



Administrative Report

Mayor Eddie Moran

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

DOWNTOWN:

- The Downtown Coordinator worked alongside Public Works staff to plant flower pots on Penn Street. Many in the community have provided positive feedback on the beautification effort.
- The Downtown Coordinator is working with the Climate Corps of Reading on a weed-pulling effort throughout the commercial corridor. Climate Corps staff are doing a great job on this effort.
- The Penn Street Market is open every Thursday in the 600 block of Penn Street by the State Parking Lot. Fresh fruits, vegetables, and other treats are available from 10 am-2 pm. The market season will run until September 29th.
- The first full-time Downtown Ambassador started on July 1st. Additional ambassadors are scheduled to begin throughout July, with a fully operational first and second shift by mid-to-late- August.

Downtown Ambassadors can be identified by their purple uniform shirts that have Downtown Ambassadors printed on the backside. In addition to getting to know businesses and assisting in keeping the downtown safe and clean, ambassadors will also receive training in CPR, Fire and Police contact, a YMCA mental health seminar, and additional training related to substance abuse issues.

- First Friday in June was held in the 600 block of Penn Street. The event was well attended and featured music, food, community partners, and live salsa lessons. First Friday was not held in July due to the 4th of July holiday weekend. The next First Friday event is scheduled for August 5th at the Goggleworks and will feature music, food, dance

lessons, community partners, and Goggleworks artists. The final event is scheduled for September 2nd and will kick off Hispanic Heritage Month.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

- The Community Development Department was commended on its efforts by Mr. Nadab O. Bynum, HUD Director of Community Planning and Development. The acknowledgment resulted from the City's HUD audit, which included a review of CDBG Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnership, Emergency Solution Grant (ESG), and Affirmative Fair Housing.
- CD participated in a housing forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Berks County, Reading-Berks Association of Realtors, and CELG. The discussion focused on housing trends through 2030 and was presented to local municipalities, realtors, and investors. The City expressed the need for all housing types, including low- to moderate-income, market-rate, student housing, and luxury apartments.
- CD staff completed the property list for the Sidewalk Repair Program. A total of 57 applications were received, and 29 of those 57 met the City's eligibility requirements as stipulated in Ordinance 35-2019, which passed in September 2019.
- The CD Property Maintenance Division has completed 1,486 inspections. Of those 1,486 inspections, 228 residential units passed the 2-year inspection, 478 failed their inspection, and 535 passed after rectifying reported violations.
- The City's Lead Hazard Program completed the 3rd quarter of HUD and DOH monitoring. The City has received five applications, with the first lead remediation occurring in late July or early August.
- The CD Department would like to welcome Mr. C. Thomas Neff. He was named the City's Zoning Administrator on June 16th.

FINANCE:

- The Finance Department's IT Division completed the email archiving setup and syncing to the cloud.
- The IT Division has deployed new tablets for use by the City's Property Maintenance Division and Fire Department.
- The Finance Department's Citizens Service Center has begun to receive delinquent BPL receipts from ARB, a collection service. A total of \$8,344.84 was received from ARB in May.
- The Finance Department's CSC has begun mailing 2022 Per Capita Tax bills.
- The Finance Department received a request from the PA Department of Revenue regarding the City's PURTA (PA Utility Realty Tax Act) Report. The inquiry pertained to the significant increase (31%) in Realty Transfer Tax and Property Tax revenue in 2021.

- In 2020, there were 1,963 realty transfer transactions. In 2021, there were 2,580 realty transfer transactions, which increased by 617 transactions.
- In 2020, the millage collected 17.689 versus 18.129 millage in 2021.
- The City Controller has the 2021 financial audit substantially complete.
- The City Controller continues to meet with City Accounting staff in an ongoing effort to find ways to improve current City processes.

FIRE:

- The Reading Fire Department received notice that ten members are recipients of the 2022 Burn Prevention Lehigh Valley Spirit Courage Awards. They are being recognized for bravery demonstrated at three separate incidents in 2021.

An award ceremony will be held in October at their annual recognition event.

- The RFD's new 93-foot tower ladder truck is expected to be delivered in the next two weeks.
- The RFD received a \$15,000 State grant which was awarded earlier this year. The monies will go towards purchasing a drone and power saws for the Aerial and Rescue Apparatus. Once obtained, the drone will be housed in the Fire Marshall's Office, as Lt. Kirk Litzenberger has the required credentials and license to operate the drone.
- The Fire Civil Service Board conducted testing for entry-level positions on June 18th. Out of 94 applicants, 41 passed the exam and will be moving on to step two, which is the CPAT portion.
- The RFD's Southwest Station Ramp project is now complete, and the station is back in full operation.
- The 9th and Marion Fire Station project site work is progressing. Below is a current photo of progress at the worksite:



The final steel beam will be set on Friday, July 15th. A small ceremony will be held at 10 am at the site. Invitations should have been distributed at the time of this report.

- The RFD would like to share that Mark “Dewey” Kulp, who passed away in January 2021 of COVID-19, finally had his ashes laid to rest on June 14th during a small ceremony. The delay was due to the time taken to create a memorial bench.

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION:

- Starting on January 1st, and as of July 1st, HRC has:
 - 302 total rent and utility assistance applications were received (An increase of 81 applications since last reported).
 - 223 applications for rental assistance were facing evictions
 - 2 applications were withdrawn by tenants
 - 5 applications were denied due to not meeting the program requirements
 - 14 applicants were not actively facing eviction
 - 4 applicants resided outside of the City but within the County.
 - 49 applications for utility assistance
 - 2 applications were denied for exceeding HUD’s income guidelines
 - 3 application was denied due to not meeting program requirements

HUMAN RESOURCES:

- The Human Resource Department would like to welcome the following new employees to the City of Reading organization:
 - Youssouf Camara, Part-time Grounds Maintenance/Parks in the Public Works Department as of June 28th.
 - Frances Rodriguez, Development & Inspection Clerk in the Property Maintenance Division as of July 1st.
 - Quincy Twyman, as an Inspector in the Property Maintenance Division as of July 1st.
 - Carmelo Ruiz, Jr., as an Inspector in the Property Maintenance Division as of July 1st.
 - Carlos Diaz-Melendez, Full-time Downtown Ambassador Specialist as of July 1st.
 - Matthew Cruz, Part-time Data Transfer Clerk in the Building & Trades Division as of July 1st.
 - Alexis Hersberger, Part-time Auditing Assistant in the Finance Department as of July 1st.

- The Human Resource Department would like to thank the following employees who retired for their service and commitment to the City of Reading organization:
 - Thomas Kendall, Equipment Operator II in the Sewers Division, retired on June 15th.
 - William Simmons, Criminal Investigator in the Police Department, retired on June 22nd.
 - Daniel Wade, Firefighter in the Fire Department, retired on June 29th.
- The Human Resource Department is currently working with Police on the promotional list for Sergeant and Lieutenant. Interviews were held on June 16th, and the Police Civil Service Board signed the finalized list on June 24th.
- The Human Resource Department held a written test for the Fire Department on June 18th. Out of 94 applicants, 84 completed the exam. Out of those 84, 41 passed the exam and will continue to the next step of the process.

LIBRARY:

- The Reading Public Library's Summer@RPL program started on Monday, June 13th, and recently received a \$5,000 grant from BCAP towards the program.
- The RPL Executive Director attended the Harwood Public Innovator Lab: Getting Started on behalf of the City. The event was held on June 30th and July 1st, with more scheduled throughout the upcoming year.
- The RPL Board the creation of a budget and design drawings for a new Jerome Marcus Meeting Commons for the Northeast library branch.
- The Reading Public Library still has the following available positions:
 - 1 part-time Bilingual Library Assistant
 - 1 full-time Bilingual Library Assistant
 - 1 full-time Youth Services Coordinator

Anyone interested in applying, please visit the RPL website at:
<http://readingpubliclibrary.org/employment-opportunities>

POLICE:

- The Reading Police Department will have the National Night Out event on Tuesday, August 2nd, on the 500 block of Penn Street. The City is actively promoting the event and hopes for a large turnout.
- The RPD conducted various community engagement activities. Led by Lt. Lance Lillis, the following activities were held:
 - Presentations were held at the Salvation Army Summer Camp and Amanda Stoudt Elementary School.

- Several RPD Officers participated in the Reading Fightins Dream League on June 18th.
 - The first Cops and Cones event was a huge success. It was held at the Great American Creamery on June 24th in collaboration with the RPD Chaplains. Pastor Jim Farnsworth purchased three tubs of ice cream for distribution at the event. 10 Officers were on location to interact with community members, as available (in-between calls). The RPD mascot, Chase the Dog, was at the event and a Police Motorcycle was available for photos. Lt. Lillis also walked throughout the neighboring blocks to interact with residents and invite them to the event.
- Other chaplains/pastors/churches with interest in sponsoring future Cones w/ Cops this summer.

PUBLIC WORKS:

- Public Works Street team filled 575 potholes and street cuts in the month of June.
- Public Works staff has also completed:
 - 28 clean-up projects resulted in 152 bags, 20 yard-waste bags, and 16 bulk items
 - 12 graffiti removal jobs
 - 11 dead animals were picked up
 - 563 bags of litter and trash were collected from Penn Street daily cleaning
- Public Works picked up 71 televisions and 64 tires at various sites throughout the City.
- Public Works delivered 50 recycling bins to residents.
- Public Works has conducted litter and trash removal services at Riverfront Park daily.
- Public Works Clean City Coordinator met with VoiceUp Berks to provide supplies to 35 Penske volunteers who cleaned and mulched Veterans Grove at City Park.
- Public Works Clean City Coordinator oversaw the City's Residential Clean-Out Day, also known as Dumpster Day. 62 volunteers from the Reading High Football team, Berks County Adult and Juvenile Probation, BCAP, and the RealDeal610 assisted in cleaning up various locations around the City, including Centre Park, 6th & Laurel, and Front & Greenwich. The event collected a total of 27.55 tons of trash.
- Public Works Sewer team attended one of two training events held by Met-Ed on street-related electrical problems.
- Public Works Sewer's Superintendent, Robert Gensemer, was elected to serve on the Berks County Water and Sewer Association (BCWSA) as a board member-at-large.