

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

**February 11, 2019**

**Committee Members Present**

Philip Wert, Nicholas Imbesi, Andrew Kearney, Robin Horman, Cathy Hoffman, Mark Ratcliffe, John Woodward

**Visitors Present**

Dan Horman

**Call to Order**

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

**Public Comment**

None

**Approval of the Minutes**

**Moved** by Nick Imbesi and seconded by Mark Ratcliffe to approve the minutes of January 14, 2019.

**Motion carried.**

**BID Status Update**

Mr. Ratcliffe noted that he continues to work with Julie Fitzpatrick and hopes to have a final document ready to present in a week or so.

**Foreclosed & Blighted Residential Properties Update:**

There are no known blighted properties at present, however it was noted that houses continue to sell very quickly in the Borough. Discussion ensued regarding the amount of rentals versus owner occupied properties. Ms. Hoffman will research housing to determine these numbers. Also discussed were the proposed changes to the rental ordinance including the requirement to have a property manager or owner residing within Berks County, as well as the addition of disruptive conduct language. It was noted that the Borough really has no other community gathering area except the park which is not in the heart of the Borough and that we really should have more to entice people to live in West Reading.

**Significant/Vacant West Reading Commercial Properties Update:**

- Narrow Fabrics Building – ‘B2 Bistro’ is now open for business.
- VF Building – Construction continues.
- 301 Penn Avenue – A rental use has been proposed – Mr. Ratcliffe will follow up.
- 433 Penn Avenue – Mr. Ratcliffe has been asked to speak with Mr. Schweitzer.
- 445, 447 and 449 Penn Avenue – The Codes Department will be asked to contact the owner of 445 Penn regarding the current residential use not being permitted.
- 550 Penn Avenue – New tenant Café Flourish will be including ‘behavioral therapy’ which is not permitted per zoning. Codes will investigate.
- 611 Penn Avenue – The space is still available for rent.
- 633 Penn Avenue – The space is still available for rent.
- 643 Penn Avenue – The tenant has not yet vacated the property. There is a possibility that the property may be sold.
- 637 Penn Avenue – Mixx is not closing however the owner is selling the business.

- 707 Penn Avenue – Property has been sold and is being converted into retail space. Satellite dishes are still a concern. Codes will address.
- 711 Penn Avenue – The owner of 528 Penn has purchased the property.

### **Strategic Planning Discussion**

- Redevelopment in the Borough was discussed, specifically with the opportunity zone that was discussed with Deb Millman and Randy Peers last month. Mr. Imbesi will contact Ms. Millman to ask for more information concerning the possibility of redevelopment on Buttonwood Street.
- Mr. Wert noted that the CRF has not heard from DCED concerning the grant applications that were submitted months ago by Mr. Rohrbach. Mr. Ratcliffe indicated that he would be attending a PDC meeting on Wednesday and would speak to his DCED contact.
- HARB/Design Strategy Discussion – Mr. Wert spoke about the meeting he and Ms. Kelley had attended with a representative of the Pennsylvania Museum and Historical Commission concerning the possible creation of a historical designation in the Borough. He noted that the designation doesn't have to be restrictive as it exists in other municipalities and can be tailored to work specifically for West Reading.

### **Old & New Business**

- General redevelopment of larger properties in both Wyomissing and West Reading were discussed briefly.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cathy Hoffman