

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

December 16, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, December 16, 2025 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Members Denise Drobnick, Bethany Bower, Zachary Shaver, and Zanna Leiendecker; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Code Department Manager & Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Engineer Pamela Stevens; Main Street Executive Director Nick Price; Borough Manager Randall Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS:

James Rogers, Resident	Christina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner
Karen Livingood, Resident (via Zoom)	James Keller, Resident
Michael Hart, Resident	Sharon Wert, Resident
Naomi Wert, Resident	Jennifer Bressler, Resident
Daniel & Robin Horman, Residents	Christopher Lincoln, Resident
Mark Dougherty, Business & Property Owner Matthew Walborn, Western Berks Water Authority	
Jamie Perez, Berks County Redevelopment Authority	

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Ryan Lineaweaver called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** There was an executive session held this evening to discuss personnel matters within the Public Works Department.
3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** There were no amendments to the agenda.
4. **COMMENDATION:** Mayor Kaag and Council President Lineaweaver read aloud commendations to Zachary Shaver and Philip Wert for their outstanding service and efforts to improve the community.
5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**
Mr. Lineaweaver thanked both Mr. Shaver and Mr. Wert for their public service of four and eighteen years, respectively. He noted the countless times he reached out to Mr. Wert, trusting his judgment and valuing his honesty.

Mr. Kaag read aloud a farewell to Council Members, Shaver, and Wert. He admired Mr. Shaver's dedication despite work obligations and his invaluable insight during some of the most challenging years for the borough. As an officer in the fire department, his efforts and experience are vital, as is his demonstrated commitment to safety. Mr. Wert's leadership has helped the community thrive and is a standard of professionalism for all of us to follow. Mr. Wert has earned the community's trust and gratitude. It has been an honor to serve with you.

Mr. Wert explained why he got involved in local government. He described his belief that communities similar to West Reading, urban, walkable, and people-oriented, are in a better position to face uncertain times. He has a desire to effect change and believes that local change is the best form. The former borough leaders who encouraged him to get involved were Mayor

Shane Keller, Council President Kevin Conrad, and Council Member Michael Morrill. Mr. Wert thanked former and current borough officials with whom he had the pleasure of serving, who challenged him to become a better Council Member.

Mr. Wert highlighted Council Members who've sadly passed on since his time on Borough Council to commemorate their lives respectfully: Council President James Gallen, Jr., Council Member Elizabeth Heckler, Council Member Grace Craze, and Council Member Nicholas Gardecki.

To the hardworking employees and consultants of West Reading, Mr. Wert recognized their tireless work and dedication, which is not unnoticed. To those who have retired, thank you for your service. Your efforts have helped shape this community in profound ways, and we often reflect on your hard work. To those who continue to work here, understand that your daily work is, in effect, your life's work. You've decided to work in a profession that is foundational to keeping a specific community safe, clean, healthy, and financially stable. Not many careers can point to specific examples of how employees' actions directly impact others' well-being. Specifically, he thanked a few employees and consultants who he's had the distinct pleasure of working with over the years, who've had the most significant impact during his tenure as Council Member.

- Dan Becker – Mr. Wert learned what seems like a lifetime of information from Mr. Becker. He is always willing to take a call and think through things clearly, logically, and calmly. On a personal note, he will never forget how Mr. Becker took his call when his dad suddenly passed away 11 years ago. All the while, on a Mediterranean cruise with his wife. He didn't have to answer the phone in the middle of the night, but he did.
- Dean Murray – The consummate son of West Reading. The blood of this borough courses through his veins like the pedigree of some long-forgotten royal family. Your decades of dedication are one for the storybooks. This community is better off because of you.
- Kerry Grassley – You've demonstrated an unwavering commitment to this town. The countless acts of selflessness you've performed over the years have helped shape the Public Works Department in ways that will be felt long after you retire.
- Cathy Hoffman – Mr. Wert couldn't say enough about her willingness to learn new things, take on new roles, and work longer hours than was necessary. She was always a calm and reasonable voice at the table, on the phone, and in casual conversation.
- Cindy Madeira – Is there nothing you can't do? I always wondered where you kept your cape. You have come to my rescue more times than I can count. What an amazing and talented employee and friend you are. The community is a better place because of you, and we all love and appreciate you dearly.
- In respect to everyone's time, a thank you was given to Chad Moyer, Helen Moyer, Mark Burkholder, Jeanette Rentschler, and Tracie Milbut, who are committed stalwarts to their jobs.

- A thank you was shared with his wife, Sharon, and daughter, Naomi, because there's no scenario in which he would have been able to serve this borough without their love and support. They sacrificed so much while he was away at meetings.
- To the people of West Reading, Mr. Wert asked that they continue looking into the future. The best days of this borough are still ahead of us. He's done the best job he knew how to do and is grateful for the trust he's been given over the past 18 years. It's time for him to step away from the Council table and let others lead. To our collective future, thank you.

Mr. Rogers recalled Mr. Wert's encouragement to look into the Business Privilege Taxes to unscramble the puzzle to increase the collection of unpaid taxes. He expressed his gratitude for the appointment of a new collector.

Mr. & Mrs. Horman, Mrs. Wert, Miss Wert, and Mrs. Bressler departed the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

6. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve November 18, 2025, regular meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

7. **ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Ordinance – Vehicles and Traffic Amendment** – Various parking amendments were requested to be advertised.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of an amendment to prohibit parking in Boot Alley, add a handicapped parking space on the 200 Block of Spruce Street, and modify a valet parking zone to a patient loading and unloading zone in the 300 Block of South Seventh Avenue. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Ordinance – Micromobility Vehicles** – A conversion of the Bicycle Ordinance to a Micromobility Vehicle Ordinance would include e-bikes, electric scooters, and the like, and was requested to be advertised.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of an ordinance amendment to convert the Bicycle Ordinance to a Micromobility Vehicle Ordinance. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Ordinance 1198 Off-Street Metered Parking Amendment** – This ordinance amendment would include the 433 Penn Avenue Municipal Parking Lot and allow the borough to suspend those provisions temporarily.

Motion to adopt amendments to Section 430-60 to include the 433 Penn Avenue parking lot and add the ability to suspend metered parking temporarily by resolution. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Ordinance 1199 Tax Rate Amendment 2026** – This ordinance would amend the dedicated Fire and Road Taxes. An increase of 0.15 mils was proposed for the Fire Tax, and 0.75 mils was proposed for the Road Tax.

Motion to adopt an increase to the Fire and Road Tax rates to 3.0 and 1.75 mils, respectively. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **Ordinance 1200 Water Rate Amendment 2026** – An increase of three percent for residential and five percent for commercial uses was proposed.

Motion to adopt an increase to water rates for 2026. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- f. **Ordinance 1201 Sewer Rate Amendment 2026** – An increase of four percent for residential and eight percent for commercial uses was proposed.

Motion to adopt an increase to sewer rates for 2026. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- g. **Resolution 2025-32 Refuse and Recycling Rate Amendment** – An increase of \$5 per quarter was proposed to cover increased contract expenses in 2026.

Motion to approve an increase to the refuse and recycling fee to \$105 per unit, per quarter. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- h. **Resolution 2025-33 Salaries and Wages 2026** – A list of borough employee wages and salaries for 2026 was proposed.

Motion to establish the 2026 salaries and wages of borough employees. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

8. **CONSULTANTS' REPORT:**

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

- b. **Engineer's Report** – Ms. Stevens reviewed the following items:

- **DCED Green Light-Go Year 9 Seventh Avenue Parkside Drive and Reading Avenue and Eighth and Hill/Reading Avenue**– Traffic Planning and Design (TPD) opened bids on December 4, 2025, via the Penn BID Platform. Telco, Inc. was the apparent low bidder of \$150,195.55, roughly \$7,000 less than the grant amount.

Motion to award Telco, Inc. the Green Light-Go Year 9 intersection improvement project of \$150,195.55. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **DCED Green Light-Go Year 11 Grant Application – Reading Eighth and Hill Avenues** – A pre-scoping cost estimate and location map have been prepared by TPD; the deadline to apply to PennDOT is January 2, 2026. Approval of the project was requested.

Motion to approve the Green Light-Go Year 11 Grant Application project. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

9. **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Mr. Lineaweaver thanked everyone for another year of working together. He is sad to see Mr. Shaver and Mr. Wert leave the table. There will be two new faces beginning at the Reorganization Meeting next month.

Motion to accept the Council President's report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

10. **BOROUGH MANAGER'S REPORT:** Mr. Miller reviewed the following items:

- **2026 Meeting Schedule** – A request was made to authorize the advertisement of 2026 meeting dates. It was noted that the Reorganization Meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 5, 2026, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Lineaweaver noted that Borough Council meetings will remain on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m., the second meeting, if needed, would be held on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. Most other meetings begin at 6:00 p.m. There are typical variations to the schedule, such as election dates and National Night Out.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of the 2026 meeting schedule. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Western Berks Water Authority (WBWA) Fifth Supplemental Service Agreement** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted WBWA long-range plans to apply for financing to make needed improvements to the facility and the need to extend the term of the service agreement through December 31, 2050.

Motion to enter into a fifth supplemental service agreement with WBWA for long-range planning and financing opportunities of the Authority through December 31, 2050. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Brownfield Assessment Grant** – Jamie Perez of the Berks County Redevelopment Authority provided an overview of no-match grant opportunities. The authority is leading an application for federal Brownfield assessment grant funding. If awarded, the authority would receive up to \$1.5 million over the next four years to support activities related to Brownfield Assessments, such as conducting environmental site assessments, completing remediation and abatement plans, and other eligible activities. Brownfields are broadly defined as areas or properties where redevelopment may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of hazardous substances, contaminants, or regulated building materials. The Authority is seeking coalition partners to designate priority areas for redevelopment, whether a corridor or a specific site, where funding would help advance redevelopment. Sites can be publicly or privately owned, and there's no local match required for funding. A letter of commitment from the borough was requested; the application is due on January 28, 2026.

Motion to provide a letter of commitment to the Redevelopment Authority to be part of the Berks County Brownfield Coalition. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Perez departed the meeting at 7:49 p.m.

- **Systems Design Engineering Team Approach** – Mr. Miller noted a recent structural issue with a retaining wall in the borough at a time when Systems Design Engineering did not have a structural engineer on staff. At that time, the borough recruited a structural engineer to assist with corrective measures for the hotel project. The team approach agreement would

ensure access to a structural engineer, geotechnical consultant, traffic consultant, etc., when available engineering services exceed their in-house core of professional services.

Motion to expand professional services with Systems Design Engineering, Inc., through a team approach. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- **Water Service Line Inventory Support** – Entech Engineering 2026 service line inventory consulting and professional services were proposed not to exceed \$14,500. The additional services, such as Swordfish Equipment/Field Work, were not authorized.

Motion to extend Entech Engineering, Inc. Water Service Line Inventory Support through 2026 in an amount not to exceed \$14,500. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Miller noted that the Transportation Planning Committee had met on December 8, and the WalkWorks update was provided in the Council packets.

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Ms. Stevens departed the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

11. **MAYOR'S REPORT:**

Mayor Kaag provided a verbal report noting the following:

- The Mayor officiated a wedding for the owners of Reiki Healing, who both live and work in the borough.
- A thank you was expressed to Mr. Shaver for his four years serving on Borough Council and continued service to the fire department.
- A thank you was expressed to Mr. Wert for his years of service on Borough Council, including his fatherly efforts in counseling her as a candidate for Borough Council and Mayor. She had hoped that Mr. Wert would remain involved.

Motion to accept the Mayor's report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

12. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Tornielli referred to his report, offering to answer any questions, and noted this month's report is a little light on maps and graphs. The transition to the new Cody Pathfinder RMS took place on November 19. The system is up and running, but some background features that enable crime mapping and graphs are still being integrated.

Chief Tornielli thanked Sergeant Phillips and Officer Karetas for their work on getting the system up and running over the last year. This upgrade is a significant improvement, funded through a Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) grant.

A request was made to approve tuition reimbursement for an officer who completed college classes.

Motion to approve tuition reimbursement of \$4,500 for an officer who completed college classes per the current Collective Bargaining Agreement, pending receipt of the transcript. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley offered to answer any questions about his report. He noted that the Omni System pump station monitor, which sends instant alarms for issues like high levels, power failures, or pump faults, is now operational. There were no questions or comments.

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer referred to his written report and noted that the purchase and registration of Utility 64 replacement have been completed, and the new vehicle is in service. The old utility truck is in service as the traffic truck. As mandated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the new National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) has now been implemented. There is new terminology and updates to how the system operates, which have changed the report's appearance. The Kiddie Christmas Party took place on December 13 with roughly 50 children in attendance. A thank you went out to Mr. Rogers for his generous donation to the event.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer noted that the hospital will be kicking off a \$650,000 renovation to the “N” Building Linear Acceleration Room. The applicant for the Zoning Hearing Board hearing regarding 438 Penn Avenue requested a continuance, which was granted. The continuance is indefinite, and either party may request a hearing. During the continuance, the permit revocation and the cease-and-desist order remain in effect. Thirty-nine snow violations were issued today.

Appreciation was expressed for the team effort from the Public Works Department installing cameras, the police for reviewing the camera footage and identifying the culprit, and the Code Department for issuing a violation to the person who illegally dumped trash on Grape Street.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF)** – Mr. Price provided the following highlights from his report:

- Small Business Saturday went well this year, which was scaled back a bit from last year. Santa was there for photos; there was a Disc Jockey and a heated tent with massages, as well as a prize wheel. The Avenue looked like a Hallmark movie, and business owners seemed pleased.

- The Second Friday event went well despite the cold weather. A judging contest took place for 55 businesses that decorated their windows.
- The French Fry Festival check presentation will be done at a later date.
- The 2026 list of road closures should be available for approval at the January 5, 2026, Reorganization Meeting.
- The Ice and Spice Festival is scheduled for the weekend of January 23 to 25. The following road closures were requested:

Motion to approve the closure of South Sixth Avenue, from Penn Avenue to Cherry Street on Friday, January 23, 2026, from 5:00 – 9:00 p.m. for fire dancing at the Ice and Spice Festival. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to approve the closure of North Sixth Avenue from Penn Avenue to Court Street on Saturday, January 24, 2026, from 2:00 – 9:00 p.m. for a heated tent with live music at the Ice and Spice Festival. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the WRCRF report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Price departed the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

13. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

- a. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly noted the Dungeons and Dragons event that had more attendees this time at the Bicentennial House. The 97th annual Tree Lighting event was held on Friday, December 5. It was a cold night. Appreciation was expressed for the Blankets of Hope donations. The festivities were moved to Reading City Church. Mr. Esterly noted that he would like to host the 100th Tree Lighting event at the park. The Home Decorating event takes place this weekend. A rough draft of the 2026 events should be finalized and presented to the Borough Council at the January meeting.

Motion to accept the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Planning Commission** – The December Planning Commission meeting had been canceled.
- c. **Economic Development Committee** – The December Economic Development Committee meeting was canceled.
- d. **Environmental Advisory Council** – The November Environmental Advisory Council meeting was held, where a list of energy improvements, as identified in the MORE Energy Audit, was reviewed. It was noted that several modifications were made following the previous energy audit, including window replacements, HVAC upgrades, and LED lighting upgrades. The engineer will be consulted on how to proceed with these goals through the grant process.

Motion to accept the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- e. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Kaag noted review of a new handicapped parking space request, traffic calming ideas for the 700 Block of Cherry Street, and the new T2 parking system amenities.

Mr. Lineaweaver requested consideration of revising the “Play Street Closed” sign in the 700 Block of Cherry Street to avoid confusion.

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- f. **Shade Tree Commission** – The December Shade Tree Commission meeting was canceled.

- g. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted the review and reminder of winter safety.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- h. **Finance Committee** – The December Finance Committee meeting was canceled.

14. **TREASURER’S REPORT:**

- a. **Transfer of Funds** – Consideration was requested for approving the transfer of \$450,000 from the PLGIT Prime account to the M&T General Fund account. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **2026 Budget Adoption** – Mr. Lineaweaver reported that a deficit of roughly \$150,000 is budgeted. Discussions are ongoing with Reading Hospital regarding their Payment in Lieu of Taxes. It was noted that approximately \$500,000 was slashed from the initial budget. Unfortunately, there are tax increases that are specified for Fire and Roads.

Motion to adopt the 2026 budget. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

The Borough millage rate is unchanged; the Fire rate will increase from 2.85 to 3 mils, and the Road rate will increase from 1 mil to 1.75 mils. A total tax rate increase of 0.9 mils was proposed.

Motion to approve the 2026 Municipal Tax Sheet respective millage rates. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 7-0.**

- b. **Financial Statement Ending 11/30/2025** – There were no questions or comments.

- c. **Payment Approval Report 11/19/25 to 12/11/25 and 12/12/25 to 12/16/25** – There were no questions or comments.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 11/30/2025, and Payment Approval Reports of 11/19/25 through 12/16/25. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Motion to accept the Treasurer’s report. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 7-0.**

15. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers shared the outcome of his report to the Police Department of a vehicle parking in his neighborhood with an expired inspection sticker since July 2022. During the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting, Chief Tornielli reported that 15 \$50 tickets or citations have been issued to the vehicle's owner, and all have been paid.

Mr. Becker thanked Mr. Wert for his years of service on Borough Council, noting that he has witnessed change and that the borough is in a better place. Mr. Becker indicated that the long hours on the phone debating legal points with Mr. Wert have made him a better solicitor, too. It was noted that Borough Council meetings used to last until roughly midnight.

Mr. Grassley also witnessed changes in character and fiscal responsibility over the last five to ten years.

16. **ADJOURNMENT:** Mr. Wert made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary