

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

May 21, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Wednesday, May 21, 2025 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Members Zachary Shaver and Bethany Bower; Junior Council Person Brian Pascal; Solicitor Daniel Becker, Code Department Manager & Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Recreation Director Michael Esterly; Engineer Troy Spade; Assistant Treasurer Helen Moyer; Borough Manager Randall Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Mayor Samantha Kaag, Council Members Denise Drobnick and Zanna Leiendecker and Main Street Executive Director Nick Price were unable to attend.

VISITORS:

James Rogers, Resident

Anthony Tucci, Western Berks Ambulance

Suzanne Thompson, Resident

Karen Livingood, Resident (via Zoom)

Charles Aden, Resident & State Representative Constituent Services

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** An executive session was held at 6:30 p.m. this evening to discuss personnel matters and the acquisition of real property.
3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** There were no amendments to the agenda.
4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers spoke about his continued review of Business Privilege Licenses and Taxes and a recent right-to-know request that was denied claiming the information is confidential. He questioned confidentiality of a business name, mailing address and whether a license fee has been paid. Mr. Miller indicated that the requested documentation has been gathered and will be ready for pickup tomorrow morning.

Mr. Aden provided a reminder that the State Representative's office is available to assist residents in applying for property tax or rent rebates.

Mr. Tucci advised Borough Council of changes in the Berks County Department of Emergency Services (DES) that limits the ability of individual municipalities' decision-making processes. Chief Moyer spoke of his concerns regarding Geo-dispatching, which in theory sounds good but creates situations where they lose the ability to pull resources. Examples were provided such as an initial delay of calls for City fire engines based on their call volumes and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) that are visiting the hospital, and a call reroutes them as the closest to the scene, however, this limits coverage of that EMS home base area. Chief Tornielli indicated the driving force behind DES changes are based on staffing limitations. It was also noted that changes were prompted by EMS not utilizing a CrewForce App. Chief Moyer reported that only chief officers have access to the CrewForce App and shared a scenario when a Lieutenant is in charge and has limited access to information via radio communications. Mr. Tucci indicated that the expensive radio system is nearing its end of life and the new dispatching system limits communication between emergency responders.

Mr. Tucci departed the meeting at 7:18 p.m.

5. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve April 15, 2025, regular meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 5-0.**

6. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Ordinance - Vehicles and Traffic Amendments** – Consideration was requested to authorize the advertisement of various parking amendments.

Motion to authorize advertisement of amendments to provide for motorcycle and compact vehicle parking and designation of handicapped parking spaces in the 200 and 500 blocks of Chestnut Street, and the 700 block of Penn Avenue. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- b. **Ordinance 1192 Vehicles and Traffic Amendments** – Consideration was requested to adopt various parking amendments.

Motion to adopt amendments to the parking prohibited at all times, time limit parking, special purpose parking zones, residential permit parking, and parking of certain vehicles in municipal authority parking lot sections. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- c. **Resolution 2025-14 MS4 Steering Committee Intergovernmental Agreement** – This resolution would assist the borough in meeting educational requirements in conjunction with shared municipal boundary partners at a reduced amount of time and expense.

Motion to enter an intergovernmental cooperation agreement to participate in the Berks County MS4 Steering Committee for the purpose of collaboratively meeting the educational requirements for MS4 NPDES Permits. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

7. **CONSULTANTS' REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker did not have anything new to report at this time.

- b. **Engineer's Report** – Mr. Spade reviewed the following items:

- **Ann Street Multi-Modal Grant** – Mr. Spade reported that a reimbursement request had been received on May 16th in the amount of \$116,317.90.
- **433 Penn Avenue Phase I & II Environmental Assessment** – A letter was received from the Department of Environmental Protection, dated May 14, 2025, indicating that no further action is required regarding closure of the storage tank system.
- **Multi-Modal Grant** – Traffic Planning & Design and the hospital are in support of installing a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon at the Fifth Avenue and Pine Street intersection to improve pedestrian safety.
- **PA Small Water and Sewer Statewide LSA Grant** – Mr. Spade reported that an application has been submitted by the April 30th deadline for the water main replacement project for the 100-200 blocks of South Seventh Avenue.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

8. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:**

Mr. Lineaweaver did not have anything new to report at this time.

9. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:**

Mr. Miller reviewed the following:

- **Website Upgrade** – The current web provider is raising rates to upgrade to a new system; it was noted that the annual fee will increase \$1,300 to \$4,000 with future annual increases of 5%. The recommended accessibility upgrades would cost an additional \$2,500 per year. It was noted that CivicPlus would allow a third-party to have access to the website should we choose an alternate accessibility program. Mr. Miller reviewed two additional quotes, NA Studios' annual support fee was \$3,600 and \$22,150 for web design; FXV Digital Design's annual support fee including accessibility was \$999 per year with a cap on costs for web design at \$10,000. Mr. Lineaweaver expressed frustration with CivicPlus in that offering online pool or playground registration through the website required their assistance. Mr. Miller recommended FXV Digital Design, which would recoup web design expenses within twenty-three months. Mr. Lineaweaver recommended the current website be reviewed by working groups to minimize the number of web pages since web design costs are per page.

Motion to hire FXV Digital Design to redesign the borough website. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- **Electricity Rates** – The current electric contract will expire this fall. Rates were requested through a resident of the borough and Usource that assisted the borough through the last electric service agreement. The current rate to compare is \$0.09670 per KWH. The current Electric Procurement Offers revealed annual savings of \$8,442 with a rate of \$0.09252 per KWH. It was thought that rates would only increase moving forward based on demand.

Motion to procure electricity rates for thirty-six months with Constellation. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Bower. **The motion passed with four votes in favor and one abstention.** Mr. Shaver abstained from this vote due to a conflict of interest in his employment position.

- **Paving Contracts** – Consideration was requested to allow execution of paving contracts when they become available.

Motion to allow the Borough Manager to execute all three paving contracts when they become available. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

10. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** The Mayor was unable to attend the meeting.

11. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Tornielli referred to his written report and highlighted the following:

- Calls for service and officer-initiated activities remain at the same level of 1,000 activities per month.
- There were no incidents to report from the Craft Pretzel and Beer Fest.
- Chief Tornielli attended a number of webinars this past month.
- The five-year strategic plan draft is completed and is planned to be presented to Borough Council next month.
- The new Parking Enforcement Officer is training and doing extremely well, he has past experience and is learning our processes well.

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. He thanked the Fire Department for their assistance in collaborating with Western Berks Water Authority to determine the cause of two water main breaks during hydrant flushing activities. It was discovered that a line had been closed at the plant without warning. A method has been evaluated to safely flush the hydrants until the water authority completes their needed repairs/upgrades. Chief Moyer was pleased to confirm that fire department personnel are properly flushing hydrants.

Mr. Grassley requested permission to purchase a budgeted zero-turn mower through a Costars vendor.

Motion to authorize the purchase of a zero-turn mower. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his written report and provided an update on the Utility 64 replacement that has been received and is currently being upfitted.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer referred to his written report noting a lot of activity in the Central Business District this past month. The warm weather has increased the number of property maintenance violation notices issued. Mr. Miller provided an update on the Penn Avenue Plantar right-of-way agreement that has been signed by the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation. Renovations to the Wyomissing Area School District Playground have begun and it was noted that the school district intends to allow access to the community.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – In the absence of Mr. Price, Mr. Lineaweaver shared the following highlights from his report:

- Craft Pretzel and Beer Fest was a success despite the weather with an increase in vendors and visitors.
- The new Promotions and Marketing committee met, appointing Anthony Matz as chair. The committee will meet on the first and third Wednesday of the month. New designs for pole banner flags are being reviewed with an intent to install the new flags before the Art on the Avenue event.
- Updates to the website are underway that allows a more interactive approach for businesses that can add events to an event calendar.
- A grant has been approved for the purchase of fourteen additional planters that will be placed in two to three weeks.
- Weekly meetings with the Borough Manager have begun for better communication during the busy spring and summer months.
- Registration for the Art on the Avenue event has opened with the anticipation of selling out.
- A college day on the Avenue during the fall semester is being planned with the Berks County Community Foundation.

Motion to accept the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

12. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly referred to his written report and offered to answer any questions. He reviewed the following action items:

- Approval of the list of seasonal staff hires and rehires for the pool and playground programs were requested. This should secure the entire seasonal staff. There are three new lifeguards at a rate of \$10.25 per hour, two playground leaders at a rate of \$10 and \$10.25 per hour, and two front desk workers at \$10 per hour.

Motion to approve the list of hires and rehires for pool and playground seasonal staff. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- Consideration of entering a concession stand agreement between the borough and Salsa Burrito to staff and operate the concession stand during the pool season. Mr. Lineaweaver noted that despite our best efforts the concession stand tends to lose money. This agreement requires \$2,000 to be paid to the borough for Salsa Burrito's use of the concession stand.

Motion to enter a Concession Stand Agreement with Salsa Burrito. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Last weekend the Vines and Vibes event took place as well as an orientation for seasonal staffing. The pool opens this weekend, and the Playground Program begins on June 9th. The next Rides and Vibes event is scheduled to take place on June 28th.

Motion to accept the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- b. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted review of the second round of county comments regarding proposed zoning and sign ordinance amendments and a recommendation to schedule a Zoning Hearing on Wednesday, July 2, 2025 to include the Planning Commission.

Motion to schedule a Zoning Hearing, authorize the advertisement of the hearing, and preparation of an ordinance to adopt proposed zoning amendments that align with the comprehensive plans and constitute a comprehensive rezoning. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

The county comments on the pursuit of a grant to replace a water main on South Seventh Avenue were reviewed and a motion was made to forward a letter of support in hopes of being awarded grant funding.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- c. **Economic Development Committee** – The May Economic Development Committee meeting was cancelled.
- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – The April Environmental Advisory Council meeting was cancelled.
- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Kaag recapped topics of conversation this month. Aspects surrounding a request from the Chairman of the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation to create paid parking along Penn Avenue were discussed, as requested by this committee to provide a recommended course of action. It was thought that parking on Franklin Street would be affected by visitors that want to avoid paid parking. Funding of a study to implement a residential-wide permit parking program was recommended as a service to taxpayers. Additional costs associated with establishing amenities for borough business staff members to park as well as additional paid parking kiosks and enforcement of a larger program were noted. Cycling of parking spaces is needed in the business district, it was noted that employees and tenants are taking advantage of the current policy by moving their vehicles every three hours to avoid ticketing. Borough Council recommended pursuing agreements with various privately owned parking lots around the borough to offer a monthly employee or tenant parking program until a parking study can be budgeted and performed.

Plans to temporarily create paid parking within the 433 Penn Avenue property were discussed. A rough drawing illustrated sixteen spaces on the lot itself, while creating six additional spaces on Tulpehocken Avenue and eight additional spaces on Penn Avenue, a net of twenty-five additional parking spaces. Aspects such as a paid parking program through a pay-by-plate system or a monthly lottery type rental program were discussed. Plans to use the lot as civic space would create an issue with a monthly paid parking program. Therefore, based on the temporary nature of parking on this lot flexibility was recommended through a temporary paid parking program. Paving of the lot is required prior to offering a parking program, Mr. Grassley intends to discuss paving of the lot with the paving contractor(s) during a pre-construction meeting of budgeted road improvement projects.

Motion to authorize the engineer to design a layout of parking and implement a temporary paid parking program on 433 Penn Avenue. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – Mr. Kaag offered to answer any questions regarding the report. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Shade Tree Commission report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted review of a training video on trenching and shoring. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- h. **Finance Committee** – The May Finance Committee meeting was cancelled.

- i. **Pension Advisory Committee** – Due to the lack of a quorum a workshop meeting was held with discussions on federal rate cuts and shortening of the duration of investments.

Motion to accept the Pension Advisory Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

13. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

a. **Transfer of Funds**

- Motion to approve the transfer of \$1,000,000 from the M&T General Fund to invest in PLGIT TERM for six months at approximately 4.36% interest. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**
- Motion to approve the transfer of \$1,000,000 from the M&T General Fund to the PLGIT PRIME account. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**
- Motion to approve the reinvestment of \$1,000,000 in the PLGIT TERM account that is maturing on 5/23/2025 for one year at approximately 4.27% interest. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- b. **Financial Statement Ending 4/30/2025** – There were no questions or comments.

- c. **Payment Approval Report 4/16/25 to 5/15/25 and 5/16/25 to 5/21/25** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 4/30/2025, and Payment Approval Reports of 4/16/25 through 5/21/25. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Motion to approve the Treasurer's report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 5-0.**

14. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers noted his attendance at the Traffic & Infrastructure Committee meeting this month and following the meeting he had an opportunity to speak with someone who parked in the hospital parking lot at Sixth Avenue and Chestnut Street. This resident reported that he has been parking in the lot for seven months and indicated that he would take advantage of parking within the 300 block of Sixth Avenue, near the hospital entrance if allowed. Mr. Rogers recommended that the borough offer a dumpster placement lease to a business owner on North Fifth Avenue in the grassy area behind the building.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:51 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary