

**CITY OF  
READING**

# Council Corner

## The Reading Water System



If you pay attention to the local media, you are aware of the current divide between City Council and Mayor Spencer over the water lease with the Reading Area Water Authority. Council recently released the information below to the media on April 10<sup>th</sup> to explain City Council's position and rationale. A copy of the release is below. I hope you will consider Council's position on this serious matter.

"The City of Reading owns the water system which is currently leased to the Reading Area Water Authority (RAWA). City Council, originally in collaboration with the administration, has attempted to identify the best valuation of our system by requesting proposals (RFP) for a specifically designed lease structure that provides water rate controls, full City ownership and control, proper capital maintenance and improvements and the retention of the RAWA rank and file employees.

This RFP would be open to all bidders, including other municipal authorities, and is the best way to identify the ultimate value of the water system, including the value of the vast amount of unused water capacity within the system; not two years. We were on track to complete this process in a 6 to 9 month timeframe. The administration's claim that alleges the millions in additional financing and costs due to rising interest rates is untrue. RAWA's resistance has already pushed the City's process out nearly 3 months. The Mayor has now joined the effort to stall this process. If the administration is concerned about time, why intentionally delay a fair and open process? The Mayor also alleges that PFM is on board with his direct negotiation with RAWA. PFM originally stated to everyone that the appearance of negotiating with RAWA would hinder potential bidders. They have only recently suggested that approach as a futile exercise because the administration and RAWA have hijacked the process. Therefore, this is no longer about access- ing equity in our water system and City Council is now continuing with the process that will protect it.

In an effort to provide a fair and prudent bidding process for all potential bidders City Council has made it clear to RAWA that no long term bids or offers are being considered outside of the RFP process. RAWA was asked to honor a two-year extension of our current lease to afford the City sufficient time to complete the RFP process. RAWA has neglected the direct instructions from City Council on no less than three occasions; the RAWA board has proven to be more of a roadblock than a facilitator in assisting the City with a fair RFP process. The RAWA board was reminded that its initial "offers" (that were not requested or reviewed by City Council) requires the issuance of even more debt which is no different than the City borrowing money on its own. This essentially constitutes further "collateralizing" of this valuable asset, already threatened by extensive RAWA debt. City Council remains firm in its intent to determine through a fair and equitable RFP process the true "capitalization" of unused capacity of this asset. RAWA's initial unsolicited proposals failed even at that basic "baseline" level.

Subsequently, the Mayor, in spite of Council's expressed clear desire for an open RFP process, has aligned himself with RAWA which has both contaminated and delayed an eventual RFP process. This has upheld RAWA's position as a roadblock to the open bidding process the City and its citizens deserve. They allege that time is of the essence and yet have done all they can to stop an RFP process from taking place. It has also been averred that private bidders would require financing to fund a lease and that will not be known until the RFP process is completed. This is a scare tactic being employed to shock the citizens into believing an RFP is only a last resort and that a RAWA proposal is the best starting point. One truth remains clear. City Council has become increasingly alarmed about the unwillingness of RAWA to cooperate. This lack of cooperation has greatly heightened our concern about the future and protection of this asset.

Due to our concerns and the strong resistance of RAWA this matter is now viewed as an asset protection effort by City Council. Therefore, the steps we will be taking are now primarily aimed at securing the water system by assuring prudent financial management and remediation for years to come. It must be made clear to the public that we anticipate RAWA and others may attempt to fight City Council extensively instead of playing the role of a cooperative city entity. The dissolution of RAWA will undoubtedly cost the City a substantial amount of money due to RAWA's expected legal resistance and current debt structure. However, City Council believes RAWA's slow loss of control of the water system due to financial entanglements and uncooperative entities is an option we can no longer permit. We are asking the public to be patient, to get educated, and to understand Council's position and the depth of our concerns. RAWA is now leveraging Council into some precarious positions.

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However, Council is up to the challenge of both protecting the water system and funding City operations. The upcoming 2015 budget is one of those challenges and Council cannot continue to wait for RAWA's cooperation.

Therefore, City Council, with a very strong majority in full agreement, will be taking the following steps to protect our water system and to make certain the City's general operations remain funded in 2015 in an effective manner despite these ever changing resistant and uncooperative conditions.

1. RAWA will be instructed to cease any and all negotiations, financing activities and any other non-operational transactions related to our water system. This includes negotiations with any and all entities – including the city administration. No further agreements will be approved by City Council regarding RAWA under any conditions. This requirement of RAWA is clearly stated under the second addendum of the operating lease agreement (12/30/2010 - see # 6) which states **“the authority shall not take any actions which will hinder, limit, or interfere with the City's Take-Back powers, including, but not limited to entering into ANY agreement, contract, loss obligation, bond, trust indenture, or pledge that contains terms that limit directly or indirectly or attempt to limit the city's take back powers”**
2. City Council will immediately hire legal and financial experts to assist in the take back of the City's water system and the dissolution of RAWA, while sustaining the City's complete control and ownership of the water system including the retention of the existing RAWA rank and file employees.
3. City Council will begin working immediately with PFM and the Auditor to start the 2015 budget process to complete our budget prior to August 1, 2014. This budget may contain either a reduced or an eliminated contribution from RAWA. This budget will then subsequently be submitted and approved during the required budget timelines required by the City Charter.
4. City Council will not approve any RFPs or contracts for a valuation of the City water system without the Mayor's commitment for an open and fair RFP process that excludes any isolated or favorable discussions with any possible bidders.
5. City Council will encourage the Mayor to join forces in an open and fair competitive bid process available to all equitable bidders and will request that the Mayor not align with any competing entity or utilize any improperly staged scare tactics.

There are not many instances where such a strong majority of City Council has had the same convictions about a specific process or task. This asset must be protected and Council has been greatly alarmed by the roadblock efforts of RAWA and certain members of the administration. As this process further unfolds we will work diligently to disclose the truths about the obstacles Council has been up against.

Finally, we assure the public that in the end City Council will make certain there is prudent oversight of this asset through the powers we have been elected to exercise. Any questions may be directed to the Council President and Vice President.”



**DISTRICT 1****CHRIS DAUBERT**

Thank you District 1 for allowing me the privilege to serve! I wanted to share a little bit with everyone about my own background and plans for the city that all of us call home.

I have been a Social Studies teacher for the past 10 years, working in the Wilson School District. In addition to my teaching duties, I also advise a community service club called Interact; it is the student-version of Rotary International. The club does all kinds of activities within the city, from cleaning up City Park to special projects and regular visits to Opportunity House. Part of my goal is to eliminate the divide between city and suburb. Our county needs a strong urban core to be successful, and when I say everyone in this county is in it together, I mean it. I also have been involved with a Parks and Recreation summer program for the past 15 years. Community recreation is incredibly important. Our kids need things to do, but they also learn so much while doing them. Good habits of mind and character, like following the rules, showing good sportsmanship, and working together are all traits that can be learned from a quality summer program. For the past two summers, I also had the opportunity to serve as a Leadership Counselor at Camp Neidig, which is affiliated with Rotary. There, rising seniors are put through an intensive four day development of their own leadership skills, through projects, the testimony of great leaders, and problem-solving activities.

We have enormous opportunity in the city. We have so many

**THANK YOU DISTRICT 1**

people working hard to see a brighter future. Places like the T.E.A. Factory on Willow Street serve as a beacon of that hope and that promise. We need to invest in our own people, especially our youth. I believe we need to analyze our parking rates to determine if they are hurting the economic development of our downtown. We need to make the process of opening a business easier. It is something everyone knows deep down, but it is no secret that our high rate of taxation is making it harder for the city to compete for new businesses to come to Reading. It is my hope and my belief that we can lower them, in a responsible and very direct manner, to bring jobs back to our city.

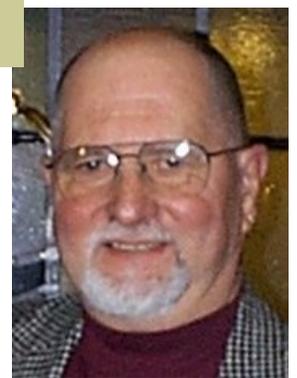
Relative to our district especially, there are several things that I want to work to get done. We need to resolve the lighting issue in Wyomissing Park. It has been long enough. With the bridge closures over the next few years, we need to ensure that the increased traffic down S 5<sup>th</sup> Street is safe for pedestrians. There are schools there, and we need to be responsible to the children's safety first and foremost. I also would like to see a beautification of the city's section of Lancaster Ave. Tom Masano's has done an amazing job serving as an example of what can be done. Making it more visually attractive will benefit everyone, homeowners and business owners alike.

We can do these things. We must all remember that ours is a city worth fighting for. A brighter day for our city is within our grasp; we just have to reach for it. Please feel free to contact me anytime. [Daubert4council@gmail.com](mailto:Daubert4council@gmail.com) Thank you so much for putting your faith in me. Now it is time to get to work.

Chris Daubert

**DENNIS STERNER****City Light Ministry****DISTRICT 3**

Written by Pastor Joe Sclafini



City Light Ministry (CLM) was founded in 1992 (formerly Life-Line Center) as an outreach ministry of the Spring Valley Church of God at 246 North Ninth Street (near Ninth and Elm). We expanded to a second location at 940 Spruce St. Our North Ninth Street location is home to our Homeless Program. Our outreach "to those without a home" started three years ago when concerned volunteers at CLM began to recognize that homelessness was a problem in our neighborhood and began to ask how CLM can help. After three months of meetings, we devised a plan to help, if only in a small way. It began with having a *Drop-in Center* where those in need would come in to get warm, a cup of coffee and a light breakfast. We targeted those living outdoors and found opening very early in the morning was when they needed us most. So the Drop-in runs Tuesday through Saturday, 6:00 - 9:00 am. Along with breakfast, folks can get a shower, receive mail, get toiletries and, when available, clothes, socks and underwear. But more importantly, we offer hope. We share the love of Jesus with all who come and, when needed, we help our people sort out the things going on in their lives and serve with much needed encouragement as they get back on their feet.

Helping "those without a home" is something the citizens of Reading do very well. *Berks Coalition to End Homelessness*, *Hope Rescue Mission and Opportunity House* are the more well-known groups, but they lead the way for dozens of other groups helping those in need. We are so impressed with our immediate community surrounding the 200 block of North Ninth Street. They have been patient and cooperative with the ministry even when things get a bit 'loud'. I think they appreciate what we do. We are also grateful for the Reading Police and Fire Departments that have been tremendously supportive and helpful. Together all citizens of Reading can celebrate that we are a compassionate city that really helps a lot of people get through hard times. Together we are really making a difference.

**DISTRICT 5****DONNA REED**

### Saying goodbye to the nicest of guys – Harvey Kimball, “the mayor of Hollenbach Street”

If you were lucky, you knew Harvey Kimball. You might not have known his name, but if you worked or spent time in downtown or

northwest Reading, chances are you encountered him.

Harvey was a fixture in this town. You may have known him as the downtown mailman, walking our center city streets and the corridors of many buildings, including the Berks County Courthouse and Services Center, as he made his daily rounds. Harvey added both a casualness and a gallantry to the traditional mailman image – sporting dreadlocks even with a receding hairline and given to wearing shorts and untucked shirts in warmer weather and being consistently courteous and kind, perhaps a vestige of his South Carolina roots.

But, most of all, Harvey had a smile that few of us will ever forget. Like hundreds of others, I never once saw him downbeat. He had no bad words for anyone. And that broad, beautiful smile lit up our city like few others.

I received word of Harvey’s passing from our former managing director Carl Geffken. I could hardly believe the message. Like many, I had recently seen Harvey. Indeed, he was making his appointed rounds earlier on the day he left us. His sudden passing stunned everyone who knew him.

Harvey was not just the mailman so many relied on to deliver the day’s missives; he was a friend who made everyone’s day just a bit brighter with his smile, kind words and a genuine interest in his fellow human beings.

I knew him also as the “mayor of Hollenbach Street.” For nearly two decades, he made an annual block party happen on that small one-block street just off Schuylkill Avenue. He got the permits, organized the neighbors, secured the entertainment, and made sure the street was clean before and after the event. His enthusiasm for the party and his neighbors was clearly evident. I was happy to be on hand for the last few of those events.

Harvey also worked throughout the year to keep his street clean and his neighborhood a good one. He would be sure to text or call me if there was an issue of concern. And he always brought those forth in a respectful, thoughtful way.

Harvey’s funeral was a testimony to the lives he touched. Hundreds gathered – from his heartbroken Postal Service co-workers, from judges to janitors, from public officials to the young kids of the neighborhood, and, most importantly, his extensive and loving family. More than 50 entries appeared in the guest book section of his *Reading Eagle* obituary – truly an extraordinary number. And the heartfelt expressions of loss and love for him were both searing and comforting.

A retired Marine, Harvey’s accomplishments also included founding of the Berks County Marines in Action.

We are so proud that Harvey settled in Northwest Reading and found and founded a sense of joy and community there.

We will miss him always. Reading had no finer citizen than Harvey Kimball.



**Harvey Kimball**



## Report to the People

### State Senator Judith L. Schwank 11<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District

# UNWANTED TELEMARKETING CALLS



The consumer complaint most frequently reported to my office is about unwanted and annoying telemarketing calls. Constituents have told my staff that they have signed up for the Do Not Call registry but they continue to receive unwanted telemarketing calls. That is because some telemarketers use new technology, such as throw away cell phones and software that fools caller ID systems. Some businesses even retain a call center in a foreign country to make the calls to market their products. And sometimes, it is because the constituent has not re-registered on the Do Not Call list. The Do Not Call list is only valid for five years. You must re-register. Please make sure that your home telephone numbers, including cell phones, are on the list by re-registering. And, if you have never registered for the list before, I recommend that you do so at your earliest convenience. Once you register, your name and telephone number will remain on the list for five years, or until your number is no longer valid. There is no fee for registering on the list.

The Do Not Call registries do not prevent all unsolicited telephone calls. Off shore telemarketers largely ignore them. However, the following telephone calls are permitted under the law:

- A phone call in response to your request;
- A call regarding an existing debt, contract or payment;
- A call from a company or individual you have done business with during the past twelve-month period;
- A call from a charitable organization; or
- A call on behalf of a politician or political group.

Whether you are re-registering for the Do Not Call list or registering for the first time, remember that the list is distributed to telemarketers on a quarterly basis under Pennsylvania law. Telemarketers then have thirty days to remove your number(s) from their call lists. Therefore, there will be a delay before you experience a reduction in telemarketing phone calls.

It's important to note that nothing is fail-proof when it comes to receiving unwanted calls, but they can at least be reduced if people continue to maintain their names on the Do Not Call registry.

To re-register or register for the Do Not Call list visit [www.attorneygeneral.gov](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov) to complete an online registration form or call the toll-free hotline at 1-888-777-3406.

As always, my office stands ready to assist you with any state related matter. I always welcome your questions, concerns, comments and suggestions, so please contact me at anytime. You may email me at [senatorschwank@pasenate.com](mailto:senatorschwank@pasenate.com); write to me in care of my district office at 210 George St., Reading, PA 19605; or call at 610-929-2151.

Please visit my website at [www.senatorschwank.com](http://www.senatorschwank.com) to view all the services my staff and I can offer you and subscribe to my e-newsletter on my website to stay connected with updates on state and local issues.

# READING HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Communities within Reading are as diverse as they are varied. Our constituents have faces that represent a multitude of races, beliefs, practices, and experiences. Individually, our different interests contribute to the methods we apply in a myriad of circumstances. Therefore, whether you are new to the area or entrenched through several generations, it is inevitable that our perspective will either enrich our communal understanding of each other, or provide a source of strife at home or in the workplace.

The mission of the Reading Human Relations Commission is to address those disparities and facilitate a respectful understanding by which the Reading community can co-exist. The RHRC's primary imports are safeguarding the guarantees accorded to its citizens in areas of employment, disability, housing and public accommodations and promoting ideals that foster compassion where conflict and dispute emerges.

Located in City Hall, the RHRC is a valuable resource to municipal government, community, and local media. As a substantially equivalent agency, the Commission is permitted to conduct fact findings, issue subpoenas, and enforce penalties necessary to enforce federal and local laws. Where it is the policy of the City to provide and protect for the general welfare, the Commission ensures equal opportunity for all persons to live in decent conditions, free from restrictions based on characteristics such as race, color, sex, religion, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, familial status, handicap, or retaliation. Ultimately, the Reading Human Relations Commission is a service, vested with considerable authority and tasked with the responsibility to promote inter-cultural relationships. It operates to serve the City and develop a mutual respect for the different faces, and places within our community.



## HOMESTEAD TAX EXCLUSION

A random check of properties that are identified as receiving a Homestead Exclusion has revealed an unusually high number of property owners that have been receiving school property tax reductions when their properties are not legally eligible for property tax relief. If a person's property is approved for a Homestead Exclusion, and the property no longer qualifies for property tax relief, that property owner is required by law to notify the Berks County Assessment Office within 45 days of the change in use. If the use of your property has changed, and you are not sure if it still qualifies for the Homestead Exclusion, you should contact the Berks County Assessment Office.



The Reading School District recognizes that many homeowners, since originally filing for an exclusion, have chosen to lease their property. The school district also understands that these owners may have mistakenly failed to notify the Berks County Assessment Office of the change. It is important to know that properties that are rented, or are under a lease-purchase arrangement, are not eligible for property tax relief. We are strongly encouraging those property owners to make the correction immediately. To make a correction, please contact the Berks County Assessment Office at 610-478-6262.

Because of the high number of properties that have claimed the exclusion but who do not actually qualify for the exclusion, I have requested that the Department of Education and the Department of Community and Economic Development assist our efforts to investigate and help verify that the property owners that have claimed tax exclusion are actually eligible for such exclusion. Any person who files an application that contains false information, or who does not notify the Assessment Office of a change in the use of their property and, therefore no longer qualifies as homestead property, may be required to pay the taxes that would have been due, plus interest. They also may be required to pay a penalty equal to 10% of the unpaid taxes. Anyone convicted of intentionally filing a false application may be guilty of a misdemeanor of the third degree and be sentenced to pay a fine up to \$2,500.

It should also be noted that those property owners who are rightfully entitled to property tax relief would receive an even larger tax reduction if the ineligible properties were removed from the property exclusion list.



The Vision Resource Center of Berks County (formerly known as the Association for the Blind) is seeking volunteers to assist in transportation services needed for clients to attend doctors appointments, go grocery shopping, shopping in general and attend counseling appointments.

Anyone interested would require the following:

- a valid driver's license
- an insured vehicle
- GPS
- cell phone

To volunteer, please contact Carolyn Krick at (610)375-8407 ext. 110 or email her at [ckrick@berksblind.org](mailto:ckrick@berksblind.org)

#### CITY OF READING TO HOLD RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP

Reading, PA – To continue efforts for City residents to conserve natural resources, the City's Environmental Advisory Council, in cooperation with the Berks County Conservation District, will hold a workshop to educate City residents on the importance of conserving water and on the City's new Rain Barrel Ordinance.

A rain barrel is a storage container that collects rain water from downspouts to be used for non-potable outdoor applications. Generally, rain barrels are large plastic containers with a lid, a diverter that directs the water into the barrel, an overflow that directs water away from the building, a screen to keep out debris, and a spigot.

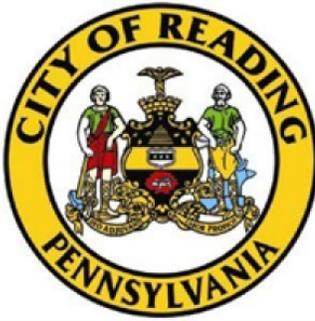
All are welcome. Attendees who are City of Reading residents may enter a drawing that will be held for a free rain barrel, donated by the Berks County Conservation District. Additional rain barrels will be available for sale on a first come, first serve basis.

When: Saturday, May 10 from 9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.  
 Where: Berks County Community Foundation, 237 Court St, Reading  
 Parking: Free parking is available on the street and in the Reading Parking Authority Chiarelli Plaza located just across the street on N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street between Washington and Court Sts.

In addition to the rain barrel workshop, the Berks County Community Foundation has agreed to give free tours of their building. The building has been awarded the highest level of LEED® certification available to environmentally sustainable or "green" buildings.

For additional information about the workshop, please contact the Chair of the City's Environmental Advisory Council, David Beane, by phone at 610-378-5555 or by email at [drb@beanellc.com](mailto:drb@beanellc.com).

This workshop is free. Registration is requested by Friday, May 2 and is limited to the first 50 callers. To register, please contact Shelly Katzenmoyer, Deputy City Clerk, City of Reading by phone at 610-655-6204 or email [michelle.katzenmoyer@readingpa.org](mailto:michelle.katzenmoyer@readingpa.org).



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.... GET INVOLVED IN CITY GOVERNMENT

The City of Reading has many opportunities for residents to be involved in decisions made by their local government. At this time, the City needs residents to serve on several Boards, Authorities and Commissions (BAC). Four BACs are highlighted below along with a comprehensive list of all openings on City BACs.

The City has a **Main Street Board** which will work to improve the City's downtown area by administering a Main Street Program that will promote a sense of community and unified purpose, assure the historic continuity of the City's architectural heritage, improve the image and perception of the City to residents and visitors and strengthen economic rejuvenation of property and commerce for the benefit of all.

The **Animal Control Board** assists the City in addressing animal related issues and enforces the exotic pet permit process. Interested applicants should have an understanding of animal issues in an urban environment.

The **Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB)** works with residents of the City's historic districts when exterior improvements are made to buildings. The Board ensures that the local and federal historical guidelines are followed. Interested applicants should be residents of one of the City's historic districts or have an interest in preservation.

The **Human Relations Commission** seeks to prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation in accordance with the terms of the City's Human Relation Ordinance, which includes discrimination against race, color, religion, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, sex, familial status, or handicap.

Plumbing Board	1 opening
HVAC Board	4 openings
Zoning Hearing Board	1 alternate opening
Police Civil Service Board	1 opening
Historical Architectural Review	4 openings
Board of Health	1 opening + 1 alternate opening
Board of Ethics	2 openings
Building/Fire Code Board of Appeals	1 opening + 1 alternate opening
Animal Control Board	5 openings
Charter Board	1 opening
Housing Board of Appeals	3 openings
Diversity Board	1 opening
Main Street Board	5 openings
Reading Area Water Authority	1 opening
Redevelopment Authority	1 opening
Reading Housing Authority	2 openings
Downtown Improvement District	1 opening
City Revitalization Improvement Zone	1 opening
Planning Commission	1 opening
Shade Tree Commission	2 openings
Stadium Commission	2 openings
Human Relations Commission	3 openings
Blighted Property Review Commission	1 opening
Environmental Advisory Council	1 opening

All interested citizens should complete the BAC application form found on the City's website – [www.readingpa.gov](http://www.readingpa.gov) – and return it to the City Clerk's office, 815 Washington St, Reading, PA 19601.

For additional information, please call the City Clerk's office at 610-655-6204 or email at [council@readingpa.org](mailto:council@readingpa.org).