

The managing director highlighted the report distributed electronically and attached to the agenda (see below). He noted the distribution of the new quarterly metrics report from the administration.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for the administration to work with the Village to help identify a location in the City Park area that will allow the Village to easily connect with youth. The managing director stated that he is working with RAWA and the Village to arrange coexistence in the building at 25 N. 11<sup>th</sup> Street.

**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** William M. Heim, Managing Director  
**PREPARED BY:** William M. Heim, Managing Director  
**MEETING DATE:** April 24, 2023  
**AGENDA MEMO DATE:** April 19, 2023

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#### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:**

The Community Development Department has the following updates:

- Community Development received HUD’s approval for HOME ARP allocation plan in the total amount of \$3,580,856.00. Allocated for administration and planning \$ 179,042.80 the equivalent of 5%. Whereas 95% for allocated to single-room occupancy (SRO) and affordable housing \$3,401,813.20.
- Delegates of EPA region III visited with the Lead Paint Hazard unit on April 6 to assess public outreach effort made by staff. EPA will provide more flyers to increase awareness of the program throughout the City.
- Conducted first quarter evaluation report by PA DOH for progress with lead abatement as well as number of completed units. To date number of intakes 18, site visit completed 12 and finalized risk assessment for 2 additional properties. Scheduled to clean 4 more units by June 2023.
- Property Maintenance division, completed 103 quality of life inspections/citation, scheduled 51 health, fire and safety inspections, 183 residential inspection for 2-year or property transfer, 3 court appearances and issued 7 notice of violations.
- Building and Trade received 34 permit applications, two sets of full plans (architectural, MEP), completed reviewing 4 plan reviews, approved 6 plans, issued 40 building permits for various contraction tasks, and approved 4 cases of utilities restorations. Building and trade Inspectors approved 67 inspections and denied 8 inspections.
- Building and Trade will assist City Project Manager developing bid package for the demolition of Mineral Spring Hotel. The funds for demolition will be encumbered from contracted services 011038-42160.
- Historic preservation Specialist, received 5 applications of completion of appropriateness (COA), approved 2 applications, issued 2 building permits, and supported 35 City residents with their applications whom requesting a modification to exterior of residential or commercial façade.
- Attended a meeting with Helping Harvest, Our City of Reading, state representatives, PA DCED and City administration staff to address funding for renovating the Goggle 2 building. It was decided to focus attention on workforce development, diversification and discover other opportunities for funding this opportunity.

- Met with zoning staff after the departure of Mr. Thomas Neff. Collectively agreed to hold weekly meetings for discussing incoming requests, pending approvals and workload. Staff were made aware that Ms. Ruth Sassaman will resume the duties of Acting Zoning Administrator. A work plan was put in place to address 17 zoning cases that are more than 31 days past due.
- Developing comprehensive scope of work to discuss with the Department of Community and Economic Development for submitting a grant application funding a Comprehensive plan. The estimated grant application is \$150,000. County and City will provide in kind labor cost to the order of 50%. In kind cost will include GIS operator developing necessary reports.

**FINANCE:**

The Finance Department’s IT Division has the following updates:

- **CSC Update**

- The CSC Manager, Maria Kantner is reviewing a “Permitting, Planning and Business Licensing Guide” drafted by the City’s Planning Consultant which once completed will provide valuable information to assist customers of the Citizen’s Service Center.
- It was determined that due to changing postal regulations, the City will need to research and acquire postage metering equipment which utilizes Intelligent Mail Indicia (IMI) technology and budget for the purchase in fiscal year 2025.
- To prevent delays in addressing sewer back up issues reported to the CSC, staff has changed their procedure and begun adding an email to the sewer back up service request type to communicate directly with the sewer team vehicle immediately upon receipt of the report.
- The CSC Manager attended the Berks Income Tax Collection Committee meeting held on March 30, 2023.

- **Accounting Update**

- The Accounting Manager is identifying Project and General Ledger reports to provide to the City Controller and the external auditors for their work on the City’s financial audit.
- The Accounting Manager is working to provide necessary access to the City’s new Grants Coordinator in the grant manager modules of the Munis accounting system.
- The Accounting Manager met with the Public Works Property Manager, Carlos Torres to facilitate completing certain Maximus activity reporting necessary in conjunction with finishing the 2021 cost allocation project.
- The Accounting Manager is reviewing resumes of Penn State intern candidates.

- **Grants Update**

- A no cost extension request will be submitted ahead of the May 1<sup>st</sup> deadline with information to be provided by the Advancing Health Literacy (AHL) team.
- Work on the City’s application for a Charging & Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) grant is progressing. A community meeting in April is in the planning stages and requests for letters of support have been sent to the appropriate legislators. Discussions regarding a partnership with RACC are also taking place.
- Mineral Springs Park has been identified as the focus of a planned DCED Multimodal Transportation Fund application.
- A meeting was held between City staff and representatives of the WCR Center of the Arts regarding possible funding sources for a construction project. In the absence of ARPA funding, potential CDBG funding was discussed as well as ways the City can offer technical or other support.

- **Purchasing Update**

### **Recently Awarded**

- **Skateboard Park** - Awarded to Land-Tech Enterprises of Warrington, PA in the amount of \$744,890.00
- **Willow Creek Dam Removal** - Awarded to Flyway Excavating of Mt. Joy, PA in the amount of \$64,700.00.
- **Plum and Franklin Street Fire House HVAC Project** - Awarded to The Warko Group, Reading, PA in the amount of \$340,331.00.

### **Current Projects**

- **19<sup>th</sup> Ward Pumping Station**  
This project is for the delivery of engineering services for the design, permitting, preparation of plans and technical specifications including final contract documents for bidding, bid phase services and design services during construction associated with the new 19<sup>th</sup> Ward Pump Station. Bids were received on 3/29 from each of the five companies approved via the RFQ process. A selection committee is currently reviewing the responses and interviews will be conducted with two selected companies.
  - **Street Light Poles**  
This project is for the purchase of Street light poles by the Public Works (PW) division. Two bids were received and the Bid Schedule and Recommendation Memo have been provided to the Acting PW Director for completion.
  - **Buttonwood Gateway Improvements Project – Phase 1 – Sanitary/Storm Sewer Rehabilitations**  
This project provides for the installation of sanitary and storm sewer improvements. As two bids were received that exceeded the budget estimate, a re-bid is planned.
  - **275<sup>th</sup> Commemorative City of Reading Book**  
Only one proposal was received for this project which has been rejected. A re-bid is planned.
  - **Summit Chase Street Lighting**  
Four bids were received on March 22, 2023. A Recommendation Memo and Bid Schedule were forwarded to Public Works division staff for completion.
  - **Laboratory Services for the WWTP**  
This bid will seek a vendor to conduct laboratory analysis for the parameters that are required by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit beyond the wet chemistry that is performed routinely in house to maintain plant compliance. This analysis includes, but is not limited to, pesticides, semi-volatiles, volatiles, organics, whole effluent toxicity, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) and metals. The proposals are due on April 5, 2023.
- **Controller Update**
    - City Controller, Michael Oppenheimer continues working with members of the Accounting department staff preparing for the 2022 fiscal year external audit.
  - **Advancing Health Literacy (AHL) Grant**
    - The second ECHO series webinar was held on March 14th and included 107 participants.
    - A media campaign which includes billboard creation is in process.

- A videographer has been selected to work on the misinformation toolkit.
- Additional touchpoints were made with community organizations and elected officials.
- Upcoming events include the Latino Health Summit from April 6<sup>th</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup>.
- **Capital Projects**
  - The Plum and Franklin fire station roof install was recently completed.
  - Progress on several paving related projects including the Cedar Street and Public Works facility parking lots is pending finalization of the bulk engineering contract with McCormick Taylor by the Legal Department.
  - An expected completion date of May 8, 2023 for City Park playground currently under construction by Empire Services was established

**FIRE:**

The Fire Department has the following updates:

**Chief:**

- Attended several “live fire” training sessions held at the Fire training site.
- Attended the annual Battle of the Badges Hockey game on April 2. Reading Fire/Police unfortunately lost to Harrisburg. Approximately \$1000 was raised for the scholarship fund.

**ONGOING PROJECTS:**

- 9<sup>th</sup> and Marion Station – Slow progress. Scheduled final completion is June 9, 2023.
- Production on the 2 new Engines purchased last year through CDBG is progressing. Delivery is slated for early May 2023.

**I. DECISION MAKING**

- No grievances filed
- No discipline issues
- Met with HR and the Union regarding the job description for the newly created fire apparatus mechanic position.

**II. INCIDENTS / CHALLENGES:**

- No major or out of the ordinary incidents occurred. Normal call volume.
- The floor in the engine room at 8<sup>th</sup> & Court Fire station was found to have some “issues” with its support beams and columns. An engineer was called in and is evaluating. He will be back next Thursday April 20. Till then I have relocated Engine #1 to the Plum & Franklin Station as a precaution for the safety of the crews.

**HUMAN RESOURCES:**

- The Human Resource Department reports progress on the status of driver training which will be presented to City council in late April.

- An exit interview process has been established
- An onboarding orientation has been created.

The Library has the following updates:

**I. ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Senior outreach had 236 patrons visit the mobile library. Requests for specific material saw a jump with a total of 43 patrons requesting material.
- The Teen Loft at Main library saw a total of 355 patrons and 193 patrons participated in teen programs provided by the teen loft. These large numbers are in part due to the very popular Teen writing Club 5.0 has starting back up.

**II. ONGOING PROJECTS**

- Filling vacant positions: Systems Admin/Assistant Director position; two open Librarian II positions.
- HVAC/generator project is on-going. Awaiting decision about location of gas line.
- Working on an RFP for evaluating our bank, as directed by the board.
- Working on the District Negotiated Contract.
- Working with Harwood Institutes “Moving Reading Forward Together Initiative”

**III. DECISION MAKING**

- Decided to renew staff health insurance keeping them on same plan.

**IV. CHALLENGES/OTHER ISSUES**

- Lawsuit against Parking Authority, Library and City. We still are hoping to be excused from the case. Awaiting an update from our attorney.
- Our van was vandalized by children again.

**POLICE:**

The Police Department has the following updates:

**I. ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- The Traffic Unit is currently participating in an aggressive driving enforcement initiative. During their last detail they issued 19 traffic citations.
- Chief Tornielli met with The Berks County Office of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and Holcomb Behavioral Health Systems to improve the response to individuals experiencing mental health crisis.
- Chief Tornielli met with officials in West Reading to discuss noise incidents that affect the borough and the measures taken to reduce those incidents.

**II. ONGOING PROJECTS**

- MDT Replacement and CI Tablets: Equipment is beginning to be delivered for this project.
- Investigations Office Renovations: Investigators in the main CI Office have been relocated to the ATTF and Vice offices. Public works has been removing the old cubicles and desks to prepare for new floor installation.

- CAD/RMS: Berks County Detectives were provided access to the new RMS system to improve information sharing.

## **PUBLIC WORKS:**

The Public Works Department has the following updates:

- 20 new trees have been planted at Schlegel Park with help from Berks Nature and their volunteers.
- Solid Waste Division Manager participated in 2 meetings to plan for Mt. Penn overlooks clean-up and security issues on 4/4 and 4/10 at PW Facility.
- “Adopt-A Block” participants cleaned up 24 bags of litter and 8 bags of yard waste. 3 “Adopt A Block” signs were installed, and 3 new participants signed up Ryan also had volunteers from Penske clean Baer Par/River Road area with 16 volunteers cleaning 36 bags of trash, 1 TV, 2 tires and 2 bulk items on 4/4/2023.
- Clean City Team (City Staff) completed 45 clean-up and illegal dumping projects picking up 319 bags of litter and 24 bulk items. Staff picked up 44 tires and 18 TV’s. 11 dead animals were removed from the streets 14 graffiti jobs completed and 35 recycling bins delivered. Clean City Program “Gateway Tuesday” is ongoing and has improved the appearance of all gateways heading into our City and will be a regular part of our operation.
- Sustainability manager meetings Attended: KRB Steering, Stone Cliff fishing field trip w/ Berks Nature, American Rivers, Barrio, Reading Rec, & Olivets, EECBG planning session w/ PA DEP, EPA Climate Action Grant w/ RAWA & Lisa Unrath, EECBG Program office hours, Earth Day Walk through, Sustainability for Businesses Resource Roundtable, EAC Communications work group, SOP Egg Hunt, Skyline Line Dr. Overlooks work group, PA DEP Climate Action Plan meeting.
- Held a Reading/Berks Manufacturer’s Sustainability Resource Roundtable for April 6th at Berks Nature with Penn TAP, Sustainable Energy Fund, PSU Sustainability Institute, and Willdan (Met Ed energy efficiency program administrator) 7 attendees, planning a second session for October 17, 2023 at Berks Nature.
- The WWTP Maintenance team rebuilt the Schlegel Pool filtration pumps which require testing prior to being put into service for the season.
- McCormick Taylor bulk engineering contract was completed.
- Basketball Court resurfacing- 2023 budgeted- refocus- Blacktop Meeting 4/13 with Mayor asked to have temp repairs completed for June play.

## **ONGOING PROJECTS**

- The City’s Arborist and Shade Tree Commission have partnered with the Reading School District to celebrate the City’s 38th Year as a Tree City USA. In celebration, 28 new trees will be planted in front of Reading Senior High School.
- Tree Pruning will commence in the coming weeks and continue throughout the year. The focus primarily will be along the permanent sweeper routes and will eventually branch off into other areas of the City. Trees to be pruned will be pruned to improve structure; reduce the risk of branch or tree failure; provide clearance of signage, lighting, and signals; and provide elevation clearance over the right of ways.
- Storm System – Preventive maintenance of inlet cleaning is being performed in East Reading.
- Lucky’s Lane (339 S. 7th Street) garden install scheduled for May (regrading & stone installation 1st week, raised bed and planting to be scheduled after mural installation).

- Reading 275 Tree Planting, April 22nd, 11 am City Park (in planning) would like to have dignitaries attend/ participate. Vendor tables are available at Earth Day for all City departments and programs at no cost.
- Reading Climate Corps 2nd Cohort will begin on April 24.
- Centre Park- Construction bids due 4-18-23.
- Baer Park Basketball Paving- Milling scheduled 4/17.
- River Road Extension – The Contractor is completing the mill and overlay of W. Windsor St. today, and landscaping. The new Lincoln St. paving is scheduled to be completed later this month. The project is 77% complete and ahead of schedule. The estimated substantial completion could be as early as June.
- 2022 Paving Project – Curb ramp designs are progressing and field work on the ramps is in full production with double crews. The manhole adjustments will start next week.
- 2023 Paving Project, Contract No. 1 – The bid opening is 4/17/23. Estimated cost is \$6.1M. Anticipated award is 4/24/23. The Solicitor and PW are working to have a contract executed to start work in May.
- Liggett Ave/Hancock Blvd. Intersection – SSM and city and stakeholders reviewed the Final Plan. SSM to finish the drawings and specs for bidding in April. This will be bid with 2 contracts; one for storm sewer and one for paving. Anticipated total cost is \$2-\$3M. The cost for this project the current 2022 Paving Project will probably exceed the available 2023 LFT budget so we will probably split the intersection project and push the remaining work into 2024.
- Knock-Down Traffic Signals – All 5 signals have been replaced but MetEd has not yet connected the power to the signals at 4th and Court St and 3rd and Buttonwood. Telco and PW are working with MetEd to get this done.
- Buttonwood Gateway Phase 2 – This is the streetscaping phase of the project. The Consultant will be reviewing the preliminary design with PW next week.
- Summit Chase Lighting – The construction contract was awarded on 4/10/23 to Hirneisen. A contract and NTP is anticipated by 1st week of May.
- Castlewood Street Dedication – Cedarville conducted the assessment of the stormwater management system. This assessment report will help the city determine the conditions for the streets/storm water dedication. The report is due soon.

## **CHALLENGES/OTHER ISSUES**

- Supply Chain Issues –WWTP staff began the trial for an alternative chemical for use in the solids operation on 03/28. This is to maintain indoor air quality and air permit compliance while we are unable to obtain a chemical due to a fire at the manufacturing and warehouse facilities.
- 19th Ward Pump Station and Force Main –City staff and the CM team awaits a response from the property owner about easements required for the force main, and the force main design team is working with PA DEP and others updating permitting with the project split. The City is in the process of reviewing and scoring the proposals received for the new pump station design.
- WWTP Permits – The PA DEP permit writer called to indicate that the US EPA would not pursue the low level mercury analysis on the City's NPDES permit. The initial request was based upon limited sampling completed for the permit renewal application.
- Safety, Security, and Technology –IT coordinated improvements for the internal signal in the WWTP admin and maintenance buildings. The WWTP and the SCADA system are experiencing communication issues with the dedicated Comcast network. Comcast has verified that they are doing upgrades in the area but staff believed the outages should have stopped.

- Report Update – The annual US EPA pretreatment report was submitted. City staff continues compiling and reviewing the additional information required for annual reports, including the City’s system-wide annual report.
- Egelman’s Dam- ECS drilling completed- BOG TURTLE hazard identified.
- Reading Public Library HVAC- Alan Shuman interested in split costs for gas line- developing. LEAD abatement is back on the radar- Change order pending.
- City Park playground- under construction Empire Services- Contract end date is 12/31/22- issued a letter of notice of violation- final completion expected May 19, 2023.
- UPCOMING EVENTS:  
 Tree Plantings (various locations Mt. Penn Preserve) 3/24, 4/2, 4/15) Rescheduling for May- tree delivery delayed.  
 Alvernia Sustainability Conference: April 19.  
 RACC Climate Action Roundtable: April 20.  
 Great American Clean Up: April 22.  
 Earth Day Berks: April 22, City Park.  
 PSTATS conference presenter with Master Watershed Stewards April 24.  
 We Conserve PA, Plenary Breakfast: April 27, 9am.  
 Good Medicine Indigenous Wellness Celebration: June 3rd, Riverfront Park (10am).  
 EJ Dives Picnic in the Park, July 8th (w/ 18th Wonder).  
 Riverzilla: August 12, Riverfront Park.

## **CITY AUDITOR’S REPORT**

### **Monday, April 24, 2023**

Council President Reed noted that the Auditor is absent due to an illness and she asked Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz to summarize the report distributed electronically and attached to the agenda (copied in below).

#### **Real Estate Transfer Tax - Update from 1/1/2019 to 03/31/2023**

The City receives a 3.5% Real Estate Transfer Tax on the sale value of all taxable real estate transactions. For the month of March of the current year, the Real Estate Transfer Tax generated \$734,930.69 in revenue. And about \$1.7 million has been collected for the first quarter of 2023. Also, during the first quarter 585 Real Estate Transfer transactions were completed, of which 98 were non-taxable and 487 were taxable (see Table #2). For the current year, six million was budgeted for this revenue line item, and out of the total revenue collected during the first quarter, about \$92,610 came for properties that were sold for half a million dollars or more.

(See Table #3)

<b>Month</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>12/31/2021</b>	<b>12/31/2020</b>	<b>12/31/2019</b>
January	537,365.84	702,030.86	535,849.04	323,123.52	223,920.68
February	429,825.33	512,582.49	523,300.89	511,220.85	615,116.21
March	734,930.69	954,153.08	1,178,885.61	601,103.82	266,411.11
April		736,240.82	717,308.73	235,765.07	548,506.44