

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

NOVEMBER 8, 2023

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

Visitors:

Karen Livingood, Resident

James Rogers, Resident

Joan McNeil, Sacred Heart School

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

Public Comment

Mr. Rogers spoke of Wyomissing Elementary School teachers parking within the 400 block of Franklin Street and the strain this adds to residents especially once the Franklin Manor complex is filled to capacity and recommended considering inclusion of this block within the permit parking program. Mr. Lincoln noted a conversation planned later this evening that should cover that topic.

Mr. Rogers spoke of complaints he has heard regarding stop signs placed at the traffic circle and the purpose of circles to keep the flow of traffic moving. He noted his encouragement to install stop signs to slow traffic into the circle and the lack of enforcement for failing to stop.

Mrs. Livingood shared her preference for lighted stop signs and wondered if these would be allowed in the Borough. Mr. Lincoln indicated that PennDOT considers electronic signs as signals and would require a permit for each individual sign.

Mrs. Livingood thanked Chief Tornielli for the program on Halloween night at Parkview and Sycamore Roads that improved pedestrian safety for the trick-or-treaters through this busy intersection.

Ms. McNeil introduced herself as the principal of Sacred Heart School and spoke of the recent restriction of four parking spaces on Franklin Street that prohibit parking during the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., and 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. that have created a challenge to faculty members to find alternate parking provisions. To the best of her knowledge none of the staff are residents of West Reading that could utilize the permit parking program. She noted the parking lot on the premises is used as an outdoor recess area. The time restrictions along Franklin Street for parking are effectively unusable for faculty and has caused a hardship. Her understanding from Sergeant Holben was that the changes were made based on complaints received about buses blocking the roadway. She expressed with certainty that this is a non-issue during drop off because the buses do not all arrive at once. She spoke of changes to dismissal procedures to speed up students exiting the building to load their respective buses and requests of bus drivers to follow a revised schedule, but she cannot say with any certainty that the multi district bus schedules are adhered to.

Mr. Lincoln noted the purpose of the change that was based on complaints of buses blocking both Seventh Avenue and Franklin Street and the creation of two parking spaces in conjunction with the bus loading zones. It was recommended to communicate with M&T Bank to determine if they would allow faculty access to the lower tier of their parking lot. Ms. McNeil shared her recent realization of the municipal parking lot on Franklin Street and several faculty members that use this area to park.

The police department will communicate with the bus drivers to provide instructions on avoiding early arrivals. Mr. Lincoln welcomed continued feedback while the Borough reviews other alternatives that would relieve the stress of parking for faculty.

Ms. McNeil departed the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee minutes of October 11, 2023. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Grassley. **Motion carried.**

Old Business

Permit Parking Program – Mr. Lincoln shared the history of the permit parking program that was facilitated based on hospital staff's use of on-street parking amenities. There have not been many changes to the program over the years other than the recent addition of North Sixth Avenue and the 100 block of Tulpehocken Avenue at the request of a previous Mayor. Mr. Grassley shared that Tulpehocken Avenue is the only block where permit parking is enforced every day from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The following goals were defined as aspects that should be included in a permit parking study to understand the cost of project services:

- A comprehensive Borough-wide study that identifies the recommended areas of implementation.
- Ideas on how to implement a limited number of free parking permits per household while considering off-street parking amenities.
- An annual permit renewal program.
- Based on limited daytime resident use it was thought that commercial use during daytime hours may be beneficial.
- Consideration should be given to residents on roads adjacent to permit parking zones especially when there is a conflict with street sweeping or trash collection parking prohibitions.
- It was thought that the use of a permit should be limited to the roadway where the applicant resides.

Also, added expenses such as installation of signage and enforcement will need to be taken into consideration before implementing a new program.

Lofts at Narrow Elm Street Intersection – Mr. Murray had the opportunity recently to speak with the owner of the Lofts at Narrow property who is agreeable to a joint effort in the installation of a speed bump near the access to Elm Street from his property. Mr. Lincoln noted that the installation of a stop sign was not fully successful in slowing traffic exiting the Lofts at Narrow parking lot onto Elm Street where children are generally at play. The speed bump will be placed on private property.

Yarnell Street Parking Restriction – Mr. Grassley reviewed the parking stall lines on Yarnell Street and provided an illustration of the realignment of spaces between Grape and Chestnut Street to retain the same number of spaces while allowing larger vehicles, such as trash trucks and snowplows, to access Grape Street. Shifting the spaces ten feet will provide twenty-two feet of clearance from the stop sign onto Chestnut Street and eighteen feet of clearance onto Grape Street, which improves the line-of-sight from Grape Street onto Yarnell Street. It was thought that the trash truck may still choose not to access Grape Street due to parked cars. Chief Tornielli offered to begin enforcing no parking on trash days within this roadway if the trash hauler wants to access the roadway. Mr. Grassley will inquire with the

trash contractor to determine how they wish to proceed and noted plans to restripe parking stall lines in the spring.

Mayor Kaag joined the meeting at 6:49 p.m.

One-Way Streets – Mr. Grassley reported that PennDOT’s report on direction of travel and installation of stop intersection studies for Holland Square and Juniata Street should be available within a few weeks.

Parking Prohibited at All Times Amendment – Mr. Lincoln noted several additional updates that were found to need updating within this ordinance section and the discussions that began last month regarding Plane Alley and the temporary regulation to prohibit parking within the 600 block of Court Street that was established via resolution of the former Mayor. Based on resident complaints received it was decided to move forward with these two amendments while the remainder of the section be reviewed and updated as time allows.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to restrict parking at all times within the 400 and 600 blocks of Court Street and the entire length of Plane Alley. **Moved** by Mr. Grassley and seconded by Chief Tornielli.

North Sixth & Reading Avenue Intersection – Chief Tornielli shared the department’s continued traffic observations of this vicinity this past month. Mr. Grassley reported that the radar speed sign was installed today in the eastbound direction of the 600 block of Reading Avenue. The data gathered will be shared next month.

Penn Avenue Pedestrian Crossing Signals – Chief Tornielli reviewed the Fourth and Fifth Avenue crossing signals for Penn Avenue and found them both to operate as intended.

Bulk Refuse Collection – Mr. Lincoln noted the intent to create a new policy to dispose of bulk refuse that will take effect on January 1st in conjunction with the new trash contract. The new policy will assist the hauler in determining if the item should be collected, and instead of restricting collection of bulk items to the first Friday of the month, items may be placed out for collection on any trash collection day. A tag would need to be purchased at Borough Hall which will better manage the types of items placed out for collection to ensure they are not oversized, overweight or recyclable. A list of items that are not accepted for curbside collection will be defined such as computers, tires, televisions, and hazardous materials. Three pricing options of \$5, \$10, and \$15 would be provided defining the types of items within each category that are based primarily on weight. The policy, including the option to remove scrap metal items in-house for free, is subject to change while this new program is administered.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to adopt a Bulk Refuse Collection Policy. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Chief Tornielli. **Motion carried.**

Sidewalk Repairs – Mr. Lincoln shared his plans to table this conversation until the December meeting.

New Business

Water & Sewer Valve Cap Replacement Policy – Mr. Lincoln inquired as to the responsible party to replace the water and sewer valve caps found at the front of each property. Mr. Grassley indicated that previously the owner was responsible for the replacement of the sewer cap while the Borough replaced the water caps. However, the Borough has also been replacing the sewer caps for the past seven or eight years since most of the damage to the caps happens during instances of sewer stops. Mr. Lincoln noted a number of missing or broken caps and the hazards this causes for children as well as animals.

Residents were encouraged to report missing or broken caps to the Public Works Department for replacement.

Public Comment

Mr. Rogers provided an update on the Business Privilege Tax collection noting a report during a recent budget meeting of collecting \$235,000 for the year and his recent conversation with a representative of Berkheimer Tax Innovation of an additional amount collected bringing revenues up to \$240,000 in 2023. Mr. Rogers recommended to Berkheimer Tax Innovation that they obtain a list of paid accounts in 2019 to determine the accounts that are delinquent as a basis to begin collecting three-year delinquent taxes. He is unsure if they have taken advantage of this suggestion.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 p.m. by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mayor Kaag.

Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary