

BOROUGH OF WEST READING TRAFFIC & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

MARCH 13, 2024

The Borough of West Reading Traffic & Infrastructure Committee met on Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chairman Christopher Lincoln; Council Member Patrick Kaag; Borough Manager Dean Murray; Chief of Police Richard Tornielli; Public Works Director Kerry Grassley; Mayor Samantha Kaag; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

Visitors:

Karen Livingood, Resident

James Rogers, Resident

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

Public Comment

Mr. Rogers provided an update on Business Privilege Taxes indicating that as of two weeks ago Berkhiemer Tax Innovations has collected \$341,748 of the budgeted \$245,000. There are 220 accounts that should be filing returns by April 15th.

Mr. Rogers noted a number of occasions where he expressed concern about allowing parking within the 500 block of Grape Street and questioned the imbalance in amending regulations on Plane Alley after receipt of a complaint. Mr. Lincoln indicated that options are being reviewed for Plane Alley and the limited random possible spaces that would not interfere with driveway access. Striping parking in an alley was not recommended. Mr. Murray suggested the removal of permit parking restrictions on South Fifth Avenue between Sunset and Sycamore Roads, that do not have homes fronting this block, to free up eight parking spaces in the vicinity of Plane Alley. Fire Chief Moyer noted the Fire Code that requires a minimum 20' road width for fire access, the allowance of parking on one side would reduce the lane width even further. Mr. Lincoln noted that the ordinance already restricted parking in Plane Alley and that the signs were updated to reflect those regulations.

Mr. Rogers shared several T-bone intersections such as the 200 block of Kline Street, the 700 block of Court Street, Fourth Avenue and Pine Street, Kent Way and Franklin Street, Ann Street and Sunset Road, and North Sixth Avenue and Reading Avenue. Mr. Rogers recommended installing stop signs at the Sixth and Reading Avenues intersection. Mr. Lincoln reported that stop signs may not be used to slow traffic.

Mr. Rogers reported that 13 additional parking spaces have been created in the shopping center parking lot where the old bank drive-through had been located and questioned the addition of these spaces to the paid parking program. He shared that there are 51 parking spaces designated for staff of the shopping center. It was thought that the owner of the lot may have arrangements with neighboring businesses.

Mrs. Livingood inquired as to the cost difference between illuminated and non-illuminated stop signs. Mr. Lincoln was unsure of the cost difference and noted that PennDOT requires permitting of any illuminated sign that is considered a traffic signal. It was noted that these types of lighted signs were unreliable and would require battery, solar or hardwiring to operate, but could be reviewed for current day reliability.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the Traffic and Infrastructure Committee minutes of February 14, 2024. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Grassley. **Motion carried.**

New Business

By-Pass Lighting – Mr. Lincoln noted the various streetlights that are owned by the county, city or Met-Ed and plans to aerially wire the streetlights to function as intended until improvements can be made to the bypass.

Old Business

North Sixth and Reading Avenue Radar Sign Data – Chief Tornielli shared information gathered during the months of January and February highlighting 18,648 vehicles captured during the January timeframe and 12,000 vehicles during the abbreviated February timeframe. Ninety-nine percent of traffic was travelling less than 40-mph on a 35-mph roadway while speeds were being displayed on the vehicles approach of the sign. Options are being reviewed to provide continuous power to the device to gather more than a week of information at a time. Traffic enforcement details have increased this year, it was noted that enforcement to date is equivalent to eight months last year.

Delaney Circle – Mr. Murray shared a video of the New Castle Lawn & Landscape memorial garden design to be located across from the entrance to the pool and Museum Road that was shared with Delaney's family earlier today.

20-Minute Parking Policy – Mr. Lincoln noted a number of requests for 20-minute parking spaces and a desire to create a standardized policy for consistency in responding to these requests. A recommendation was made of allowing one space per side per block upon request with a designated timeframe of Monday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM to allow resident use of the space overnight, and to limit pedestrian traffic across Penn Avenue. Consideration was given to locating the requested spaces in the middle of the block to benefit all businesses on the same side of the block. Mr. Murray was in support of a pay to park program on Penn Avenue while providing permit parking on side streets for residents to promote turnover of parking spaces. Mr. Lincoln noted that Walker Consultants will be attending the meeting next month to discuss permit parking options.

Mr. Murray shared that last month's request by the hospital for multiple 20-minute parking spaces was reviewed and found to currently be designated in the ordinance, therefore signs have been installed. The 20-minute parking along the west side of South Seventh Avenue will be reviewed and discussed with the hospital to include changes in a future amendment.

A Penn Avenue 20-minute parking space policy will be drafted to allow one space per block, per side with the committee's review of the specific demographics and business composition for placement. The time limit parking would be in effect Monday through Saturday from 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM.

No Parking Zone Striping Policy – Chief Tornielli shared thoughts of an internal assessment policy that would limit striping to areas that impact pedestrian and traffic safety. A review of citations issued, crash history, and radar sign data would be determined as a group as to the significant need to stripe no parking zones.

Sidewalk Program – Mr. Moyer recommended a trial sidewalk replacement program to utilize budgeted funds to progress towards lifting the moratorium that was placed on sidewalk repairs a number of years ago. Equipment has been purchased and a concrete professional hired enabling the borough to replace sidewalk panels damaged by borough tree roots. The trial period would reveal manpower and funding requirements. Priority would be given to areas where trees were removed and provide the ability to begin enforcing other necessary sidewalk repairs.

Mr. Grassley spoke of plans to purchase a used stump grinder that would not damage sidewalks or lawns and a cost that exceeds the budget by \$1,900. It was recommended to deduct this overage from the allotted \$10,000 budgeted for sidewalk repairs. Verbiage would be shared with the solicitor prior to implementing a program. The moratorium would remain in effect during the trial period.

Motion to recommend Borough Council to approve a one-year trial program for sidewalk repairs up to the amount budgeted contingent upon solicitor approval. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Chief Tornielli. **Motion carried.**

Public Comment

Mr. Rogers referred to the comment earlier of the state prohibiting the installation of stop intersections to slow traffic and inquired about public safety concerns. Mr. Lincoln indicated that criteria must be met for an all-way stop intersection and recommended a study be performed with a PennDOT LTAP representative.

Mr. Rogers inquired as to Borough Council's decision to purchase a property on Penn Avenue and the ability to create paid parking spaces. It was noted that this is a decision of the Borough Council. Mr. Rogers requested consideration in creating paid parking within the municipal parking lot on Franklin Street.

Mrs. Livingood apologized as a resident to Mr. Grassley for the unnecessary work to remove graffiti on the fire station wall.

Mr. Lincoln thanked Mr. Murray for his service during his last Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 p.m. by Mr. Murray and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary