

City of Reading City Council
Regular Meeting
July 25, 2022

Council President Cepeda-Freytiz called the meeting to order.

The invocation was given by Guillelina Medina.

All present pledged to the flag.

There were no executive sessions between July 11th and July 25th; however, there was an executive session at the close of the COW that preceded this meeting on litigation and real estate.

ATTENDANCE

Council President Cepeda-Freytiz
Councilor Daubert, District 1
Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, District 2
Councilor Ventura, District 3
Councilor Butler, District 4
Councilor Reed, District 5
Council Solicitor M. Gombar
City Auditor M. Rodriguez
City Clerk L. Kelleher
Interim Managing Director F. Denbowski
Mayor Moran

PROCLAMATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

The City Clerk administered the oath of office to Council President Cepeda-Freytiz.

A recognition certificate was issued to Guillelina Medina for circulating a petition in the North 2nd and Buttonwood Street neighborhood for the installation of a stop sign and for organizing a block party.

Charlie Jones, President of the Northeast Alumni Association, issued a Distinguished Northeaster plaque to City Clerk Linda Kelleher for her work to help Reading residents. He noted that Ms. Kelleher was unable to attend the ceremony at Northeast Middle School due to her work schedule.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Council President Cepeda-Freytiz stated that there are four (4) citizens registered to provide public comment – two on agenda matters and two on general matters.

Councilor Reed read the public comment rules adopted by ordinance.

Yeneilly Byer, no address listed, was registered to comment virtually but she was not connected to the meeting.

Evelyn Morrison, no address provided, congratulated Council President Cepeda-Freytiz on her appointment to the position. She then reiterated the remarks she made at the July 11th regular meeting regarding the request to forgive the Housing Authority loan on the River Oak apartments, noting that the City is not a bank and it should not be forgiving loans and financial obligations. She stated that it is the City's job to collect taxes and other payments and manage those taxpayer dollars with great care. She stated that the loans issued are intended to be repaid so those funds can be reused for other projects. She expressed the belief that the Housing Authority assumed this loan when it purchased the apartment building and it has an obligation to repay the loan. She stated that during the July 11th COW discussion on this topic Council members present failed to request financial information on the apartment building. She questioned how an apartment building that is at 98% capacity would not be able to repay this obligation. She noted her frustration with all the loans forgiven over prior years and promised to sue the City if this loan is forgiven as well. She stated that she can no longer tolerate this derelict behavior with HUD funding.

Carol Riley, no address listed, described her activities to resolve her problems with her landlord to no resolve.

Nate Rivera, no address listed, congratulated Council President Cepeda-Freytiz on her appointment and he thanked former Council President Waltman for his mentorship and the manner in which he handled the position. He noted the fine work of the interim managing director over the past months. He expressed his disagreement with the person Council selected to fill the District 6 Council seat and he promised that the person to be elected in next year's municipal election will reflect the demographic of the District. He expressed the belief that the person selected was not the applicant who stood out during the interview and that Council had already made the selection prior to the interview process. Furthermore, he expressed the belief that some Council members choose to ignore requests for assistance from the average resident and they only pay attention to the needs of a few select individuals.

The five minute alarm sounded and Mr. Rivera requested three (3) additional minutes of time to conclude his remarks. City Council did not object.

Mr. Rivera expressed the belief that the many complaints about the noise and partying at Riverfront Park were ignored until West Reading officials sounded the alarm. He stated that Council cannot solve problems with ordinances and he opined that those serving on Council long term are preventing progress. He noted the need for change in elected officials, adding that some on Council wrongly believe they are part of the solution when in actuality they are part of the problem.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the various ways individuals have to find solutions and solve problems.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA & MINUTES

Council President Cepeda-Freytiz called Council's attention to the agenda for this meeting, including the legislation listed under the Consent Agenda heading and the minutes from the July 11th Regular Meeting of Council and the July 18th Special Meeting, along with the summations of discussion from the July 11th and July 18th COW meetings and the July 18th Nominations Committee meeting.

Council President Cepeda-Freytiz noted the need to correct the July 11th minutes regarding the votes for Resolutions 112 and 113 by omitting her name and adding Councilor Ventura. She also noted the need to add names to the blanks on the resolutions listed on tonight's agenda as follows:

D. Resolution – appointing O. Christopher Miller to the City Council District 6 seat

E. Resolution – appointing Christopher Daubert, Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz and Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz to the Council Staff Evaluation Committee

F. Resolution – appointing Fred Thompson to the Reading Redevelopment Authority Board

G. Resolution – appointing Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz, Donna Reed and Melissa Ventura to the RAWA Lease Agreement Work Group

The agenda for this meeting, including the Consent Agenda legislation, the minutes from the July 11th Regular Meeting, as amended, the July 18th Special Meeting, and the

summations of discussion listed were approved by acclimation.

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 acclimation 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 the Bertolet Construction, Wernersville, PA in the submitted price of \$35,670.00 for ADA improvement at the Public Works building for select demolition of existing pavement, installation of a new concrete parking pad, wearing course, pavement markings, and installation of amenities to aid in ADA access to the building.

B. Resolution No 115-2022 – authorizing the disposal of Public Works Handicapped Applications from 1984-2010 in accordance with the Records Retention Schedule

C. Award of Contract –to Boyle Construction, Allentown, PA, in the submitted price of \$1,623,886.00 for a project and construction manager to supply design engineering services to the City's Public Work's Department, in conjunction with the Reading Police Department, with the engineering, design, technical specification preparation and the construction management of the new Reading Police Department Training and Special Operations Facility (RPD TSOF).

D. Resolution No 116-2022 – authorizing the administration to execute an agreement setting the City's electric rates

E. Resolution No 117-2022 – confirming the appointment of C. Thomas Neff as the City Zoning Administrator

F. Award of Contract – to OpenGov, SHI International Corp., Somerset, NJ, in the submitted price of \$94,457.56 (includes Year 1 and Year 2). This program will allow the City to have the most automated solicitation development solution via e-procurement and a contract management. This program will also allow up to 75% less time in having to write the new bids/RFPs for projects. This is being purchased via the Omnia Partners Contract which is through competitive purchasing for all cities and states and others are permitted to piggyback onto their contracts.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

The mayor thanked those who commented this evening and he highlighted his activities over the past two (2) weeks. The interim managing director provided a summary of the information provided below:

TO: City Council
FROM: Frank Denbowski, Interim Managing Director
PREPARED BY: Maritza Loaiza, Special Assistant

MEETING DATE: July 25, 2022
AGENDA MEMO DATE: July 25, 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 Litzenger 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.

Councilor Reed reminded the administration of the suggestion to install screening in the storm water catch basins to prevent litter from entering the system and traveling to the river. She reported tire dumping at the former Dana South property aka the 50 acre site. She noted the trashy condition of the 600, 700 and 800 blocks of Schuylkill Avenue and the need for education and enforcement, which may help some recognize the need to step up clean up their neighborhoods.

The interim managing director stated that the Adopt-a-block program and the Sweep Officers will be focused on making improvements in neighborhoods. Councilor Reed

questioned how effective these programs will be without people who are willing to invest in their neighborhoods. She reminded everyone of the time former Councilor Slifko and former Council President Waltman dedicated to collecting litter in various neighborhoods.

Councilor Ventura suggested that Councilor Reed adopt a block.

Councilor Daubert congratulated the administration for donating fire equipment and vehicles that were replaced to the Dominican Republic. He requested a breakdown on the number of properties inspected by Property Maintenance, the number that pass, fail and require re-inspections.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested a discussion in the future to identify alternative forms of problem solving, new solutions and new strategies that have synergy.

Council President Cepeda-Freytiz suggested creating infomercials on various things such as littering, trash set out, etc. She noted her appreciation of the mayor’s work to engage with the community.

CITY AUDITOR’S REPORT

The Auditor highlighted the report listed below.

Real Estate Transfer Tax - Update from 1/1/2018 to 6/30/2022

The City receives a tax levy of 3.5% on the value of the Real Estate Transfer Tax for properties sold. During the month of June of 2022, \$842,707.71 in revenue was recorded for this line item; this amount included a total of 240 Real Estate Transfer transactions of which 198 were taxable and 42 were non-taxable (see Table #2). For the current year, \$5.5 million was budgeted for this line item, and as of June 30, 2022, \$4,631,237.34 has already been recorded (see Table #1). Also during the month of June of the current year, two properties were sold for more than half of a million dollar threshold (see Table #3).

Table #1

Month	2022	12/31/2021	12/31/2020	12/31/2019	12/31/2018
January	702,030.86	535,849.04	323,123.52	223,920.68	293,105.03
February	512,582.49	523,300.89	511,220.85	615,116.21	204,053.26
March	954,153.08	1,178,885.61	601,103.82	266,411.11	348,937.95
April	736,240.82	717,308.73	235,765.07	548,506.44	347,097.22
May					

	883,522.38	447,710.27	157,245.87	441,084.11	322,871.76
June	842,707.71	719,042.39	1,464,932.00	363,997.72	350,369.72
July		752,234.50	437,026.44	359,547.89	350,708.33
August		1,078,840.76	361,892.51	353,006.61	514,841.63
September		678,323.20	501,228.42	350,731.42	324,492.29
October		480,665.62	493,787.54	340,908.53	389,823.15
November		844,193.89	510,649.58	330,855.79	267,444.32
December		837,430.85	993,086.79	457,238.03	576,429.44
Total Revenue	4,631,237.34	8,793,785.75	6,591,062.41	4,651,324.54	4,290,174.10
Total Budgeted	5,500,000.00	4,700,000.00	4,200,000.00	3,800,000.00	3,350,000.00
Over/(Under) Budget	(868,762.66)	4,093,785.75	2,391,062.41	851,324.54	940,174.10

Table #2

	Taxable	Non-Taxable	Total Transactions
January	216	33	249
February	135	37	172
March	250	41	291
April	201	40	241
May	200	29	229
June	198	42	240

Table #3

Month	Address	Sale Price	Rate - 3.5%
May	232 N 6th Street	664,900.00	23,271.50
May	430 S 4th Street	840,000.00	29,400.00
May	1802 Hill Road	599,900.00	20,996.50
May	755 Hiester Ln	1,800,000.00	63,000.00
May	501 S 9th Street	1,075,000.00	37,625.00
June	500 N 8th Street	925,000.00	32,375.00
June	354 Penn Street		

		1,450,000.00	50,750.00
Total		7,354,800.00	257,418.00

Admission Fee Tax Revenue– Update as of June 30, 2022

The majority of the revenue collected for the Admission Fee Tax comes from the Reading Royals, the Reading Phils and other events/concerts held at the Santander Arena and the Performing Arts Center. In 2022, the Administration budgeted \$200,000 for this revenue line item. And as of June 30, 2022, \$390,228.59 in revenue has already been collected, exceeding its budget target by \$190,228.59.

Admission Fee Tax Revenue - 2022:

Month	Reading Phils	Reading Royals	Santander Arena- Other	Performing Art Center	Varsity Spirit LLC	YTD Amount Recorded
January	2,686.19	8,618.11	5,013.05	4,687.02		21,004.37
February	2,797.68	9,277.90	44,010.19	25,533.63		81,619.40
March	4,312.12	18,087.90	54,424.75	23,490.73	3,133.98	103,449.48
April	6,919.24	9,876.94	77,475.84	23,792.76		118,064.78
May	7,355.98		34,515.52	10,421.32		52,292.82
June	8,941.65		0.00	4,856.09		13,797.74
Total	33,012.86	45,860.85	215,439.35	92,781.55	3,133.98	390,228.59

User Fees Revenue – Update as of 5/31/2022

For the fiscal year of 2022, the City budgeted \$3,000,000 for User Fees, which is the revenue collected for the EMS services that the City provides. And as of May 31, 2022, the City has recorded \$1,296,437.86. If the revenue received in the upcoming months continues with this same trend, most likely the User Fees Revenue line item will meet its budget target by 12/31/2022.

The chart below illustrates User Fees Revenue vs. Budget from 2018 to 5/31/2022:

	5/31/2022	12/31/2021	12/31/2020	12/31/2019	12/31/2018
USER FEES-EMS	1,296,437.86	3,287,855.40	2,405,142.53	3,333,157.10	2,808,204.15
BUDGET	3,000,000.00	3,033,500.00	3,196,000.00	3,095,000.00	2,900,000.00
OVER/UNDER BUDGET	(1,703,562.14)	254,355.40	(790,857.47)	238,157.10	(91,795.85)

Miscellaneous:

On Tuesday, July 19, 2022, I communicated with the external auditors, and the tentative date for the

next Audit Committee Meeting will be on August 25, 2022. At this meeting, we will receive an update on the status of the 2021 Audit, and any potential findings will be discussed.

Reports from Departments, Boards, Authorities & Commissions

Phil Rabena, Zoning Hearing Board Chair, introduced Zoning Board members and Zoning Staff. He read the following statement:

General Comments

1. The Zoning Board is seeing more people coming to deal with zoning issues before they take any actions.
2. The Zoning staff supplies us with accurate and timely information.
3. The Zoning Solicitor supplies us with sound advice and counsel.
4. The City's use of the One Stop program is a great asset.
5. The use of official interpreters has been an asset for the Board and the applicants.
6. The Zoning Hearing Board and City Zoning office work well together.
7. The Zoning Hearing Board works well together and takes the work very seriously, noting that people's economic lives as well as public safety issues are at stake in all these decisions.
8. The ZOOM process has been working well and the Board continues to operate in a hybrid fashion.

Philosophy

1. The Board makes every effort to treat applicants and each other with respect at all times.
2. The Board often delays an appeal decision to gain more complete information and provide the fairest possible hearing.
3. The Board tries to be consistent in our rulings. Given the circumstances of having a City as old as Reading that is not always possible. Each appeal has its own set of circumstances.
4. The Board tries to always understand the letter of the law as well as the intent of the law.
5. The Board tries to understand the history of a property, current circumstances and what might be the future positives or negatives of our decisions on any matter.

Issues

1. Parking continues to be an issue. The studies and discussions among staff have promise to help resolve this ongoing issue. The coordination of these groups will allow Council to make decisions that will have positive long term results.
2. Legal and illegal conversions of properties to multifamily units.
3. Under sized housing units as well as site crowding. This is counter to the Cities plan to reduce density for a better quality of life.
4. Site sketches that are not accurate for many reasons. Some adjustment may be needed in the requirements when applications are filed.
5. Federal and State laws make it difficult to enact tough sanctions for willful violations. Cities need to address these issues through State legislators.
6. Ability to follow up to see if violations have been removed or approvals have been fully implemented as approved.

Recommendations

1. Often people are sold properties and told they can do certain things with it and then get cited for zoning and code violations. There are several ways to address this issue. Many

solutions cost little money but provide great benefit. One thought would be print a notice about various requirements on something that goes out each month or each year to every property owner.

2. In areas of high density housing, vacant lots and or abandoned structures should be turned into parking areas by the Parking Authority or green space. Blight removed increases value to all the surrounding area.

3. It is important to know the history of properties. Have the applicant supply the information on the following issues when they file their appeal:

- The deed/description of properties (County tax records could be supplied by the applicant going back 5 years),
- A copy of how the property was advertised for sale,
- The number of gas/electric meters(how many and how long were they there),
- Site plan or other sketches must be drawn to certain standards.
- The City has information on violations, permits for code issues, water/sewer records. Having that information in one data base or having the applicants supply it would go a long way in making this process more accurate and fair to all parties.

Closing

1. It is an honor for this Board to serve the City and citizens with the City Zoning Office personnel present and past.

2. The City has some very creative and thoughtful people in your employ in the areas of zoning, planning and codes and some great studies going on by other groups. Coordinating the findings will give the City the ability to create solutions for some of the ongoing issues in our City.

3. The City needs to find a way to retain employees. Turnover is not an asset to any organization.

4. If you have any questions feel free to ask them now or contact myself or the staff and we will address any of those issues.

5. Thank you for the opportunity to address all of you

ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

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, June 27, July 11 regular meetings***

Councilor Butler moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to table Bill No. 50-2022.

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

Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura, Cepeda-Freytiz, President

Nays: None - 0

A. Bill 70-2022 – 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 *Introduced at the July 11 regular meeting*

Councilor Reed moved, seconded by Councilor Daubert, to enact Bill No. 70-2022.

Bill No. 70-2022 was enacted by the following vote:

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura, Cepeda-Freytiz, President
- 6**

Nays: None – 0

B. Bill 71-2022 – authorizing the Mayor to Execute an MOU and Intergovernmental Agreement to join the other Berks Municipalities on the Berks County Emergency Response Team (BCERT) *Introduced at the July 11 regular meeting*

Councilor Reed moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to enact Bill No. 71-2022.

Bill No. 71-2022 was enacted by the following vote:

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura, Cepeda-Freytiz, President
- 6**

Nays: None - 0

10. INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

Councilor Butler read the following ordinances into the record:

A. Ordinance – amending City Code Section 5-207 relating to the attendance of the Council Solicitor and City Solicitor at Council meetings

B. Ordinance – authorizing an appropriations transfer in the amount of \$200,000 to Zoning Contracted Services to help expand the processing capacity of the Zoning and Planning Office

11. RESOLUTIONS

A. Resolution No 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 *Tabled at the July 11th regular meeting; Discussion scheduled for Aug 1st COW*

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

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

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura, Cepeda-Freytiz, President
- 6**

Nays: None - 0

B. Resolution No 118-2022 – reappointing Michael Gombar Jr. to the Berks County Convention Center Authority

C. Resolution No 119-2022 – reappointing Heminton Urena to the Blighted Property Review Commission

Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Ventura, to adopt Resolutions 118 and 119-2022.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz and Council President Cepeda-Freytiz noted the experience both these applicants bring to their respective Boards.

Councilor Reed agreed noting the benefits provided through continuity in service.

Resolution Nos. 118 and 119-2022 were adopted by the following vote:

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura, Cepeda-Freytiz, President
- 6**

Nays: None - 0

D. Resolution 120-2022 – appointing O. Christopher Miller to the City Council District 6 seat

Councilor Reed moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to adopt Resolution 120-2022.

Councilor Daubert expressed his belief in the ability of Mr. Miller to come on board and quickly come up to speed as he stays aware of City related issues. He also noted Mr. Miller's familiarity with District 6 as a 41 year resident.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted Mr. Miller's depth of knowledge about City issues which is essential to keep up with the workload placed on Council members.

Councilor Reed agreed with the previous remarks and noted Mr. Miller's depth of volunteer service across the Reading community, noting the diversity he brings to the body.

Council President Cepeda-Freytiz explained the process used by Council to rate those who are interviewed. After the interviews the scores are tallied and the winner is announced.

Councilor Reed stated that Council has been using this evaluation process since 2012.

Resolution No. 120 -2022 was adopted by the following vote:

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

Nays: Ventura - 1

E. Resolution – appointing Christopher Daubert, Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz and Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz to the Council Staff Evaluation Committee

Councilor Ventura moved, seconded by Councilor Daubert, to adopt Resolution 121-2022.

Resolution No. 121 -2022 was adopted by the following vote:

Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura, Cepeda-Freytiz, President - 6

Nays: None - 0

F. Resolution – appointing Fred Thompson to the Reading Redevelopment Authority Board

Councilor Daubert moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to adopt Resolution 122-2022.

Councilor Reed explained that the same evaluation process used to select the District 6 appointee was used for the Redevelopment Authority interviews.

Council President Cepeda-Freytiz stated that those not selected will be invited to serve on another Board, Authority or Commission.

Resolution No. 122-2022 was adopted by the following vote:

Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura, Cepeda-Freytiz, President - 6

Nays: None - 0

G. Resolution – appointing Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz, Donna Reed and Melissa Ventura to the

RAWA Lease Agreement Work Group

Councilor Ventura moved, seconded by Councilor Daubert, to adopt Resolution 123-2022.

Resolution No. 123-2022 was adopted by the following vote:

**Yeas: Butler, Daubert, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Reed, Ventura, Cepeda-Freytiz, President
- 6**

Nays: None - 0

COUNCIL COMMENT

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz thanked her neighborhood for watching out for the elderly in the neighborhood during this oppressive heatwave. She expressed hope that others will follow this example.

Councilor Reed asked residents who report complaints to be clear about the location of the problem so City staff can address the issues quickly. She noted her firm belief in freedom of speech and noted the need for citizens to provide specifics. Rather than complain about ordinances generally, she asked that residents be specific about the ordinances or issues that they find problematic. She also noted the need for people to avoid making damaging comments about perceived diversity injustice and ageism when addressing the body.

Council President Cepeda-Freytiz thanked those who spoke at tonight's meeting and she announced the upcoming meeting schedule.

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

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk