

**City of Reading City Council**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**June 27, 2022**

The Council Solicitor called the meeting to order, noting the absence of the Council President due to the recent passing of her father. He stated that the Council Vice President position is currently unfilled. As per the Administrative Code, the Council President is required to name a President Pro Tem which needs to be approved by City Council. He stated that the Council President sent the following message on Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup>:

Members of Council:

In accordance with Administrative Code Sections §5-204 Meetings, Section F and §5-207 Conduct of Business, Section C both regarding the absence of the President and Vice President, I hereby designate Council member Donna Reed as the Presiding Officer and President Pro-tem for the July 11, 2022 regular meeting and recommend that Council approve a motion so assigning the duties of Presiding Officer and Pro-tem for the July 11, 2022 regular meeting to Council member Donna Reed.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter.

Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz  
Council President

**Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Ventura to appoint Donna Reed as President Pro Tem for this meeting.**

**The appointment was approved by the following vote:**

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura - 5**

**Nays: None - 0**

President Pro Tem Donna Reed proceeded with the meeting.

The invocation was given virtually by Daniel Myers, Community Evangelical Church.

All present pledged to the flag.

There was an executive session on June 30<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm in the Mayor's Office regarding personnel. There were also two (2) executive sessions after the June 27<sup>th</sup> COW on personnel and litigation

## **ATTENDANCE**

Councilor Daubert, District 1  
Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, District 2 - virtually  
Councilor Ventura, District 3  
Councilor Butler, District 4 – virtually  
Councilor Reed, District 5  
Council Solicitor M. Gombar  
City Auditor M. Rodriguez  
City Clerk L. Kelleher  
Asst. Solicitor I. Litvinov  
Mayor Moran

## **PROCLAMATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS**

The City Clerk administered the oath of office to the following:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Deputy Chief Michael R. Glore to 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Fire Chief
- Fire Suppression Lieutenant David C. Williams to 2<sup>nd</sup> Deputy Fire Chief
- Firefighter Steven E. Ginder to Fire Suppression Lieutenant

The mayor congratulated those promoted. Chief J. Stoudt thanked Council for their continued support of the Fire Department and their personnel.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The President Pro Tem stated that there are three (3) citizens registered to provide public comment - one on agenda matters and two on general matters.

Councilor Ventura read the public comment rules adopted by ordinance.

**Ruby Mora, of South 5<sup>th</sup> Street**, expressed her belief in the need for rental control within Reading to tame the high and unaffordable rental increases charged mostly by absentee landlords. She described the additional obstacles to finding decent and affordable housing due to background checks and other barriers. She also noted the need to improve timelines for assistance programs and improve the regulations for evictions.

**Evelyn Morrison, no address provided**, expressed the belief that the City is not a bank and should not continually forgive loans. She stated that those who assume loans are responsible for repaying them. She stated that Council members failed to ask the proper questions when hearing the presentation on the River Oak loan forgiveness during the preceding COW. She questioned why Council did not inquire about the financials for a building with a 98% occupancy rate. She expressed that this was a bad deal made by the

former Executive Director and that the new Executive Director is trying to find a way clear this financial obligation. She suggested calling HUD for advice, noting that Section 108 loans are to be repaid and reused for other projects. She expressed the belief that her challenge to the Bookbindery settlement inspired Council to negotiate a better deal, which benefits the City and the public.

**Danny Natale, of Wunder Street**, stated that he is a 30 year Reading resident and he described the drug and homeless activity in the Wunder Street area between South 11<sup>th</sup> and South 12<sup>th</sup> Streets. He stated that there is rampant use of K2, heroin and prostitution. He stated that his only return call was from the Vice unit. He gestured to the audience noting the attendance of many community members who support the need to take their block back. In addition to the need for additional policing, he also noted the poor condition of properties in this neighborhood due to lackluster Property Maintenance enforcement.

The mayor stated that the PA Legislature prohibits rent controls in all municipalities other than Philadelphia, which is a First Class City. He stated that he has received complaints about criminal activities in the Wunder Street area and has shared those complaints with the Police Department and the Homeless Task Force.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed with the need to address these neighborhood issues. She thanked the residents for bringing this matter forward.

## **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA & MINUTES**

The President Pro Tem called Council's attention to the agenda for this meeting, including the legislation listed under the Consent Agenda heading and the minutes from the June 27<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of Council, along with the summations of discussion from the June 27<sup>th</sup> and July 5<sup>th</sup> COW meetings and the July 5<sup>th</sup> Nominations Committee meeting.

**The agenda for this meeting, including the Consent Agenda legislation, the minutes from the June 27<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of Council, and the summations of discussion listed were approved by acclamation.**

### **Consent Agenda**

*The Consent Agenda is designed to provide efficient approval of non-controversial legislation that does not require discussion/debate by giving approval via acclamation when the meeting agenda is approved. The President of Council will call Council's attention to the list of Consent Agenda legislation at the meeting before action is taken, which allows Council to remove a piece of legislation for separate consideration.*

**A. Award of Contract** – to STV for the Pagoda Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing and Structural Contract at a cost not to exceed \$180,400, which includes \$174,400 for

professional services and \$6,000 for a Comprehensive Drone Survey and Photo Documentation

**B. Award of Contract** – to the Abel Fence LLC, Wrightsville, PA, in the amount of \$73,620.00 for the replacement of the western perimeter fencing at 11<sup>th</sup> and Pike Playground (eastern perimeter already replaced)

**C. Award of Contract** – for a Co-Stars Equipment supply and repair purchase to Degler-Whiting in the amount of \$94,345 for playground equipment and repairs needed in Keifer Park, 3<sup>rd</sup> and Spring, 2<sup>nd</sup> and Oley, Front and Shiller, Barbey’s, and Baer Park. The final NE quadrant is currently being scheduled for review.

**D. Resolution 109-2022** – authorizing the promotion of Patrol Officer Stephen Butler to the rank of Sergeant

**E. Resolution 110-2022** – accepting the resignation of Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz from the District 6 Council seat, effective June 27<sup>th</sup>.

**F. Resolution 111-2022** – authorize conditional offers of employment to Mocha Baldwin, Evan Cook, Brayden Lewis, Christian Lynch, Zachary Rivera, Zachary Shenk, Mohamed Solimani-Hussein, and Drew Zebertavage as probationary officers for the Reading Police Department.

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

---

The mayor highlighted his activities over the last two weeks. He noted former Council President Waltman’s dedicated service to City government and to the Reading community, noting his daily walks to pick-up trash. As such there will be an annual Jeffery Waltman City Cleanup on September 24<sup>th</sup> from 9 am to noon. He asked Council members to recruit neighborhood leaders and participants within their Council Districts and to call the mayor’s office to register to participate.

Ashley Waltman thanked City officials for honoring her father and she recalled his dedication to the City and public service in all ways. She thanked the City for honoring her father in a way he would appreciate.

Skyler Fisher, Ashley’s life partner, thanked City officials for their support to the family and their love for the former Council President. He expressed thanks that the former

Council President encouraged him to accept a job offer from RAWA, noting what a rewarding experience his work is.

**The President Pro Tem nominated Sophia Waltman, the former Council President's granddaughter to be Junior Chair of the annual Clean-ups. Council, by voice vote, approved the nomination.**

Tina Waltman described the former Council President's love for Reading and for public service.

The interim managing director highlighted the report listed below which was distributed electronically and with the agenda packet. He added that the administration is currently negotiating with a developer regarding a public-private partnership for the Penn Square properties and a presentation will be scheduled when a preliminary agreement is reached. He added that the requirement for permitted dumpsters to be screened is beginning. Two thousand letters will be sent to those having dumpsters in or visible from the public right-of-way. He noted that funding has been allocated to assist with the screening expense.

The mayor stated that 27 students are entering the Summer Initiative program and three (3) additional students are in the background process. The program begins on June 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### **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 29<sup>th</sup>.
- The first full-time Downtown Ambassador started on July 1<sup>st</sup>. 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 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday weekend. The next First Friday event is scheduled

for August 5<sup>th</sup> at the Goggleworks and will feature music, food, dance lessons, community partners, and Goggleworks artists. The final event is scheduled for September 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### **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 18<sup>th</sup>. 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 15<sup>th</sup>. 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 14<sup>th</sup> during a small ceremony. The delay was due to the time taken to create a memorial bench.

## **HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION:**

- Starting on January 1<sup>st</sup>, and as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 28<sup>th</sup>.
  - Frances Rodriguez, Development & Inspection Clerk in the Property Maintenance Division as of July 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Quincy Twyman, as an Inspector in the Property Maintenance Division as of July 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Carmelo Ruiz, Jr., as an Inspector in the Property Maintenance Division as of July 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Carlos Diaz-Melendez, Full-time Downtown Ambassador Specialist as of July 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Matthew Cruz, Part-time Data Transfer Clerk in the Building & Trades Division as of July 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Alexis Hersberger, Part-time Auditing Assistant in the Finance Department as of July 1<sup>st</sup>.
- 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 15<sup>th</sup>.
  - William Simmons, Criminal Investigator in the Police Department, retired on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.
  - Daniel Wade, Firefighter in the Fire Department, retired on June 29<sup>th</sup>.
- The Human Resource Department is currently working with Police on the promotional list for Sergeant and Lieutenant. Interviews were held on June 16<sup>th</sup>, and the Police Civil Service Board signed the finalized list on June 24<sup>th</sup>.
- The Human Resource Department held a written test for the Fire Department on June 18<sup>th</sup>. 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 13<sup>th</sup>, 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 30<sup>th</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 2<sup>nd</sup>, 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 18<sup>th</sup>.
  - The first Cops and Cones event was a huge success. It was held at the Great American Creamery on June 24<sup>th</sup> 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, 6<sup>th</sup> & 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.

**CITY AUDITOR’S REPORT**  
**Monday, June 27, 2022**

**Fire Escrow Proceeds Audit**  
**Year Ending December 31, 2021**

**Internal Audit Report**

**Objective**

Determine if the City of Reading’s Fire Escrow Proceeds account activities adhered to applicable ordinance as written.

**Scope**

The timeframe of the Fire Escrow Proceeds activities under review was from January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021. Items reviewed included: Ordinance Bill No. 6-95, Bill No. 32-2013, cash receipts, disbursements, fire escrow insurance payment schedule, and applicable general ledger postings.

**Methodology**

Internal Audit reviewed all Fire Escrow Proceeds transactions. Due to the sensitive nature of this area of review, Internal Audit tested for 100% compliance.

To achieve our objectives, Internal Audit performed audit procedures by obtaining and reviewing the following:

- Listed in the ordinance, Bill No. 6-95, “The Insurer shall transfer from the insurance Proceeds to the Municipal Office the aggregate of \$2,000.00 for each \$15,000.00 of a claim”, in this case to the City of Reading.
- Per Bill No. 32-2013, “The City of Reading may by Ordinance fix reasonable fees to be charged for municipal activities and services provided pursuant to this part; including but not limited to, issuance of certificates and bills, performance of inspections and opening separate fund accounts”.

### Audit Results

During the month of May of the current year, an audit was completed for the Fire Escrow account from January 01, 2021 through December 31, 2021. And part of this audit was also to reconcile Fire Escrow cash receipts and disbursements. The data needed for this audit was provided by the Treasurer Manager who is responsible to maintain a log with all necessary information for each property of which the proceeds are received. These proceeds are received from the Fire Escrow Insurance, and it appears to have been historically deposited into the Fire Escrow Account under Fund 31, which is used as a “security against the local cost of removing, repair, or securing the building”. The data received has been reviewed and analyzed by the City Auditor and tied to the Trial Balance completed by the City Controller. The liability ending balance of the Fire Escrow Account as of 12/31/2021 is \$755,427.45. (See **Table 1** below.)

**Fire Escrow Balance as of December 31, 2021 - Table 1**

Balance as of 12/31/2020	766,883.44
2021 Proceeds	199,837.33
2021 Disbursements	<u>(211,293.32)</u>
<b>Balance as of 12/31/2021</b>	<b>\$755,427.45</b>

During the fiscal year of 2021, a total of \$211,293.32 was disbursed. And even though the liability in the Fire Escrow account decreased by \$11,455.99 in 2021 compared to 2020, the balance of \$755,427.45 in this account is still significant (see Fire Escrow Liability Aging per year in **Table 2** below). This liability has been recorded in Fund 31, which is in compliance with Bill No. 32-2013.

**Fire Escrow Liability Aging through December 31, 2021 - Table 2**

Years of Receipts Aging	Proceeds	2021 Disbursements	Balance	%
<b>2010 &amp; Prior</b>	<b>169,942.02</b>	-	169,942.02	22.49%
<b>2011-2015</b>	<b>192,931.93</b>	<b>(54,773.33)</b>	138,158.60	18.29%
<b>2016</b>	<b>87,153.00</b>	-	87,153.00	11.54%
<b>2017</b>	<b>50,339.11</b>	<b>(9,333.33)</b>	41,005.78	5.43%
<b>2018</b>	<b>60,852.08</b>	<b>(34,000.00)</b>	26,852.08	3.55%
<b>2019</b>	<b>73,560.29</b>	-	73,560.29	9.74%
<b>2020</b>	<b>132,105.01</b>	<b>(91,020.00)</b>	41,085.01	5.44%
<b>2021</b>	<b>199,837.33</b>	<b>(22,166.66)</b>	177,670.67	23.52%

<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>766,883.44</b>	<b>(211,293.32)</b>	<b>755,427.45</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
---------------	-------------------	---------------------	-------------------	----------------

The attached spreadsheet shows the details including: owner names, the parcel #, property addresses and the dates/amounts of when respective proceeds were received and disbursed, and the total liability that the City has as of December 31, 2021.

**Recommendations**

- The Administration should implement a plan to enhance the effectiveness of the Fire Escrow proceeds in order to reduce this liability.

**City Auditor’s Comments**

- As a result, the Fire Escrow Account has a balance of \$755,427.45 as of December 31, 2021.

**Department of Finance Response**

None.

The interim managing director inquired about how to handle the funds remaining when the properties have been sold to new owners. Ms. Rodriguez stated that that question needs to be referred to Law.

Councilor Ventura inquired about the Department Director vacancies. The interim managing director stated that the administration is working with a headhunter to fill these positions. Until the Managing Director position is filled the firm will conduct only background work.

The City Clerk noted that fire escrow funds are only released to property owners after the property has been rehabbed or demolished. The Council Solicitor agreed noting that the City can deduct costs to bring the properties into code compliance, etc.

The City Clerk noted that in 2013 an amendment to the Fire Escrow ordinance allowed the City to charge other fees against the Fire Escrow fund and she inquired if deductions occurred. The Auditor stated that she is unsure.

**ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE**

**Bill No. 49-2022** – increasing the salary of the Finance Director by \$15,000 to \$120,000 due to the expansion on that role as Deputy Managing Director ***Introduced at the May 23 regular meeting; Tabled at the June 13 regular meeting***

**Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to enact Bill No. 49-2022.**

The interim managing director noted the need for this position to support the Managing Director.

The Council Solicitor expressed the belief that the ordinance is properly prepared and there is no need to amend the Charter to create this position.

**Bill No. 49-2022 was enacted by the following vote:**

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura - 5**

**Nays: None - 0**

**Bill No. 50-2022** – amending the Charter Board Ordinance by making various alterations such as eliminating Advisory Opinions, creating an administrative body, eliminates the confidentiality of complaints, etc. to establish reasonable guidelines on Charter Board spending ***Introduced at the May 23 regular meeting; Tabled at the June 13 regular meeting***

**Councilor Ventura moved, seconded by Councilor Daubert, to table Bill No. 50-2022.**

**Bill No. 50-2022 was tabled by the following vote:**

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura - 5**

**Nays: None - 0**

**A. Bill 55-2022** – directing the Berks County Board of Elections to place a referendum question before city voters on the 2022 General Election Ballot which would amend the Home Rule Charter Section 404 (a) - (b) – requiring Council approval for the termination of the Managing Director ***Introduced at the June 13 regular meeting; Tabled at the June 27 regular meeting***

**Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Ventura, to enact Bill No. 55-2022.**

The Council Solicitor stated that the proposed amendments are valid. Although the administration is pushing that the amendments require a Government Study Commission first, he does not agree. Furthermore, he agreed that as Council has a level of authority for the hiring/appointment of directors under the Charter, it would seem logical that the Council would have the same or similar power to approve/reject termination. Also, it would bring things in line with the similar provisions in the Charter regarding Council's hiring and firing powers over the City Solicitor.

The Assistant Solicitor reiterated his belief that the proposed amendments would create a

conflict between Council and the administration, creating the potential for acting on personal purposes rather than acting in an appropriate manner. He expressed the belief that the proposed amendments would encourage additional problems, rather than provide reasonable solutions.

The mayor asked Council to reconsider their position on the approval of these amendments and announced his intent to veto and legally challenge the validity of the ordinances if they are approved.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed that approving the proposed amendments could place the mayor in a difficult position as if Council rejects the termination recommendation the mayor could be forced to work with a person he does not like. She suggested a Government Study Commission instead.

Councilor Daubert questioned if the proposed amendment will fix this issue or create additional problems. He agreed that Council should instead consider empaneling a Government Study Commission to evaluate the form of government and its effectiveness.

The President Pro Tem expressed the belief that if these proposed amendments are not placed on the ballot for the electorate's consideration, then a Government Study Commission should be empaneled as this dysfunction cannot continue.

**Bill No. 55-2022 was NOT enacted by the following vote:**

**Yeas: Reed - 1**

**Nays: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Ventura - 4**

**B. Bill 62-2022** – authorizing residential permit parking from 8 am to 8 pm with a 2 hour period for non-permit holders Zones in the 100 block of Schiller Street, the 100 block of North 8<sup>th</sup> Street and the 200 block of Reed Street, in accordance with City Code Chapter 576 Vehicles and Traffic, Part 4 Stopping and Parking, A – Regulations, Section 576-417 Residential Permit Parking, as recommended by the Reading Parking Authority ***Introduced at the June 27 regular meeting***

**Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to enact Bill No. 62-2022.**

**Bill No. 62-2022 was enacted by the following vote:**

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura - 5**

**Nays: None - 0**

**C. Bill 63-2022** – amending City Code Chapter 396, Part 3 Park Use by providing additional authority for law enforcement agencies to act when responding to calls for service at public park properties as defined herein and allowing responding law enforcement agencies to seize devices that are in violation of this ordinance for possible forfeiture and destruction. *Introduced at the June 27 regular meeting*

Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to enact Bill No. 63-2022.

Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Ventura, to amend the ordinance to eliminate the names of law enforcement agencies included in the definition of “City” and replace them with “or other law enforcement agencies approved by City Council”.

The amendment to Bill No. 63-2022 was approved by the following vote:

Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura - 5

Nays: None - 0

Bill No. 63-2022, as amended, was enacted by the following vote:

Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura - 5

Nays: None - 0

**D. Bill 64-2022** – amending City Code Chapter 387 Noise by adding references to Chapter 396, Part 3 Park Use regarding noise at City and City agency owned properties *Introduced at the June 27 regular meeting*

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz moved, seconded by Councilor Daubert, to enact Bill No. 64-2022.

Bill No. 64-2022 was enacted by the following vote:

Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura - 5

Nays: None - 0

**E. Bill 65-2022** – directing the Berks County Board of Elections to place a referendum question before city voters on the 2022 General Election Ballot which would amend the Home Rule Charter Section 603 (a) - (b) – requiring Council approval for the termination of the Department Directors *Introduced at the June 27 regular meeting*

Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Butler, to enact Bill No. 65-2022.

Bill No. 65-2022 was NOT enacted by the following vote:

**Yeas: Reed - 1**

**Nays: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Ventura - 4**

**F. Bill 66-2022** – authorizing the conveyance of 140 Schiller Street Berks County Parcel I.D. No. 06530765523615 from the Reading Redevelopment Authority and execution of the agreement of sale of the property for nominal consideration as per the agreement of sale ***Introduced at the June 27 regular meeting***

**Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to enact Bill No. 66-2022.**

**Bill No. 66-2022 was enacted by the following vote:**

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura - 5**

**Nays: None - 0**

**G. Bill 67-2022** – transferring \$10,100,000 of ARPA funds from Fund 47 to the Capital Projects account Fund 34 ***Introduced at the June 27 regular meeting***

**Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Ventura, to enact Bill No. 67-2022.**

Councilor Daubert expressed concern about the viability of these capital projects if ARPA funding was unavailable.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that when the City exits Act 47, the Commuter Tax infusion to Capital Revenue will be lost and she noted the need for careful budgeting for viable Capital projects in the future.

The mayor noted that some of these projects have been lingering on for years.

Councilor Ventura inquired about the incomplete spray pad and the need to add a kiddie pool at the Schlegel Park pool property. The interim managing director stated that the spray pad has been delayed due to supply chain issues and further discussion is required about the kiddie pool during the 2023 budget.

Councilor Ventura questioned how “supply chain” issues could be the cause of the delay, when the administration clearly took this direction, rather than conform to Council’s unanimous decision to add a kiddie pool instead. She stated that Council has clearly demanded a kiddie pool so no further discussion is required.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to obtain the cost of the kiddie pool to



solidify potential donors to the Jeffrey S. Waltman, Sr. Legacy Fund, which can move this project forward.

**Bill No. 67-2022 was enacted by the following vote:**

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed - 4**

**Nays: Ventura - 1**

**H. Bill 68-2022** – amending City Code Chapter 62 Pension, Part 1 New Officers and Employees Pension Fund and Part 2 Officers and Employees Retirement System by clarifying the criteria for qualifying for a disability pension benefit ***Introduced at the June 27 regular meeting***

**Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to enact Bill No. 68-2022.**

**Bill No. 68-2022 was enacted by the following vote:**

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura - 5**

**Nays: None - 0**

**I. Bill 69-2022** – amending the City Code Chapter 5 Administrative Code, Part 2 Council Organization and Procedure by creating a new Section 5-216 relating to the evaluation of council staff in accordance with the Charter amendment approved by the electorate at the June 2020 Primary Election ***Introduced at the June 27 regular meeting***

**Councilor Butler moved, seconded by Councilor Daubert, to enact Bill No. 69-2022.**

**Bill No. 69-2022 was enacted by the following vote:**

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura - 5**

**Nays: None - 0**

## **10. RESOLUTIONS**

Councilor Butler read the following ordinances into the record:

**A. Ordinance** – amending the Solid Waste Budget by increasing the budget line item for Machinery and Equipment in the amount of \$347,235, and Grants and Gifts in the same amount due to the receipt of the PA DEP 902 Recycling Grant

**B. Ordinance** – authorizing the Mayor to Execute an MOU and Intergovernmental Agreement to Join the other Berks Municipalities on the Berks County Emergency Response Team (BCERT)

## **11. INTRODUCTION**

**A. Resolution 112-2022** – forgiving in its entirety the \$1,475,000.00 loan originally extended to the previous owner of River Oak Apartments and assumed by River Oak Development LLC aka Reading Housing Authority by that certain Assignment of Amended and Restated Promissory Note and Mortgage dated September 17, 2008 and to release the mortgage securing said loan

**Councilor Ventura moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to adopt Resolution 112-2022.**

**After discussion, Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz withdrew her motion to adopt the Resolution.**

**Councilor Daubert seconded the motion made by Councilor Ventura.**

There was discussion about the underlying rationale regarding the release of the mortgage on River Oak and questions regarding other available options to the Housing Authority.

**Councilor Ventura withdrew her motion to adopt the Resolution.**

**Councilor Ventura moved, seconded by Councilor Daubert, to table Resolution 112-2022**

**Resolution No. 112 -2022 was adopted by the following vote:**

**Yeas: Butler, Cepeda-Freytiz, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed - 5**

**Nays: None - 0**

**B. Resolution 113-2022** – authorizing the filing and executing of all documents related to the application for RACP funds in the amount of \$1,000,000 for the Alvernia University CollegeTown Infrastructure and Renovation II Project.

**Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz moved, seconded by Councilor Ventura, adopt Resolution 113-2022.**

**Resolution No. 113 -2022 was adopted by the following vote:**

**Yeas: Butler, Cepeda-Freytiz, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed - 5**

**Nays: None - 0**

## **COUNCIL COMMENT**

The President Pro Tem noted that July 14<sup>th</sup> is Bastille Day and the day the City will be

released from the Act 47 program. She asked the mayor to highlight the plans for this day.

The mayor stated that a signing ceremony will occur on the front steps of City Hall with State officials at noon. There will then be a march up Washington Street to City Park, where there will be a community celebration that will include a free lunch for 500 people and a DJ. He stated that the event is open to the public.

The President Pro Tem announced the upcoming meeting schedule, noting the special meeting scheduled for next Monday, July 18<sup>th</sup> to make appointments to the Redevelopment Authority. She noted that the application period for the District 6 Council seat closed at 4 pm this afternoon.

**Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Reed, to adjourn the regular meeting of Council.**

*Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk*