

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
TRAFFIC & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**

FEBRUARY 8, 2023

The Borough of West Reading Traffic & Infrastructure Committee met on Wednesday, February 8, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chairman Christopher Lincoln; Council Member Patrick Kaag; Police Chief Wayne Holben; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Borough Manager Dean Murray; Mayor Samantha Kaag, and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

Visitors: Karen Livingood, Resident James Rogers, Resident
Maureen Hasty, Resident

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

Public Comment

Mrs. Livingood expressed her gratitude again towards Mr. Grassley for his persistence in facilitating the electric company to complete streetlight repairs along Linden Lane.

Mr. Rogers reiterated his request to install stop signs at the intersections that approach the traffic circle. Mr. Lincoln indicated that his item is on the agenda tonight and he can join the conversation at that time.

Mrs. Hasty noted the frequency of hit-and-run accidents along Sunset Road, including an incident that totaled her parents' vehicle on Christmas Day. She asked if there was anything that could be done to prevent the use of Sunset Road as a short cut to Penn Avenue. Mr. Lincoln shared a long-range idea to reconfigure the Museum Road intersection from a merge type approach onto Sunset Road to a right turn approach. He also noted implications this may cause by increasing the flow of traffic along Fifth Avenue to Penn Avenue. Chief Holben offered to place a radar speed sign in the vicinity to gather data to maximize enforcement activity.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee minutes of December 14, 2022. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

Old Business

Council Chambers Audio/Video Upgrades Update – Mr. Murray reported that a part is currently on order and once that arrives Haverford Systems will be coordinating the anticipated two-day project with the Public Works Department to install wiring.

Delaney Circle Improvements – The most recent plan shrinks the cartway of the circle and modifies all approaches, except Fifth Avenue, to stop intersections to slow traffic and bring more awareness to pedestrian crossings. A right turn lane would be added to the heavily traveled approach to Fifth Avenue. The consensus of the committee was that for safety reasons the traffic circle is not the best location for Delaney's memorial. Alternate locations for the frog statue bench and memorial were discussed such as the highly visible grassy area between the pool and Museum Road; in front of the firehouse; near the fieldhouse; and near the pickleball courts. Should the memorial be relocated, the crosswalks to the center of the circle would be removed to deter pedestrian crossings through the center of the circle. The Recreation Commission will be asked to evaluate and identify alternate locations within the park system, and the possible relocation of the annual tree lighting ceremony.

Mr. Rogers questioned the movement of the forty-year tradition of tree lighting ceremonies from the traffic circle and the influx of business that is provided to the Penn Avenue businesses during this event. The conjunction of moving the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony to the vicinity of Delaney's memorial would be discussed with the family once an alternate location has been identified by the Recreation Commission and Borough Council.

Sidewalk Repairs – A moratorium had been established several years ago by a previous Mayor that instructed the Code Department to refrain from requiring property owners to repair public sidewalks damaged by Borough tree roots. It is understood that sidewalk repairs are the responsibility of the property owner, however, when a Borough tree causes damage to the sidewalk the responsible party becomes unclear. Borough Council has been requested to provide feedback on the aspect of financial responsibility. Mr. Kaag reported that the Shade Tree Commission recently discussed the allocation of funds within the 2024 budget for a 50/50 sidewalk repair program with a recommendation of priority being given to sidewalk panels damaged by Borough tree roots.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to reaffirm the sidewalk repair guidelines and determine financial responsibility as it relates to sidewalk panel replacements impacted by Borough tree roots. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Chief Holben. **Motion carried.**

Mrs. Livingood commented on the number of properties that are affected by Borough tree root sidewalk damage and the resentment she would have as a homeowner to fund these sidewalk repairs. Mr. Kaag reiterated the confirmed value that is added to properties with trees, plus the utility cost savings.

Mrs. Hasty reported that the cities of Baltimore and Philadelphia have been sued for not enforcing ADA regulations. She also recommended, if possible, to refrain from offering the 50/50 share program to investment properties. The legalities surrounding this exclusion would need to be reviewed by the Borough's solicitor.

Mr. Rogers noted tree roots that had followed a water line into his home on Franklin Street.

Penn Avenue Variable Message Sign – Chief Holben reported that the Public Works Department was successful in repairing the existing sign to operate without the purchase of any parts, and the cancellation of a subscription program that allowed remote programming of the message. Chief Holben will research grant opportunities to purchase a replacement. In the meantime, the Public Works Department will freshen the paint and appearance of the device that is situated within the 200 block of Penn Avenue.

New Business

Bulk Trash Collection – Mr. Lincoln noted the trash hauler's adherence to the trash collection policy last year which saved roughly \$100,000 in dumping fees. Mr. Grassley noted his review of businesses that use dumpsters provided by the Borough's trash hauler and stressed the importance of these dumpsters being emptied on days other than Tuesday and Friday to avoid being overcharged in dumping fees.

Information was provided from the Boroughs of Kenhorst and Wyomissing as to their bulk trash collection programs. In both instances tags are purchased from Borough Hall costing between \$10-\$15 per item. The items are recorded for compliance with their bulk trash collection policies and items and can be placed out for collection on any regular trash collection day. Each municipality offers one day in either the spring or fall as a free cleanup event, where up to five items may be placed out for collection in accordance with the bulk trash collection policy. The convenience of placing items out on any regular collection day for a nominal fee seemed favorable. The committee wished to further explore the implementation of this type of program and suggested an inquiry be made as to how the Boroughs of Kenhorst and Wyomissing established their fees.

Alley Parking – A request to prohibit parking alongside a garage structure within a triangular alley between Pine Street and Sunset Road, at the intersection of Twilight Alley and Wedge Alley was reviewed. An image was provided of two vehicles parked alongside the brick structure. An aerial parcel view of the property illustrates that a portion of the macadam is on private property, it was unclear as to where the right-of-way begins. The Borough cannot enforce parking upon private property without the request of the owner. On the

recommendation of Mr. Murray, the owner of the property will be requested to post no parking signs on the side of the building.

Borough Official Map – Mr. Lincoln indicated that the adoption of an official map is a lengthy process that is generally used as a planning tool to identify new roadways within open spaces for future development. Since there are no areas within the Borough available for new roads it was thought that a document illustrating the location and name of streets would be sufficient.

Mr. Rogers inquired as to neighboring fire departments being provided with the new alley names. It was noted that the information has been provided to the Berks County Department of Emergency Services, and Chief Holben confirmed that the County's dispatchers would have this information.

The current large file version of the map is difficult to view. It was recommended that a request be made to the engineer to provide a street layout without an aerial view for a more user-friendly version.

Mowing Interchanges – Mr. Murray noted issues of high grass in the cloverleaf areas the past few years and his efforts to find the correct PennDOT contact to address these issues. A year later he received a response via email. Mr. Grassley stated that PennDOT recommends cutting the grass six times per year, however, he recommended maintaining the grass every other week. Chief Holben welcomed the added maintenance for instances when police vehicles need to drive or search for evidence in the grassy areas. The PennDOT representative indicated that they could not deviate from their rate schedule of roughly \$6,800 per year. Mr. Grassley would like to purchase a tow behind mower deck to attach to an older tractor for this project, the cost was estimated to be \$700. Mayor Kaag recommended sharing the mowing schedule with the Environmental Advisory Council to facilitate the removal of trash/debris prior to mowing. Mr. Lincoln recommended hiring an additional seasonal staff member to assist in maintaining the approximate 10-acre area. The committee felt it would be beneficial to the Borough to be able to maintain the main access point to the Borough.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve taking on the responsibility of mowing three quadrants of the cloverleaf area for the 2023, 2024, and 2025 mowing season as outlined in the map and compensation schedule provided by PennDOT. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

Public Comment

Mrs. Livingood thanked this committee for the informal meeting style that allows residents to comfortably interact. She indicated that especially this committee meeting is where much can be learned.

Mr. Rogers expressed concerns regarding the parking conditions within the 500 block of Grape Street and the limited separation distances for emergency responders to gain access in the event of a kitchen fire. It was recommended to consider restriping the 500 block of Chestnut Street to create roughly six additional parking spaces.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 p.m. by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Chief Holben. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary