

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

JUNE 14, 2023

The Borough of West Reading Traffic & Infrastructure Committee met on Wednesday, June 14, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chairman Christopher Lincoln; Council Member Patrick Kaag; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Officer-in-Charge Chad Marks; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Borough Manager Dean Murray; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

Visitors:

Karen Livingood, Resident	James Rogers, Resident
Christine Matthews, Resident	Samuel Goldberg, Resident
Susan DeVenecia, Resident	Adam Cocuzza, Business Owner

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Public Comment

Ms. DeVenecia lives on Barnhardt Way and uses Tulpehocken Avenue to access the traffic circle. She noted that drivers accessing the circle from Buttonwood Street do not recognize the intersection as a 2-way stop with Tulpehocken Avenue and recommended moving the stop sign closer to the circle for better visibility. It was noted that this is not a 2-way intersection and that once a vehicle enters the circle that vehicle has the right-of-way. The height of the stop sign will be reviewed to ensure that it meets standards. Placement of the sign must be at the stop bar and the stop bar must be behind the crosswalk which limits movement of the sign.

Mr. Goldberg shared pedestrian safety concerns at the Third and Penn Avenue intersection. Based on the geography of the area, the crosswalk areas drop out of view from both east and westbound traffic. Mr. Lincoln spoke of communications with PennDOT who has jurisdiction over this roadway. Some of the discussion was about prohibiting pedestrian crossings at this intersection, however, it was thought that people would still cross. Therefore, highly visible signage with arrows pointing towards the crosswalk areas is being explored. A PennDOT permit would be required stipulating the placement of these signs. The second note of concern Mr. Goldberg shared for this intersection was that drivers rarely stop at the stop signs approaching Penn Avenue and he recommended adding right turn only signage. Mr. Lincoln noted previous discussions of adding pavement markings. However, based on the slope and the markings causing slippery conditions it was decided not to add these markings. The area will be reviewed for additional right-turn-only signage. Mr. Goldberg noted a previous request to install additional stop signs at the Fourth and Reading Avenue intersection. The confusing, tight intersection with low visibility and multiple industrial type vehicles parked on the street creates a dangerous intersection. He requested more enforcement at pedestrian zones. Mr. Goldberg also requested assistance in his plight to urge PennDOT to address the non-functional streetlights along the bypass. Mr. Lincoln noted that some of the lights are owned by the City of Reading, County of Berks, and PennDOT and there is a broken wire issue within the bridge. PennDOT plans to improve the highway by the year 2027, therefore, no work is planned to correct this issue.

Mr. Rogers shared the history of two of his classmates' fathers that were killed as pedestrians crossing the Third and Penn Avenue, and Sixth and Penn Avenue intersections.

Ms. Matthews made a recommendation to remove the crosswalks from Penn Avenue on the eastern side of the Third and Penn Avenue intersection based on the increased danger of being seen by motorists that are turning left from Penn Avenue. Mr. Goldberg begged to differ stating that he would prefer the additional reaction time the eastern side of this intersection offers. Mr. Lincoln recommended pursuing the rapid flashing pedestrian crossing beacon grant opportunity that is available through the end of July.

Mr. Rogers inquired as to the various parking restrictions along North Sixth Avenue and a vehicle that is regularly parked in front of a garage for periods of time extending beyond the three-hour limit. Sergeant Marks will share this complaint with the Parking Enforcement Officers.

Ms. Matthews provided an update on her efforts to improve trail access signage near the fishing dock. She spoke with a representative who seemed receptive to improving signage in this area and plans to discuss this further next week following a weekend kayaking event.

Mr. Cocuzza spoke of a Parklet idea for the space in front of West Reading Motor Club. A structure would be placed with barriers within the currently unused area to help draw attention to the 400 block of Penn Avenue. Mr. Lincoln stated that PennDOT would need to approve this request and recommended that plans be provided for further exploration.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee minutes of May 10, 2023. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Grassley. **Motion carried.**

Old Business

Sidewalk Repairs – Mayor Kaag noted her attendance of two PSAB webinars to gather information from other municipalities on sidewalk repair programs. She plans to pull this information together to provide a summary next month.

Mr. Cocuzza questioned the removal of tree grates from the Penn Avenue sidewalk area that provided an additional walking surface. Mr. Murray reported that the trees outgrew the space lifting the metal rusted grates, therefore a decision was made to place mulch at the base of the trees.

Alley Parking – Twilight and Wedge Alley – Mr. Grassley reported that a parking by permission only sign has been posted on the garage at the request of the property owner. Sergeant Marks shared that the owner previously granted permission to a tenant to park there and since the area against the structure is private property Mr. Grassley changed the sign to accommodate and plans to stripe the area to limit parking to one vehicle. The Fire Chief did not see any issues that would impede emergency vehicle access with one vehicle parked adjacent to the structure.

Pedestrian Safety Improvements – The Fourth and Reading Avenues intersection was reviewed by a representative of LTAP who provided a memorandum with various suggestions regarding sight lines and the elimination of parking spaces to increase sight distances. Further review is needed prior to recommending any action. Something to keep in mind during the review of the memorandum are the ramifications of needing to remove parking spaces at intersections throughout the Borough and the impact this would have on available parking spaces. Mr. Grassley asked if he should paint the piano keys to the four crosswalks of this intersection. It was thought that the higher visibility crosswalk would improve the safety of pedestrians.

Mr. Goldberg asked if there is a standard to the distance between parking stalls and stop signs. Mr. Lincoln confirmed the current 20' setback regulations. The length of parking stalls differs from block-to-block based on the length of the block to maximize the number of spaces. Mr. Grassley offered to shorten the spaces near intersections to allow additional sight distances and possibly limit the types of vehicles that park within these spaces to compact cars.

School Zone – An ordinance amendment was provided to lengthen the Sacred Heart school zone on Franklin Street and add a school zone on South Seventh Avenue to lessen school buses from blocking the lanes of travel near the South Seventh Avenue and Franklin Street intersection. Two additional parking spaces would be created, one on Franklin Street and one on South Seventh Avenue, which would be

restricted during school days. It was noted that the extended school zones may not accommodate the number of parochial school buses that visit this school zone, but this should improve the safety and flow of traffic in this vicinity. If it is determined that additional space is needed, Cherry Street may be a viable option.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve an amendment to Section 430-23 Parking Prohibited Certain Hours to provide additional school bus zones on Franklin Street and South Seventh Avenue. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

Parking Restriction - Mr. Grassley spoke with members of the church to determine if a food pantry loading zone would be needed. They indicated that they purchase no parking signs to accommodate truck parking on the varied delivery schedule. This loading zone would be similar to the one designated for St. James Church. An additional parking space would be created with restrictions on Sunday mornings.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve a no parking zone in front of Bethany Lutheran Church to be changed to a parking space with loading zone restrictions during church hours. **Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

Alley Maintenance – Mr. Lincoln noted a grass alley between Olive Street and Jade Alley that was to be reviewed by staff and discussed with the solicitor as to vacating the area to adjacent property owners. In reviewing the deeds to the six abutting Walnut Street properties there is notation of a ten-foot-wide alley parallel to Walnut Street. The solicitor recommended against the Borough abandoning the alley due to the associated costs. The solicitor will be asked for legalities in maintaining the alley or posting the alley as no maintenance.

Fifth & Penn Avenue Traffic Signal – Sergeant Marks shared his findings in the review of this traffic signal with Telco that was found to be compliant with PennDOT regulations. He also performed a field check and found the timing of 7 seconds to cross Penn Avenue to be accurate. Telco offered the option to extend pedestrian crossing times by creating a four-way red light. However, it was thought that this would create congestion and backups. Mr. Lincoln noted that the walk time could be extended, and he will review this for further discussion next month.

Mr. Cocuzza asked if the large metal battery backup boxes that sit on the sidewalks at Penn Avenue intersections could be painted to dress them up. This will be reviewed and if allowed the project would more than likely be overseen by the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation.

Parking Ticket Fine Parameters – Sergeant Marks stated that there was a discrepancy between the ordinance and the amount of time printed on the parking tickets. The ordinance allows 72 hours which is now listed correctly on the ticket and the website.

Mr. Rogers inquired as to the fine structure for parking within the 600 or 700 blocks of Court Street where parking is prohibited. Sergeant Marks indicated that the fine should be \$50. Mr. Rogers indicated through right-to-know requests that recent fines were issued at \$15.

New Business

Handicapped Parking Space Applications – Sergeant Marks shared one new application and two requests to relocate existing space designations:

- 223 Tulpehocken Avenue – A new application was received requesting a space designation in front of 223 Tulpehocken Avenue. The applicant does not have access to off-street parking and there are no spaces currently designated within this block that would support three handicapped spaces.

- 150 Tulpehocken Avenue – The current applicant for a space designated at 160 Tulpehocken Avenue has requested the space be moved five spaces south to 150 Tulpehocken Avenue. Sergeant Marks reported that off-street parking is available within a small garage structure at the rear of the home. Sergeant Marks was requested to speak with the applicant to determine if the off-street parking is unsuitable for their needs.
- 456 Chestnut Street – The current applicant for a space designated at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Chestnut Street has requested to move the designation three spaces to in front of her home. The reasons for this request are due to difficulty walking and fear of being hit by a car. The applicant does not have access to off-street parking.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve the designation of a handicapped parking space near 233 Tulpehocken Avenue and relocate a space designation to 456 Chestnut Street. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

Temporary Road Closure Policy – Sergeant Marks shared a recent request from a contractor to close a road for construction and realized that there is no formal mechanism to request or approve the closure of lanes or streets. He suggested formalizing an application to allow the police, fire, and code departments, as well as the Mayor to review and approve or deny requests. Other municipalities have similar procedures in place, and he shared a draft form for the committees consideration. The Fire Chief questioned the mechanism available to enforce the road closure policy, wondering if an ordinance would be required. Mr. Lincoln felt a mechanism should be in place to include property owner notification, possibly beyond the no parking sign postings. Emergency type utility work would require leniency to apply. Sergeant Marks indicated that emergency services and public works should be aware of all road closures and lane restrictions. Mr. Grassley noted issues in the past where UGI closed roads adjacent to each other that caused a number of issues. It was thought that an ordinance would be required to provide a mechanism for enforcement and penalties. A general policy, ordinance, and fee schedule update will be drafted and reviewed by the solicitor. Sergeant Marks will work with the Fire Chief and Code Department Manager to create a policy.

Motorcycle Parking & Permitting – Sergeant Marks noted receipt of a few complaints regarding motorcycles and parking:

- Can a motorcycle park in a space that already has a vehicle in that space?
- Can two motorcycles be parked in a single space?
- Can motorcycles be covered and stored in a marked space for an extended period of time?
- Can motorcycles have parking permits, and if so, where must the permit be displayed?

Sergeant Marks reviewed the ordinances and there is nothing that provides clarity on these issues and recommended developing regulations to address these types of complaints. Mr. Lincoln noted from a practical standpoint sharing a parking space with another vehicle is welcomed, however, this makes it difficult to parallel park and not bump the motorcycle. Sergeant Marks will explore general regulations that could be implemented.

Council Chamber Microphone – Mr. Lincoln noted a need to address quiet spaces within the Council Chamber room, especially from a virtual visitor aspect where they cannot hear the audience or staff along the side of the room. Mr. Murray shared three options provided by the company that recently performed upgrades to the audio/video system.

- Wireless Handheld Microphone with Stand is the least expensive but would need to be passed around the room.

- Single Hanging Microphone is a mid-range device that would be mounted from the ceiling centered near the visitor area. This would however pick up all noise/conversation in the room.
- Tri-Element Hanging Microphone is the most expensive option that would direct the microphone to the person speaking in the room.

Mr. Cocuzza offered to find less expensive microphone options for the committee to consider.

Trash / Recycling / Yard Waste / Landfill Requests for Proposal – Mr. Lincoln noted that the hauling and landfill contracts expire on December 31st. The current services provided are trash collection twice per week of four cans each collection day and recycling collection one time per week. Options that are being explored would be to eliminate one trash collection day to offer a yard waste collection day. Yard waste would be offered during the months of April through November. Alternatively, the offering of a second Saturday per month to drop off yard waste materials at the garage may be a less expensive option. Mr. Grassley reported an average of seven to eight residents that visit the garage on the first Saturday of the month between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to noon and noted an increase in the number of weekday resident drop-offs. It was thought that collection of yard waste would not be feasible without eliminating a service due to the expense. The limitation of seeking bids from haulers with landfills did not seem to be a competitive option but would be explored. Committee members were open to eliminating one trash collection day per week if yard waste collection were available. A three-year contract with options to extend would be sought with the options to retain existing services or alter to one trash, one recycling, and one yard waste collection day per week. Mayor Kaag suggested including yard waste collections during the spring and fall cleanup events hosted by the Environmental Advisory Council. Committee members were requested to review both the Wyomissing Borough and West Reading Borough RFPs for further discussion next month. The RFP should be advertised in August to allow figures to be included in the 2024 budget discussions.

Narrow Fabric Subdivision Stop Intersection & Parking Stalls – Mr. Grassley indicated that stall striping has been configured except for the area near the unapproved access from the Lofts at Narrow property. Mr. Murray spoke with the solicitor about the access point options and noted that when dedication of the street takes place, access from this parking lot onto Elm Street could be terminated. However, emergency access should be considered. Sergeant Marks shared an incident of chasing a suspect coming from Wyomissing Borough along the railroad tracks where police vehicles used the access point to cut through. He indicated that an area that is difficult to access tends to be an area where people hide and appreciates the convenience of that right-of-way. He noted that this access point has been open for a number of years without any accidents during that time period. It was recommended to discuss the available options to address the unapproved land development access point with the engineer and the solicitor prior to reaching out to the owner of the property to require a stop sign and speed bump to slow traffic.

2023 Road Construction Projects – Mr. Grassley shared a pleasant surprise following the pre-construction meeting where an extra block is being paved on Sycamore Road from Parkview Road to Museum Road. The paving company does not want to include the Borough parking lot in the current contract. The contractor recommended bidding this project closer to the end of the season for a better price and to pave the entire parking lot to avoid issues in the future. Mr. Murray indicated that budgeted funds are available to pave the parking lot and contact will be made with the hospital to encourage paving of their portion of the lot at the same time. Mr. Lincoln recapped the list of paving projects:

- Sycamore Road – Fifth Avenue to Museum Road
- South Seventh Avenue – Penn Avenue to the Doctor's Office Building
- Sunset Road – Pine Street to Parkview Road

- Bruce Alley – Franklin Street to Spruce Street

An example notice was provided for South Seventh Avenue and Kent Way residents of the mid-July project start date and the need to trim hedges along Bruce Alley before the project begins. Mr. Grassley stated that the contractor agreed to touch up Linden Lane from the water main break. Mr. Lincoln recommended that South Seventh Avenue be done separate from Bruce Alley to avoid monopolizing parking in that vicinity, and to notify the hospital. The contractor will video tape all street markings to recreate the hospital markings. Mr. Grassley indicated that the crosswalks and stop bars will be thermoplastic.

Public Comment

Mr. Rogers provided an update on his business privilege tax research. From January to May there have been 30 properties sold, and of this number eighteen appear to be rentals. He stressed the importance of a standard operating procedure for business privilege tax reports to Berkheimer Tax Innovations. Mr. Hunt has located more than 100 new accounts since the beginning of the year.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m. by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Grassley.

Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary