

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING**

**March 19, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.**

West Reading Borough Council held its regular monthly meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, March 19, 2024 with the following persons present: Council President Ryan Lineaweaver; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Patrick Kaag; Council Members Zachary Shaver, Denise Drobnick, and Bethany Bower; Mayor Samantha Kaag; Solicitor Daniel Becker; Fire Chief and Code Department Manager Chad Moyer; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Borough Manager Dean Murray; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Recreation Director Michael Esterly; Engineer Pamela Stevens; Junior Council Person Mark-Handy Phanor; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Member Zanna Leiendecker was unable to attend.

**VISITORS:**

James Rogers, Resident	Karen Livingood, Resident (via Zoom)
Ty Gardner, Resident (arrived at 7:23 p.m.)	Helen Moyer, Resident
Suzanne Thompson, Resident	Cody Rhoads, Resident
Lance Parmer, Fire Police	Caitlyn Marrella, Resident (via Zoom)
Joseph Cesarz, Resident	Tina Shenk, Resident & Business Owner
Thomas & Stephanie Kosmoski, Residents	Ryan Spengler, Resident
Karalee Tuck, Resident	

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:** Mr. Lineaweaver reported that an executive session was not held this evening.
3. **AGENDA AMENDMENTS:** There were no amendments to the agenda.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Cesarz requested consideration of rescinding the decision to move trash collection from the rear of homes to the front of homes on the north side of the 200 block of Reading Avenue and the 100 block of North Third Avenue. It was thought to be unnecessary to change this longstanding policy to accommodate the trash hauler. Mr. Murray noted neighboring blocks that have collection from the front and a desire to ensure collection on a regular basis. Mrs. Kosmoski shared her efforts in educating the drivers. It was decided to retain the trash collection policy from the rear while allowing recyclable materials to continue to be collected from the front of these homes.

5. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Motion to approve the February 20, 2024 and February 27, 2024 meeting minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

6. **ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:**

- a. **Ordinance 1183 Commencement of Water Service Amendment** – Consideration was requested to adopt the advertised amendment to Section 441-21 to refer to a resolution for a schedule of fees.

Motion to adopt an amendment to refer to a resolution for the schedule of fees to commence and discontinue water service. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Resolution 2024-8 Extension of Local Disaster Emergency** – Consideration was requested to extend the local disaster emergency.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-6 extending the Proclamation of the Local Disaster Emergency until the April 16, 2024 Borough Council meeting. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Ordinance – General Obligation Bonds** – Consideration was requested to advertise the issuance of a series of bonds to acquire real property located at 433 Penn Avenue and to make improvements to this property in the amount of \$1,250,000.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of an ordinance for the issuance of a series of General Obligation Bonds to acquire real property, the installation of various Capital improvements to the property, and the payment of costs and expenses. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 5-0.** Mr. Wert abstained from this vote to assure the community that he is not benefiting from this project based on ownership of property that is located across the street.

- d. **Resolution 2024-9 Fee Schedule Amendment** – Consideration was requested to reduce the playground program fees. Mr. Esterly noted complaints that were received and a decision to lower the resident and non-resident rates.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2024-9 approving a reduction in the Playground Program fees and a revision to the Sidewalk Café late fee filing date. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

7. **CONSULTANT'S REPORT:**

- a. **Solicitor's Report** – Mr. Becker indicated that he had nothing new to report that is not otherwise covered on the agenda.

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

- The 2024 Road Projects were awarded last month.  
The Year 9 Green Light-Go Application and funding commitment letter was submitted prior to the deadline of February 28<sup>th</sup>.
- The Commonwealth of PA Financing Authority (CFA) grant funded security camera upgrade project was scanned and sent out with hopes of upgrades beginning soon by the contractor.
- The Ann Street Multi-Model Grant Application submitted in July of 2023 may possibly be awarded next month.
- The Chapter 94 Annual Wasteload Management Report was submitted to the Joint Municipal Authority.
- Survey and design of the water line replacement project on the 500 block of Spruce Street has begun. Coordination with the hospital is needed for the flow of traffic and water service for a few weeks.
- Ms. Stevens noted their assistance to the Code Department on baseline EDU's and proposed changes in use.

Motion to accept the Engineer's report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

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

Mr. Lineaweaver stated that he has nothing new to report this month.

Ms. Stevens departed the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

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

- a. **Right-to-Know Officer Appointment** – Mr. Murray requested consideration to appoint the Interim Borough Manager as Right-to-Know Officer from April 2, 2024 to June 7, 2024.

Motion to appoint Richard Sichler as a Right-to-Know Officer. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Sale of Police Vehicle** – Mr. Murray requested consideration to approve the sale of the Ford Explorer that was previously used as a K-9 vehicle. The winning bid was \$3,800.

Motion to accept the winning bid of \$3,800 for the 2013 Ford Explorer. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Gardner joined the meeting at 7:23 p.m.

- c. **Sick Time Bank** - Mr. Murray requested consideration of dividing his remaining 1,430 hours of sick time amongst the sick pools that are established within the Public Works and Police Department Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) and to create a sick pool for the Administration Department. Mr. Wert inquired as to violating the current CBAs by these donations. Mr. Becker did not believe that this gift would be challenged; however, it was decided to allow the Personnel Committee to review the handbook and CBAs prior to taking any action. This action item was tabled.

- d. **Liquor License Transfer** – Mr. Murray requested consideration of ratifying the direction of the solicitor to intervene in a liquor license transfer.

Motion to ratify the direction of the solicitor to intervene in a liquor license transfer. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Event Approvals** – Mr. Murray requested consideration to approve the Taqueria Comalli event on North Seventh Avenue from Penn Avenue to Reading Avenue on May 4, 2024, and the Fashionista 5K event on May 5, 2024.

Motion to approve the Taqueria Comalli event on May 4, 2024. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to approve the Fashionista 5K event on May 5, 2024 that primarily takes place in the park area. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Borough Manager's report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

10. **MAYOR'S REPORT:** The Mayor referred to her written report noting a quiet month. The following outline of meetings/events was recapped:

- February 22<sup>nd</sup> – Attended the Berks County Community Foundation’s luncheon and met with non-profit and grant organizers to review grant funding opportunities that may benefit the borough.
- February 26<sup>th</sup> – Attended the Environmental Advisory Council meeting.
- February 29<sup>th</sup> – Attended the Albright College Berks Municipal Partnership meeting that reviewed the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) crisis.
- March 1<sup>st</sup> – Attended an event committee meeting.
- March 8<sup>th</sup> – Attended the Red Cross Berks Heros Breakfast where she was honored to stand next to the borough’s first responders.
- March 14<sup>th</sup> – Attended the Center for Excellence in Local Government’s Municipal Official’s Dinner that reviewed the EMS crisis further.
- March 16<sup>th</sup> – Attended the IM ABLE Bash and expressed the importance of supporting those in need in our community.
- The Mayor attended the recent Jill Biden and President Biden visit and met with other state and local representatives.
- An article has been included in the Spring/Summer 2024 newsletter.

Motion to accept the Mayor’s report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Drobnick.

**Motion carried 6-0.**

#### 11. DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

- a. **Police Department** – Chief Tornielli highlighted the traffic enforcement statistics accredited to the officers that are using their discretionary time during the slower months to enforce items such as stop intersections. It was noted that 360 traffic citations have been issued in the first two months of 2024 in comparison to a total of 461 citations issued during 2023.

Two items of note under Community Events were:

- Hosting of a Community Engagement event on April 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at the West Reading Fire Department to provide an opportunity for members of the community to learn about the department and our initiatives to maintain public safety in the borough.
- The St. Patty’s Day Crawl event last weekend did not result in any serious issues. The two minor incidents were not outside of a normal weekend occurrence. There were two officers on duty along with extra Penn Avenue patrols provided by the State Police.

Assistance was provided by the Borough of Wyomissing and the County to perform a DUI checkpoint in the 800 block of Penn Avenue. Applications are being reviewed to conduct interviews with candidates for the Parking Enforcement Officer position. Deployment of the in-car cameras has been delayed to April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> due to scheduling issues with Motorola technicians.

Chief Tornielli requested consideration to advertise the test date of April 27<sup>th</sup> for the written and physical tests of an entry level officer.

Motion to authorize the advertisement of a test date and process for hiring a police officer. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Police Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Public Works Department** - Mr. Grassley referred to his report and offered to answer any questions noting two action items this month. The first request was to extend the contract by one year with Jeff's Services Berks to mow the cloverleaf area. There was no increase in cost and the contract is under the bidding threshold.

Motion to approve the contract extension of one-year that is under the bidding threshold with Jeff's Services Berks to perform biweekly mowing/trimming and removal of trash as necessary to the cloverleaf area. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Grassley requested consideration to approve the purchase of a budgeted stump grinder. He elaborated on the amount budgeted of \$14,000 for an attachment to the skid loader and a newfound use of grinding roots that are lifting sidewalk panels as proposed in a trial sidewalk panel replacement program. To avoid damage to lawns and sidewalk panels an alternate version was found used at a cost of \$14,900. Three telephonic bids would be required.

Motion to approve the purchase of a budgeted 2024 stump grinder not to exceed \$14,900. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Public Works Department report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Fire Department** – Chief Moyer reminded everyone of the annual Chicken BBQ event scheduled on Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup> and recommended placing an order online by Friday for tickets.

The purchase of a second replacement garage door has been budgeted for purchase this year; therefore, Chief Moyer requested consideration of initiating the purchase of a four-fold bay door from a Costars vendor in the amount of \$57,000.

Motion to approve the purchase and installation of a second four-fold garage door from Ben Druck Door Company. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mayor Kaag recognized Fire Police Lieutenant Lance Parmer who was in attendance of this meeting for all that he does to educate himself and contribute towards the fire department.

Motion to accept the Fire Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Code Department** – Mr. Moyer referred to his written report and provided a progress report regarding the apartment building located at the corner of Second and Penn Avenue, noting their deadline to submit plans to the Code Department by the end of the month. Also, the Zoning Hearing Appeal for 400 Walnut Street has been delayed by the applicant. This could be rescheduled at the end of April following their visit to the Planning Commission meeting.

Motion to accept the Code Department report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**

e. **West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation** – In Mr. Price's absence Mr. Lineaweaver provided an overview of his report noting that the following:

- Hope Rescue Mission has been cleaning Penn Avenue for the last few weeks which has been very receptive by the business owners and community.
- Chili Fest had a number of attendees in spite of the not so pleasant weather.
- The Penn Avenue gateway project is moving along where Goggleworks has assembled a team with a few potential designs and has begun communicating with Norfolk Southern.
- Secured funding with Customers Bank for all three CRF events.
- Plans are underway for the Plein Air 2024 event.
- New Castle Landscaping will be sponsoring four silver traffic box covers in decorative vinyl wrap.
- Penn State Berks is planning a college night on Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup>.
- A tour of businesses is planned on March 21<sup>st</sup> with State Representative Cepeda-Freytiz.
- A final quote has been received for new streetlights and speaker systems along Penn Avenue.

Motion to accept the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

## 12. COMMITTEE / COMMISSION REPORTS:

a. **Recreation Commission** – Mr. Esterly referred to his written report and requested consideration of two action items this evening. He shared that the Masonic Temple will be hosting a community service project by painting the pavilion and picnic tables at no cost to the borough. The Easter Egg hunt is planned on Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Zumba classes will resume at the pavilion and a fishing rodeo is planned on April 13<sup>th</sup>. A disc golf tournament will be held on April 14<sup>th</sup>. The Candyland Family Dance will be held on April 20<sup>th</sup>, tickets are available online. Pool and playground program preparations have begun.

Mr. Esterly requested consideration of hiring a list of pool and playground seasonal staff members. Mr. Lineaweaver noted fourteen lifeguards ranging in pay from \$10.25 to \$12 per hour. A playground manager at a rate of \$20 per hour. Five front desk personnel and three concession stand personnel ranging from \$10 to \$10.25 per hour.

Motion to approve the list of hire and re-hire pool and playground seasonal staff. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Esterly requested consideration of granting permission to Berks Humane Society to host a free vaccination clinic at the pavilion as supported by the Recreation Commission. Mr. Lineaweaver shared that they are requesting use of the pavilion between the hours of 2:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on June 26<sup>th</sup>, July 17<sup>th</sup>, and August 7<sup>th</sup>. Donations for services provided would be accepted.

Motion to grant permission to Berks Humane Society to utilize the pavilion for a vaccination clinic free of charge. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Ms. Drobnick provided reminders of upcoming warmer weather activities:

- May 19<sup>th</sup> – Annual Vines & Vibes Concert in the Park with the local band Frog Holler.
- May through September – Yoga in the Park Saturday mornings at 9:00 a.m.
- April 7<sup>th</sup> – Rides & Vibes community bicycling on the first and third Sunday at 1:00 p.m.

Motion to accept the Recreation Commission report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- c. **Planning Commission** – Mr. Wert noted continued discussions on zoning definitions as they near the end of this portion of the form-based codes review. Mr. Lineaweaver noted a number of conditional uses in the Light Industrial District that were revised to permitted uses.

Motion to accept the Planning Commission report. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- d. **Economic Development Committee** – Mr. Wert noted the similarity of businesses coming into and leaving the borough. A number of interesting things are happening in neighboring Wyomissing Borough such as residential and commercial redevelopments.

Motion to accept the Economic Development Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- e. **Environmental Advisory Council** – Mr. Kaag noted a visit by Nick Johnson to provide an update on MS4 improvements to Wyomissing Creek. The next Free-Market is scheduled for April 21, 2024 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Pavilion, paired with the Earth Day Cleanup event. The one-year anniversary of the R.M. Palmer disaster is this weekend. A moment of silence can be shared at the memorial garden.

Motion to accept the Environmental Advisory Council report. **Moved** by Ms. Drobnick and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- f. **Traffic and Infrastructure Committee** – Mr. Kaag recapped discussions on radar sign data review of the Reading and North Sixth Avenue intersection; the possible relocation of Delaney's memorial to the park area; the creation of a 20-minute parking policy; and a trial sidewalk panel replacement program for damage caused by borough tree roots. A prioritized list of areas to address would be replaced with budgeted funds. Mr. Moyer would prioritize areas where trees were removed and coordinate efforts with the Public Works Department to remove only the damaged panel(s), grind roots, and replace the affected sidewalk panel(s). The trial program would work towards lifting the moratorium to be able to enforce other sidewalk hazards throughout the borough. A legal review was requested.

Motion to approve a one-year trial program for sidewalk repairs, up to the amount budgeted, contingent upon solicitor approval. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Motion to accept the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee report. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Bower. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- g. **Shade Tree Commission** – The March Shade Tree Commission meeting was cancelled.

- h. **Safety Committee** – Mr. Murray stated in the last three years there were strides made in enhancing the safety handbook and keeping everyone safe.

Motion to accept the Safety Committee report. **Moved** by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Shaver. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- i. **Finance Committee** – The March Finance Committee meeting was cancelled.

13. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

- a. **Transfer of Funds** – Mrs. Rentschler requested consideration to transfer funds from PLGIT to the M&T Bank account.

Motion to approve the transfer of \$500,000 from the PLGIT Prime account to the M&T Bank account. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- b. **Financial Statement Ending 2/29/2024** – There were no questions or comments.

- c. **Payment Approval Report 2/21/24 to 3/15/24, 3/12/24 to 3/15/24, and 3/16/24 to 3/19/24** – Mr. Lineaweaver noted an additional report this month to correctly allocate Travelers Insurance to the appropriate General Ledger Code.

Motion to approve the financial statement ending 2/29/2024, and Payment Approval Reports of 2/21/24 through 3/19/24. **Moved** by Mr. Wert and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

14. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Rogers noted his attendance at the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting last week and a car counter located on Penn Avenue near Fourth Avenue. He wanted to bring this to our attention since it was not noted in the meeting last week. He shared his observance of 80 people on Penn Avenue at 11:30 p.m. on the evening of the St. Patty's Day Crawl that generated a lot of activity in the borough.

Mr. Rogers inquired with the solicitor as to the need to intervene on the transfer of a liquor license. Mr. Becker shared the Borough Council's concerns with the applicant regarding the transfer request for Third & Spruce Drafthaus' change in ownership license transfer.

- 15. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Shaver and seconded by Ms. Drobnick. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary