



# Administrative Report

## Mayor Eddie Moran

**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Frank Denbowski, Interim Managing Director  
**PREPARED BY:** Maritza Loaiza, Special Assistant  
**MEETING DATE:** April 11, 2022  
**AGENDA MEMO DATE:** April 6, 2022

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### **MAYOR:**

- Mayor Moran initiated discussions with many community leaders from various organizations such as the Reading School District, Berks Community Action Program, Olivet Boys and Girls Club, Reading Recreation Commission, The Village, Reality Check Project, local colleges and universities, parents, and many others. Discussions continue to identify how organizations can collaborate and do outreach. The Mayor attended after-school dismissal at the high school and middle schools to provide teens with information on programming from organizations that submitted their programming information.
- Mayor Moran is aware of a volunteer-based group called the Cultural Coalition initiated by Alvernia's O'Pake Institute that will provide strategic planning for ongoing initiatives and help support those leading those efforts to execute the programs. It will also undertake some of its own projects. The coalition is being chaired by Adonis Fleming, Graduate Assistant of Community Outreach for O'Pake. Mayor Moran chose Maritza Loaiza, Special Assistant in the Office of the Managing Director, as the City's representative and co-chair of the effort. The coalition consists of three task forces: arts and culture, community and neighborhood revitalization, and education and workforce development.

The community and neighborhood revitalization task force will help the City form a block captain program in which a captain is assigned to each block in Reading to facilitate community engagement and improve social connections.

The arts and culture task force will promote awareness of and celebrate local artists. Its first project will be to bring artists together to co-design a citywide communications campaign.

The education and workforce development task force will partner with organizations and institutions to enhance access to post-secondary opportunities in the workforce and higher education. That includes supporting workforce training programs and helping community members to connect with the colleges and universities in Berks County. One of their first projects will be assisting the Mayor's Youth Violence Prevention group in creating a directory of programming for access by any community organization interested in contributing and accessing to help our youth.

- Mayor Moran announced that Reading, PA, was chosen as one of ten communities along the greater Delaware River Watershed to host a local Climate Corps. PowerCorpsPHL is currently accepting applications to serve as AmeriCorps members on the new Reading Climate Corps for six months. Members will serve on a crew from Spring 2022 to Fall 2022. This opportunity is open to Reading community members ages 18-24. Citizens, nationals, or lawful permanent resident aliens can apply. Anyone currently unemployed or underemployed, with a high school diploma or GED, looking to build career skills and connections, is eager for growth, and wants to contribute to their community is encouraged to apply. English can be the applicant's first or second language, and this opportunity is background friendly. Young people with criminal records are encouraged to apply. Climate Corp Members will experience environmental stewardship in local parks, waterways, and other public spaces, professional development, skill-building, and connections to career pathways, supportive services provided to remove barriers to participating, giving back to the Reading community.

For more information on the program please see the attached flyer or visit:

<https://www.cognitoforms.com/PowerCorpsPHL1/ReadingClimateCorpsMemberApplication>

#### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:**

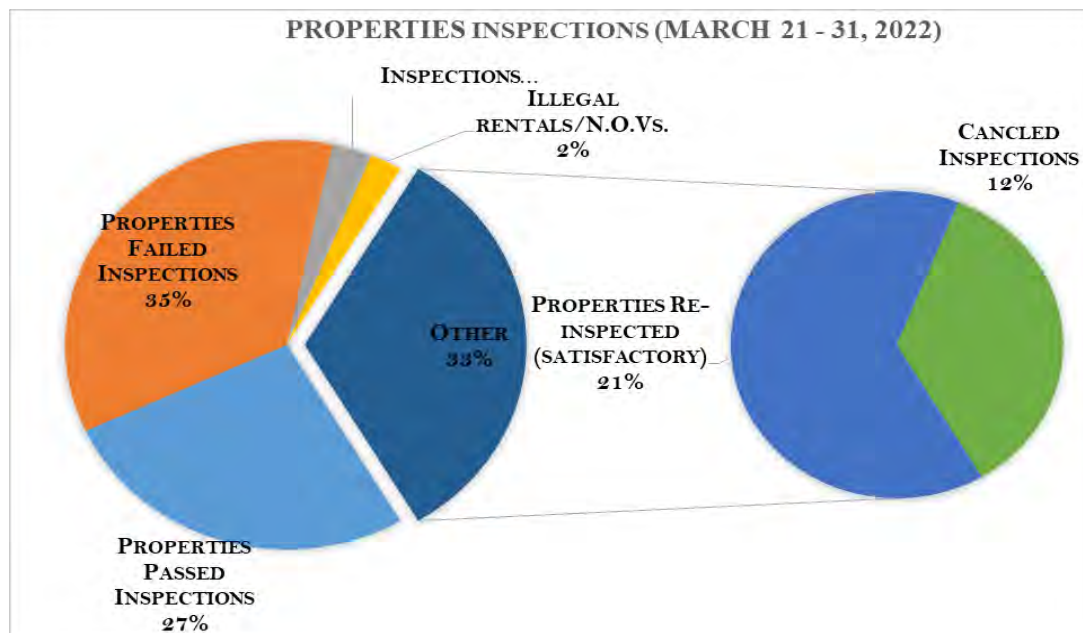
- On March 21<sup>st</sup>, the Community Development Department held the first Active Transportation Steering Committee with the PA Downtown Center to coordinate the development of an action plan.
- The Community Development's Property Maintenance Division provided the following Quality of Life Report for February 2022. Violations are broken down by City Council Districts:

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	Total
QOL 001 Accumulation of Garbage	6	17	14	10	6	13	66
QOL 002 Animal maintenance and waste	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
QOL 003 Improper disposal of Garbage	0	4	2	0	0	1	7
QOL 004 Highweeds and grass	1	6	2	0	3	0	12
QOL 006 Motor vehicles	0	3	2	3	1	2	11
QOL 009 Outside placement of indoor furniture of appliances	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
QOL 013 Storage containers out of place	2	6	2	1	2	12	25
QOL14 Storing or discarding appliances	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total QOLs	9	37	23	14	12	29	124

- The Community Development’s Property Maintenance Division provided the following Inspection Summary for February 2022:

**Two Week Summary**

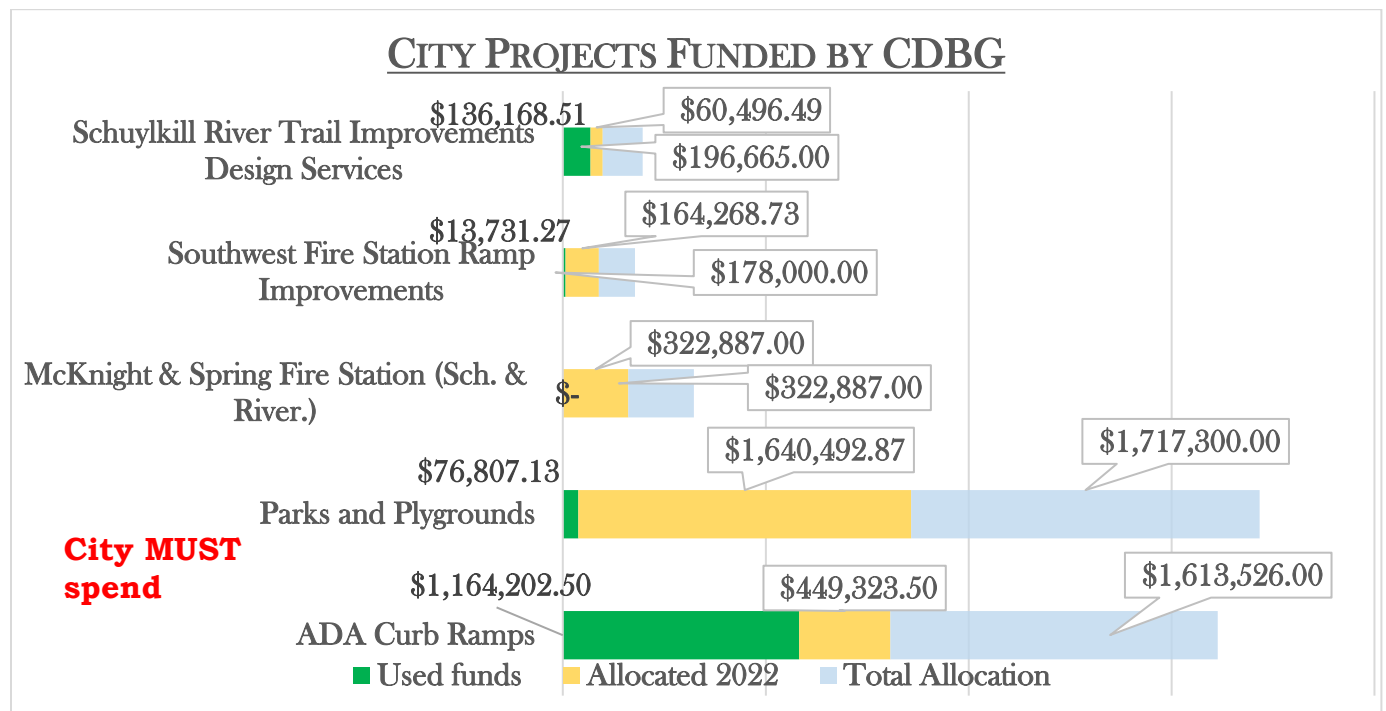
Properties Passed Inspections	183
Properties Failed Inspections	242
Inspections cancelled	20
Illegal rentals/N.O.Vs.	16
Properties Re-inspected (satisfactory)	146
Cancelled Inspections	80



- The Community Development's Zoning Division provided the following report on Planning and Zoning activities:

	21-Mar	31-Mar	Total
New permit applications rec'd City	12	9	21
Pending intake	9	10	19
Permit reviews completed	23	16	39
Application returned incomplete	0	1	1
Applications on hold/awaiting applicant	49	58	107
Applications pending/in review	81	51	132
Applications over 31 days	37	14	51
New Zoning Complaints/Enforcements	8	8	16
Open from 2021			0
New Inquiries/research new received	18	21	39
2022 Open inquiries	59	52	111
2021 Open inquiries			280
Site visits	6	0	6
Phone Calls	75	56	131
Walk-ins	129	99	228
Zoning Hearings (ZHB) April 13			

- The Community Development provided the following report on City projects funded CDBG:



## **DOWNTOWN:**

- The City successfully hosted the first First Friday Block Party of the season on April 1<sup>st</sup> despite the cold and windy weather.
- With the Reading Police Department's presence downtown out of their substation, they report all concerns to the Downtown Coordinator regarding trash, security checks of empty storefronts, and suggestions to support a safer downtown.
- The Downtown Coordinator is in the process of hiring additional downtown staff to help support a clean and safe downtown.

## **FINANCE:**

- The Finance Department's Information Technology staff completed the installation of the new Wi-Fi network at City Hall. Staff is now working on onboarding the City's remote sites.
- IT is modifying the City-owned iPads to allow for data usage reduction. Research continues into mobile device management solutions for city-owned iPads and cell phones to improve use.
- The Accounting Division continues to participate in Munis training for other areas such as capital assets. In addition, they continue to assist staff throughout the organization with questions and resolve issues.
- The Accounting staff has reviewed and responded to the external auditor's request list and provided the City's Controller with the information for further review and submission.
- The Finance Department's CSC provided the following data related to phone calls received:

REQUEST TYPE	REQUESTS	PERCENT
Trash Pick up	94	3.93%
Trash Enforcement	75	3.14%
Property Inspections Scheduling	71	2.97%
Property Maintenance Issues	57	2.38%
Meet with the Mayor	43	1.8%
Building and Trades Permits	41	1.71%
Zoning Inquiry	35	1.46%
Tire Removal/Pick Up	30	1.25%
Street Sweeping	26	1.09%
No Heat	21	0.88%
Recycling Pickup	20	0.84%

Trash Cans Outside Too Long	17	0.71%
Clean City Projects	17	0.71%
Graffiti vandalism removal	15	0.63%
Trash Education	14	0.59%
Handicap parking	14	0.59%
Property Maintenance Fees	13	0.54%
Zoning Violation	12	0.5%
Unpermitted construction activity	12	0.5%
Infestation	12	0.5%
Feeding Animals	12	0.5%
Street light out or malfunctioning	11	0.46%
Sewer Inquiries	11	0.46%
Illegal Dumping	11	0.46%
Tree Trimming Private Property	10	0.42%
Housing Inspection	10	0.42%
Collections - Codes	10	0.42%
Structure	8	0.33%
Street Sign Request	8	0.33%
Street Repair or Paving	8	0.33%
Unsecured/Open Property	7	0.29%
Parks general	7	0.29%
Dog dirt	7	0.29%
Sewer Grates Catch Basins	6	0.25%
Sewer backup	543	22.71%
Property Maintenance Unpaid Fees Request	229	9.58%
Needs Recycling Bin	181	7.57%
Yardwaste	174	7.28%
Pothole or sunken utility cut	143	5.98%
Recycling Electronics	121	5.06%
Housing Permits	105	4.39%
Mold/Mildew	6	0.25%
Line Painting	6	0.25%

Hauler Issue	6	0.25%
Dead animal	6	0.25%
Tree Questions Permits	5	0.21%
Street sign damaged or vandalized	5	0.21%
No Water	5	0.21%
Historic preservation assistance	5	0.21%
Certificate of Transfer	5	0.21%
Abandoned Property	5	0.21%
Traffic signal out or malfunctioning	4	0.17%
Sewers - Sign Posting	4	0.17%
Plumbing Issue	4	0.17%
Non-Emergency Police	4	0.17%
Meet with the Managing Director	4	0.17%
Abandoned Vehicles on Property	4	0.17%
Trash City of Reading Owned Property	3	0.13%
Sidewalk Construction Permits	3	0.13%
Quality of Life Violations	3	0.13%
Property Inspections	3	0.13%
Certificate of Occupancy	3	0.13%
Animal Control - Live Animals	3	0.13%
Vehicle Nuisance	2	0.08%
Tree Trimming Public	2	0.08%
Street Inquiries	2	0.08%
Roofs/Drainage	2	0.08%
Recycling Education	2	0.08%
Over grown grass and weeds	2	0.08%
Odor	2	0.08%
No Trash Hauler	2	0.08%
Building & Trades Inspection Plumbing	2	0.08%
Building & Trades Inspection Mechanical	2	0.08%
Sewers Storm Renewal/Repair	1	0.04%
Sewer Billing Inquiry	1	0.04%
Rooms for Rent	1	0.04%

Playground Maintenance	1	0.04%
Other	1	0.04%
No Electric	1	0.04%
Indoor Furniture	1	0.04%
Illicit Discharge	1	0.04%
Illegal Conversions	1	0.04%
Hoarding Clutter Situation	1	0.04%
Health Bills	1	0.04%
Electrical Issue	1	0.04%
Curb/Sidewalk Repair Enforcement	1	0.04%
Building & Trades Inspection Building	1	0.04%

- The Finance Department’s Purchasing Division provided the following update on current and upcoming projects:
  - **Road Program.** Submissions are due by April 5<sup>th</sup>. The project involves removing and replacing roadway pavement and related items such as subbase repairs, base repairs, leveling, ADA curb ramp improvement and associated signal improvements, pavement markings, and loop detection systems. All paving work must be substantially complete by October 31, 2022, and all ADA improvements by August 31, 2023.
  - **Reading Police Department Training and Special Operations Facility Engineering Project RFP.** Submissions from qualified individuals or firms are due by April 14<sup>th</sup>. The RFP is for design engineering service for the new Reading Police Department Training and Special Operations Facility.
  - **RFQ – Penn Square Properties** – The selection review committee completed interviews of those who submitted proposals.
- The Finance Department’s Grants Division provided the following update on current and upcoming projects:
  - **600 Penn Project (DCED)** is on schedule, and the anticipated construction completion date is June 1, 2022.
- The Finance Department’s Grant Coordinator attended the 2022 Grants Funding Landscape for your Next Technology–Enabled Project in Education or Government (sponsored by HP). HP, AMD, and Microsoft partner to support Grants Office LLC to create the HP Grants Support Program. The Grants Office team shares information on grant-seeking opportunities and how to best position grant applications for success.



- City Controller Michael Oppenheimer assisted, reviewed, and/or reported the following reports were submitted timely:
  - DCED Annual Financial Report (Herbein prepares, City reviews, and submits)
  - AG385 Pension Census Report
  - Act 205 Pension Report
  - Annual External Audit (currently gathering documentation and coordinating City activity)

**FIRE:**

- The Fire Department would like to share that the Reading's Fire and Police hockey team won the 2022 Battle of the Badges hockey game on March 27th against Allentown's Police hockey team. The final score was 10-3.
- The 9<sup>th</sup> and Marion Fire Station project site work is progressing. Below are two photos taken on April 1<sup>st</sup> showing the progress at the worksite:



## **HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION:**

- Starting on January 1<sup>st</sup>, and as of April 1<sup>st</sup>, HRC has:
  - 138 total rent and utility assistance applications were received (An increase of 30 applications since last reported).
    - 132 applications for rental assistance
      - 115 applicants were facing eviction
      - 8 applicants were not actively facing eviction
      - 3 applicants resided outside of the City but within the County.)
    - 6 applications for utility assistance
  - Since January 1<sup>st</sup>, HRC Director has attended 15 eviction court proceedings at District Judge Butler's courtroom to provide landlord-tenant mediation, rental assistance, and other social service referrals when needed.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES:**

- The Human Resource Department Training Coordinator announced the safety training schedule for employees. Sessions are set to begin on April 20<sup>th</sup>. Webinar-based training is also scheduled to start on March 23<sup>rd</sup> for the entire organization.

## **LIBRARY:**

- The Reading Public Library received the following feedback from a patron:
  - “<Reading Public Library> has an incredible selection of books, especially those pertaining to local history... Their books have provided me with many hours of education and entertainment.”

## **PUBLIC WORKS:**

- Public Works Solid Waste Manager attended the following training:
  - R-Vision Recycling Cart Software (early March)
  - Professional Recyclers Of Pennsylvania (PROP) (mid-March). This training will provide certification upon completion and exam.
- Public Works staff has completed:
  - 33 clean-up projects resulted in 81 bags and 30 bulk items picked up.
  - Penn Street Corridor continues to be cleaned, with trash cans emptied daily. Since last reported, a total of 551 bags of trash were collected.
  - 32 tires and 52 televisions were collected due to illegal dumping in numerous locations throughout the City.

- Public Works Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) is compliant with all NPDES discharge and Air Quality permit requirements. Staff is monitoring the biological process to plan for process control changes to maintain compliance as the temperatures increase in preparation for the more stringent summer permit limits.
- Public Works completed tree-trimming (crown raising, pruning of dead, dying, diseased wood) in the following City neighborhoods:
  - Spruce Street from South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to South 7<sup>th</sup> Street
  - Willow Street from South 5<sup>th</sup> Street to South 7<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - West Douglas Street from North Front to Schuylkill Avenue (currently underway)
- Public Works held the Bernhart's Dam pre-construction meeting on April 5, 2022. The physical construction is anticipated to begin on April 18, 2022.

The draw-down permit becomes active on April 15, 2022. The construction is anticipated to last a minimum of 15 days as the draw-down permit limits the lowering of the lake to 1 foot per day. The Spillway is 13 feet tall. Upon completion of demolition, the stream will be allowed to make a natural meandering path to the dam exit. A fence will be installed around the island when conditions permit, and EPA will conduct remediation evaluations for Lead contamination.

- Public Works is required by the State to offer a recycling program to residents due to the size of our municipality. While the State does not supply major financial support, it provides an annual recycling performance grant based on recycled material's total tonnage within specific material categories.

The program's efforts for the 2020 calendar year resulted in a grant award of approximately \$146,283.90. The PA DEP estimates the funds will be disbursed in four to six weeks and may still make adjustments to the final total. The award increased by 25% compared to the 2019 calendar year (\$116,389.00) due to increased residential tonnage, which is a significant factor in determining the grant award. In 2020, the City's recycling program saw a 17% increase in tonnage (4,785 tons in 2019 to 5,632 tons in 2020). This increase can be mainly attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic as residents stayed at home more and purchased goods online, resulting in more recyclable materials from mailings.

This award will be allocated as revenue in the recycling budget. Historically this 904 recycling grant award is used as general revenue, compared to the 902 recycling grant, which is specifically limited to capital improvements.