



Administrative Report

Mayor Eddie Moran

TO: City Council
FROM: William M. Heim, Managing Director
PREPARED BY: Maritza Loaiza, Special Assistant
MEETING DATE: September 12, 2022
AGENDA MEMO DATE: September 7, 2022

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

- The Community Development Department attended a meeting hosted by the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) to discuss “Franklin Square,” which is an initiative by the GRCA and supported by the Berks Alliance. The discussion was focused on establishing a designated focus group to coordinate several important tasks, such as attracting high-use businesses.
- The CD Department reviewed and submitted proposed revisions to the Residential Tax Abatement Program (ReTAP) to City Council for consideration and inclusion.

DOWNTOWN:

- The Downtown Coordinator ended the First Friday Block Party season on Friday, September 2nd. Instead of the evening block party, a lunchtime event named “Taste of Reading” was held in the Penn Street Courtyard. Thank you to Salsa Burrito, Doubletree Hotel, JuiceC Juice Bar, La Casa del Chimi, Mi Casa Su Casa, and Homemade Cravings for the free samples provided during the event.
- The Downtown Ambassador staff is growing. Currently, there are two full-time ambassadors and two part-time ambassadors. All have received radio training from the Reading Police Department, which will assist them in effectively responding to emergencies while downtown.

Additional ambassadors will be added to the team soon as interviews are ongoing.

- Thank you to the Shade Tree Commission for their assistance in cleaning the center barrier on the 500 block of Penn Street.

FINANCE:

- The Finance Department's Information Technology Division provided the following updates on IT-related activities:
 - Completed training related to Human Resource Capital Management (HCM) implementation, started ReadyForms checks and user roles assignment and established the necessary workflow settings.
 - Staff assisted in Police Records Division's temporary relocation to the Penn Room in conjunction with their remodeling project.
 - Discussions started regarding anticipated IT needs for the new 9th & Marion Fire Station.
- The Finance Department's Purchasing Division provided the following updates related to projects:
 - Dumping Abatement RFP - The City, on behalf of the Berks County Cooperative Purchasing Council (BCCPC), put out an RFP to mitigate dumping around the City and in the vicinity of Lower Alsace Township. It was advertised to include the City, Lower Alsace Township, and Mt. Penn Borough. As no bid responses were received, a re-bid is anticipated.
 - 3rd and Spruce Rec Center Roof Replacement - New roof for the 3rd and Spruce Recreation Center. Bids are due on September 21st.
 - 3rd and Spruce Rec Center HVAC Improvements - New HVAC improvements at the 3rd and Spruce Recreation Center. Bids are due on September 21, 2022.
 - Upcoming Projects:
 - Registering Abandoned Properties for Community Development
 - 3rd and Spruce All Abilities Playground – Specifications were recently received.
 - 3rd and Spruce Rehabilitation (design)
 - Sidewalk Project for Community Development
 - Reading Skate Park Construction
 - 6th and Amity Playground
 - Reading Iron Playground
 - City Hall Roof Replacement – Phase II – Specifications recently received
- The City Controller continues budget preparations for the 2023 fiscal year.

- The City Controller is drafting the 2023 Minimum Municipal Obligations for the City’s defined benefit and compensation plans for inclusion in the 2023 budget.
- The Finance Department’s Project Manager provided the following updates related to capital projects:
 - Fire Museum HVAC – Engineering proposals review is complete.
 - Peace Dove Conservation - Site meetings with two conservators, have occurred.
 - City Hall HVAC – Review of engineering proposals has begun.
 - Several park projects and the Pagoda site visits have occurred.
 - Completed Projects:
 - Essick Park Asphalt Removal
 - Southwest Apron
 - Bernhart’s Dam
 - Bernhart’s Lead/Creek (EPA confirms the site is safe with current use)
 - 11th and Pike Phase 1
 - City Park Pavilion
 - City Park Small Pavilion
- The Finance Department provided the following updates on the AHL Grant activities:
 - Enid Narvaez was welcomed to the team as the Community Engagement Coordinator on August 16th.
 - A Level 1 MOU was completed, and the first signed agreement is with Berks Counseling Center for the Hands Across Reading display.

FIRE:

- The Reading Fire Department and Muhlenberg Township Fire Department were awarded an AFG grant to replace all fire hoses on the current frontline engine companies.
- The Reading Fire Department’s 93 ft. tower ladder truck was delivered on Thursday, August 11th. Below is an image of the new truck.



- The 9th and Marion Fire Station project site work is progressing. Below is a picture of the project's progress as of August 12th:



HUMAN RESOURCES:

- The Human Resource Department would like to welcome the following new employees to the City of Reading organization:
 - Benamy Ruiz-Gomez, Downtown Ambassador (part-time), August 8th
 - Evangeline Ortiz, Clerk Typist 1 (part-time), August 8th
 - William Heim, Managing Director, August 15th .
 - Felix Freytiz III, Chief of Staff, August 22nd
 - Brandalee Davis, Planner 1 in Community Development, September 1st
 - Scarly Canela, Development & Inspection Clerk in PMI, September 1st
- The Human Resource Department, on behalf of the entire City of Reading organization, would like to thank the following employees for their years of commitment and service
 - Frank Denbowski, Mayor's Chief of Staff, retirement effective on August 17th.

LIBRARY:

- The Reading Public Library has officially completed Summer@RPL 2022 with 180 participants at the Main Library branch. Participation increased in comparison to the attendance numbers for summers 2020 and 2021.

During this year's Summer@RPL, a total of 96 programs were held and attended by 1,769 people at the Main Library branch. 250 take-home activities were also distributed.

- The RPL is offering free weekly art workshops for all ages. The schedule is as follows:
 - Watercolor at the Northeast branch on Wednesdays 4pm-6pm
 - Children’s Illustration at Southeast branch on Thursdays from 3pm-5pm
 - Photography on Saturdays from 10:30am-12pm
 - Drawing at the Northwest branch on Mondays from 3pm-5pm
 - Mojigante Maskmaking at the Northwest branch from 4pm-6pm
- The Reading Library District Center launched a new streaming video platform on a trial basis called Kanopy. The trial will run from now through July 11, 2023. This platform will allow community members to stream films, documentaries, and children’s content with their library cards.

POLICE:

- The Reading Police Department worked with the FBI and NYPD to successfully recover an abducted juvenile on August 31st. The recovery effort took less than 12 hours after the initial report. The FBI is currently filing federal charges against the suspect relative to this crime.
- The RPD conducted another Operation Cease Fire detail on Thursday, September 1st. The RPD was assisted by Berks County’s District Attorney’s Office Drug Task Force, Berks County Adult Probation, Berks County Juvenile Probation, Berks County Sheriff’s Office, PA State Police, and PA State Police. The detail focused on areas of McKnight Street, Tulpehocken Street, Church Street, South 11th Street, and Cotton Street. The detail produced the following results:
 - 2 Misdemeanor Arrests
 - 1 Warrants Served
 - 5 Home Visits of Individuals on Supervision
 - 1 Traffic Stops
 - 1 Park and Walk
- The RPD’s Community Response Coordinator continues attending various community and recruiting events. Recent participation includes a nighttime homeless coalition detail.

An upcoming event for the weekend of October 7th-10th in honor of National Faith and Blue is currently being planned.

PUBLIC WORKS:

- Public Works staff has also completed:
 - 40 sites (primarily illegal dump sites) were cleaned up, which resulted in 132 bags of litter, and 32 bulk items
 - 111 recycling bins delivered
 - 15 graffiti abatement projects

- 4 volunteer cleanups were facilitated.
 - 57 volunteers.
 - 13 volunteer hours
 - 30 bags of trash and litter collected
 - 10 bags of yard waste collected
- Public Works Sewers team were recently awarded the Eastern Pennsylvania Water Pollution Control Operators Association's Collection System Excellence Award and the Collection System Safety Award.
- Public Works hosted Alvernia University's incoming freshmen students for a day of service as part of a Sustainability Camp.
- The Public Works Sustainability Manager is working with Penn State University students to update the Green House Gas (GHG) emissions survey.
- Public Works has begun installing sign channels for the Street Sweeper Program expansion into the Reading Housing Authority's (RHA) Oakbrook and Glenside homes.