alby's wood pizza oven and that the odor from the smoking meat would not cause any problems. The Borough has requested written documentation that would address the emissions.
- Mr. Woodward reported that Wyomissing's Economic Development group is planning for the redevelopment of the Berkshire Heights area.
- The Joint Comprehensive Plan will most likely be adopted this month and will become a valuable tool for grant applications and reference materials.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hoffman