

A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Our Safety...Is a Priority



During the last few weeks City Council has been working to increase the City’s efforts to make Reading a safer. After several hours of negotiations and considering our fiscal situation, City Council has decided to accept grant funds from FEMA (approximately \$2.7 million) to add about 20 firefighters, cross trained as Emergency Management personnel. This increase in personnel will allow us to add a fourth medical unit to the EMS Division and have a full complement of staffing in the Fire Department.

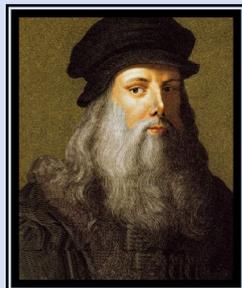
This decision will save the City hundreds of thousands of dollars in overtime normally paid out by the Fire Department and will provide us with better coverage during any emergency. Although these federal grant funds will only be available until 2015, it is our intention to continue providing the necessary security to our residents after 2015 by locating if possible additional funding so the City can continue operating with increased staffing of this Department.

In our next newsletter, we will be sharing information relevant to the Crime Summit follow-up meeting scheduled for March 11th and any other information important to our community. As always, thank you for the privilege of serving you.

Francis G. Acosta, President of Council

Famous People Born in the month of April:

Leonardo da Vinci
 Bette Davis
 Washington Irving
 Shirley Temple



***“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.”
 —Leonardo da Vinci—***

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INSIDE DISTRICT 4



I have lived in District 4 in the College Heights area for nearly 50 years and during that time many people have asked me “What was here first Albright College or the residential community?” I took some time to research the matter a few months ago and learned the following.

In 1875, Selwyn Hall, located on the Albright Campus, was opened by the Central Pennsylvania Diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church as a military boarding and day school for boys. This school closed before the end of the century. In 1881, the East Penn Conference of the Evangelical Church opened a prep school in Reading near Sixth and Walnut Streets. This school soon moved to Schuylkill County. In 1902, the Church purchased the abandoned Selwyn Hall under the leadership of Rev. Warren F. Teel and under his direction the prep school became a junior

college incorporated as the Schuylkill College in 1923.

The present Albright College is the merging of a number of schools of the Evangelical Church. In 1895, Albright College Institute was opened in Myerstown. In September 1928, the Schuylkill College and Albright College merged and moved to Albright’s present location under President Teel (Teel Hall). The name “Albright” was retained because Jacob Albright founded the Evangelical Church in this region in 1880.

While working with the College Heights Community Council on its application to become a historic district we learned that the development plan for the Hampden Heights began around 1909 and the neighborhood around Albright was under development for the following 25-30 years. So the “Who came first” issue is settled: Albright and the residential community arrived and grew up around the same time.

COUNCILOR MARCIA GOODMAN-HINNERSHITZ

INSIDE DISTRICT 2

Neighborhood Businesses Make A Difference



What do barbershops, a boxing club, and bodegas have in common? If you are a resident of East Reading, these are just a sampling of the neighborhood businesses within walking distance of your home. While

suburban residents are forced to jump in their car to shop, the residents of East Reading need only to walk several blocks to find a variety of family-owned enterprises. Corner grocery stores and sandwich shops have always been fixtures of working class neighborhoods.

Many of these businesses such as Tack’s Sandwich Shop at 16th and Cotton have served generations of families with their flavorful fare. While the ownership has changed over the years, East Reading businesses still offer the convenience of “just around the corner” for area residents. With the traditional establishments still thriving, unique businesses have now made East Reading their home. One example is Abigail’s Tearoom, at the foot of Clymer Street. This charming dining venue offers an opportunity to enjoy British tea and sandwiches in a gorgeous Victorian setting. And Shop Smart, near 16th Street and Perkiomen Avenue, one of the newest stores, offers residences with expanded shopping opportunities.

When we talk about business districts in Reading, the Penn Corridor has received the most attention. However, the Perkiomen Avenue and Cotton Street Corridors have always been vital thoroughfares for Reading and deserve recognition. While not an official business district, the expansion of neighborhood businesses adds to economic development as well as offering employment opportunities. We should value the hard work of these entrepreneurs and their investments in the city.

With my grandparents having owned corner grocery stores, I appreciate the value of these small neighborhood businesses. During my walks through East Reading, I am always looking for signs of these new investments. There needs to a concentrated effort to recognize the growth of these businesses and the value they bring to the city. With the right plan, small businesses can grow. Remember that Boscov’s Department Stores began with one small store in Northeast Reading.

I am interested in hearing from business owners on how we can spread the word and promote the East Reading business district. Please feel free to contact me at the City Council office at 610-655-6204 with your ideas. Let’s support the grassroots efforts to keep Reading growing.





INSIDE DISTRICT 6



There is no doubt that over the past 10 years the Sixth District has garnered most of the revitalization projects in the City of Reading. This includes the Goggleworks,

the IMAX theatres, Sun Rich Foods, the Berks Community Foundation Building, and various other projects such as the Barbey's playground revitalization and the establishment of our Centre Park Historic District artifacts bank. The Sixth District remains a cornerstone and anchor for our city.

Our city has too much to offer, to improve upon and to embrace. At times we get so caught up in trying to re-invent our city that we almost bury our great history. Fortunately, the Sixth District also

includes not only the astounding Centre Park Historic District, but also an almost unfair amount of eccentric architectural, historical and natural beauty, all of which we can never lose sight of and never take for granted. My hope in the coming years is to help Reading declare itself. We have all the ingredients, including the great diversity of people. We have to learn to embrace what our city has. We have to polish it and promote it to the world. When we do that at the individual and community level there is no limit to where we can go as a region.

So as we embark on spring, my message to the newly altered Sixth District that runs roughly from a southern border of Spruce to a northern border of Marion and an eastern border of North 10th to a western border of the Schuylkill River as well as the rest of our great city is to embrace what is in front of you. Do not take this city for granted any more. Let's all take a role in polishing this city; each

street, each flower, each lawn, and each person makes our landscape. Our landscape is what the world sees. We have to be proud of it if we expect others to want to make it their home too. The Sixth District is a uniquely "true" Reading district. From the long term extended families of the 6th Ward to the adamantly dedicated residents throughout the rest of the neighborhoods, my challenge to the entire district is simple. Take time this spring to watch this city blossom. Don't take it for granted as it is a spiritual and magical place. When we all realize that, and care for it in that way, we will prosper in ways beyond our wildest dreams. Thank you to the many residents of the Sixth District for your continued commitment to our great city and for allowing me to serve you. It's truly an honor to do so.

“Great minds have purposes, others have wishes.”

—Washington Irving—

FOR YOUR INFORMATION...

- Did you know that through the Reading Public Library you can now borrow e-Books for your Nook, your Kindle or other electronic device? Visit www.Reading.lib.pa.us for more information.
- If you have questions about running for a political office, about registering to vote or to find out where your polling place is located, please contact the Berks County Elections Services Office at 610 478 6490 or at elections@countyofberks.com
- For assistance with any City issue or service call the Citizens Service Center between 8 am and 4 pm Mon-Fri at 1-877-727-3234 or customer.service@readingpa.org.
- Did you know that you can research the history of your home online through the Berks County Recorder of Deeds website. For more information go to www.co.berks.pa.us/recorder or email recorder@countyofberks.com.
- If you are planning a home-improvement project relating to things beyond cosmetics, you may need a building or trades permit. Please call 610 655 6283 to see if your project will require a Building Trades permit or other type of permit relating to zoning or historic preservation.



Happy spring!

The Reading Recreation Commission has accomplished great things in our first year of operation. In 2012, we increased the playground program from zero to four sites – Third and Spruce, Pandora, Hillside, and 11th and Pike – that involved the participation of almost 200 City youth. Our biggest playground event of the summer was the Lantern Parade, a time honored tradition in Reading that included tissue-paper lanterns, a parade, and dancing. In 2013, our program will be expanding to include three additional locations including a “Fun in the Sun” program at Schlegel Park which



will include three trips to the pool a week! A great event for the kids this summer will be a basketball workshop at City Park with the Philadelphia 76ers!

Our game rooms at both recreation centers received new equipment, courtesy of R&R Amusements including new pool tables, foosball tables, ping pong, and bumper pool. The improvements didn't stop there

though...with tremendous support of the Public Works Department, volunteers from Alvernia University and Albright College, and the tireless efforts of the Commission board members and staff, most of our buildings and parks received fresh paint, upgraded amenities, landscaping work, and repairs to benches and more. The Pandora Field house, in particular, received a fresh coat of paint, new doors, upgraded kitchenette, and new furnishings. Since completing the renovation, City residents have been reserving the facility for birthday parties and reunions and we've received many compliments on the great condition of the building.

Our recreation centers have increased their hours and days that they are open, expanded club offerings, implemented an open gym program, and an expanded volleyball league. The rec centers are “hopping” just about every day of the week with kids playing and having fun! Our newest improvement at Third and Spruce includes a new Teen Room which features a new TV, gaming system, and carpet. The room is not quite completed yet, but will eventually have furniture for the kids to “chill out” on, a work table, and a pool table. If you have a chance, stop down and check out the photo mural which features pictures from this past year mixed in with photos from the past that really exemplify why Reading was so renowned for their recreation programs and facilities!

Our City of Reading Tennis Program is stronger than ever under the

direction of Coach Larry and his great team! Great tennis events such as the “Hit-A-Thon” and the “Turkey Tournament” drew



hundreds of tennis youth and their parents. The Schlegel Pool was busy this summer, too, with Moonlight Swims, pool parties, and the always fun Fourth of July Celebration.

Finally, 2012 was a year of firsts...our first hayride, our first Easter Celebration, a bi-monthly newsletter to the school district, increased participation with the police and fire departments, and the largest university-driven cleanup EVER attempted with more than 500 volunteers in 13 parks simultaneously.

We are excited about what we've accomplished this past year and are looking forward to even more great things happening this year and in the future. THANK YOU to everyone who helped our efforts throughout this past year – we couldn't have done it without you!



READING CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

In addition to the televised Council meetings and work sessions, City Council has five functioning Committees – Nominations and Appointments; Open Government, Rules and Inter-Governmental Relations; Housing and Economic Development; Finance, Budget and Audit; and Public Works, Public Safety, and Neighborhood Services. During January and February, the Committees discussed many topics.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee discussed the City’s representation on the regional Reading Area Transportation Study and conducted five interviews for appointments and/or reappointments to three Boards, Authorities or Commissions – the Fire and Building Code Board of Appeals, the Board of Health, and the Zoning Hearing Board.

The Open Government, Rules, and Inter-Governmental Relations

Committee discussed the process for the preparation of Council agendas and legislation, those who have access to City emails, an update to the Welcome to Reading Guidebook, the Communication Policy, the Media Policy, making appointments to the Charter Review Commission, and amending the City’s Code of Ethics by adding “Pay to Play” provisions.

The Housing and Economic Development Committee heard updates on the Main Street process and the application for designation, the Comprehensive Plan, the Quality of Life Ticket Program, the Certificate of Transfer Program, the Housing Amnesty Program, the Zoning Permit backlog, and the disposition of citations at the Magisterial District Justice offices.

The Finance, Budget and Audit Committee heard reports from the Citizen Service Center and Information Technology as well as updates on the amendment to the procurement policies, the proposed library tax, a defined

contribution pension plan and reports on revenues and expenses, the cost of police and fire overtime and legal fee expenses. The Committee also heard the results of the audit of fund transfers and capital projects.

The Public Works, Public Safety, and Neighborhood Services Committee heard updates on the formation of the Pagoda Foundation, the application for the SAFER Grant, and the enforcement of the City’s Solid Waste regulations. They heard about pending projects including the situation with the street lights in the Wyomissing Park area, two pending projects on Penn St, and the repaving of Cotton St. The relocation of the UGI meters was also discussed. There is a pending issue with parking on William Lane. They also heard an update on the 2012 crime statistics, the Crime Summit and police training utilized in 2012. In addition, they discussed lease agreements for Egelman’s baseball field and Angelica Park.

Quality of Life Ticketing Program or Reminder Service?

In 2011, the City began the Quality of Life (QoL) Ticketing program after an evaluation showed that the enforcement of the Property Maintenance Code (Code) was burdensome and ineffective for the Property Maintenance Division. Under the old process, Inspectors were required to issue a notice of violation (NOV) for all violations of the Code, from small issues like high grass to larger issues like peeling paint and failure to maintain. After the NOV was issued, the Inspector needed to revisit the property in five to seven days to see if the issue was corrected and if the issue was not corrected a citation would be issued. The City reviewed processes used in Allentown and Lancaster and found that their use

of the QoL was much more efficient and effective; however, those cities applied QoLs to a multitude of large and small violations. The City Administration decided that the Allentown and Lancaster approach went too far and recommended to Council that Reading should only apply QoL to issues that the owner or tenant could correct quickly such as high grass/weeds, snow removal, trash set out issues, removal of animal waste, etc. After two lengthy public educations periods, one in 2011 and a second in 2012 the QoL process began. While the NOV or reminder service is a good thing for larger problems like peeling paint and maintenance problems, it is not efficient or effective for Inspectors to issue warnings for the

small general items that should be performed regularly at residential properties. The QoL ticket fees are much less expensive than the citations issued after multiple visits to the property by an Inspector. Like a parking ticket calls your attention to a parking infraction, a QoL ticket calls your attention to the need to cut your grass, properly store your trash or shovel your snow, etc. QoL tickets can be appealed to the Property Maintenance Division Manager and approximately 40 percent of the appeals are successful. For more information about the QoL Ticketing program go to www.readingpa.gov/content/quality-life-violations to view a Power Point on the program.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Written by Linda Kelleher

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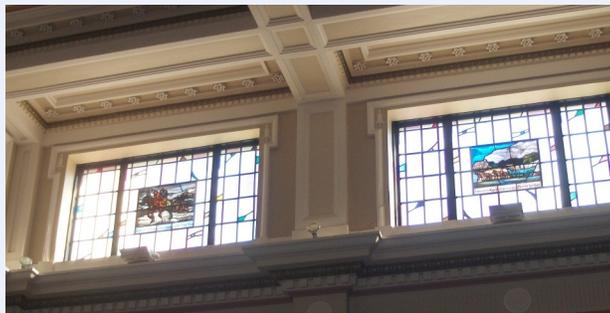
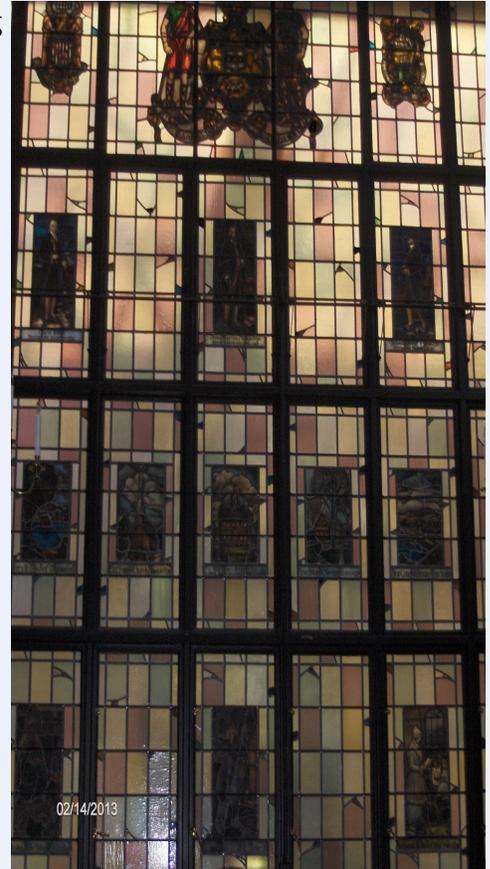


In the first edition of the Council Corner we told you about the meaning of the City Coat of Arms which you see on letterhead and in the beautiful stained glass windows on the north wall of Council Chambers. These magnificent windows symbolize the history of our City. The window was designed by Paul G. Kase and executed in the studios of J.M. Kase & Company for the new City Hall building at 815 Washington Street, which was dedicated July 10, 1929. The plan for the windows was originally a hand drawn water color sketch that was reviewed by J. Nolan Bennet and the Berks County Historical Society for criticism and confirmation of historical data.

Measuring 25 feet wide by 22 feet high, the window holds 14 pictorial panels. The middle section of the window showcases 3 of Reading's most prominent citizens: Thomas Penn, son of William Penn and who selected the City site in 1748, is shown in the left panel with the map of the City as originally surveyed. The center panel displays the first Burgess of the City, Charles Biddle. Col. Conrad Weiser is located on the right panel with the description, "Pioneer, Judge and Interpreter."

The tier below the center of the window showcases five landscape views of Reading in its earliest days. These five panels represent:

- Ferry at Penn Street Ford, established in 1783
- Old Trinity Church, founded in 1751
- The first Court House at Penn and Callowhill (now Fifth St.)
- The first Friend's Meeting House, built 1765 out of logs
- The Covered Bridge at the foot of Penn Street, built in 1815



The lowest tier contains three windows. The first panel shows a Revolutionary War period town watchman keeping his vigilance over the City at night, with the description, "Preserver of Law & Order." The next panel is dedicated to the mothers of Reading. The final frame charmingly shows a schoolroom scene with a teacher presiding and the inscription, "Dedicated to the Teachers of Reading."

The top level of the window showcases the seals relative to the City of Reading, with the United States Coat of Arms on the left and the former Arms of the State of Pennsylvania is on the right.

Along the top of the eastern wall, the City's history continues in a group of five small stained glass windows dedicated to the Five Stages of Transportation in Reading. The first panel shows an Indian Drag, used by the first Americans before the coming of the white settlers. Next is the Conestoga Wagon used by the pioneers, followed by the boats on the Schuylkill Canal, opened in 1818. The next windows represents mechanical transportation showing "The Rocket"; the first steam locomotive to pass through Reading in 1838. The final window represents modern transportation and shows the most modern means of rapid travel with a modern locomotive with a number of automobiles sitting in parallel to the train tracks. The sky is dotted with airplanes and dirigibles.

The windows were restored in November 1987 by the Redevelopment Authority and the City of Reading Fine Arts program. These windows remind us of Reading's journey each time we visit Council Chambers.





VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES...

GET INVOLVED IN READING 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). Five BACs are highlighted below along with a comprehensive list of all openings on City BACs.

The City has an **HVAC Board** of licensed/certified professionals in the area of HVAC who oversee the City’s regulations regarding HVAC system installation and the licensing/certification process. HVAC professionals in the area are encouraged to be City residents but applicants with a business interest in the City who are not residents will also be considered.

The **Charter Board** is charged with enforcing the provisions of the City’s Home Rule Charter (its Constitution) and to educate citizens, officials and employees about the Charter to ensure that it is followed consistently in daily operations of City government.

The **Reading Housing Authority** monitors and manages several housing developments within the City which are reserved for low-income residents.

The Reading **Human Relations Commission** is the local agency charged with investigating discrimination claims and with landlord/tenant disputes. The Human Relations Commission looks at discrimination dealing with employment, housing and public accommodations.

The **Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)** focuses on environmental issues in the City. Currently the EAC is working on updates to City regulations regarding issues such as steep slopes, riparian buffers, and alternative energy sources. The EAC also reviews projects which may have an

environmental impact. Applicants for the EAC should have a background in environmental sciences or a devotion to improving the environment.

HVAC Board	3 openings
Police Civil Service Board	1 opening
Historical Architectural Review	3 openings
Public Library Board	1 opening
Board of Health	2 openings
	2 alternates
Board of Ethics	1 opening
Building/Fire Code Board	
Of Appeals	1 opening
	1 alternate
Animal Control Board	3 openings
Charter Board	1 opening
Main Street Board	5 openings
Reading Area Water Authority	1 opening
Reading Housing Authority	2 openings
Shade Tree Commission	2 openings
Stadium Commission	1 opening
Human Relations Commission	4 openings
Blighted Property Review	
Commission	1 opening
Environmental Advisory Council	3 openings

All interested citizens should complete the BAC application form found on the City’s website – 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.



ALBRIGHT COMMUNITY GARDEN

In 2012 students at Albright College, in conjunction with the Environmental Studies department, started a community garden utilizing permacultural techniques. These techniques focus on sustainable design that seeks to foster ecosystem health while providing nutritious food for the community. The garden, which is located at 1817 Linden St., was created without tilling the ground and instead used resources from around campus such as used coffee grounds, leaf waste, and grass clippings. Resources were 'stacked' to create a lasagna garden bed that composted in place, creating fertile soil in which the plants could thrive. In addition, three rain barrels were installed to collect rain water from the roofs of two surrounding structures. Most of this water was used to water the plants or feed the newly donated rain garden from the Berks County Conservancy. The various types of output from the garden exceeded our expectations and were very popular among the Albright community. Nearly all of the produce was sold to members of the Albright Community on a weekly basis.

This summer we are expanding the garden to include six additional 25-square-foot plots. These plots are available to community members free of charge on a first-come, first-served basis. If you are interested, please contact Brian Jennings at bjennings@alb.edu as soon as possible. We simply ask that a person (or group of people) utilizing the plot help with the maintenance of the larger community garden. Maintenance activities include watering, weeding, staking plants, turning the compost pile, etc. This year we have also been given a generous grant through the Hawley and Myrtle Quier Fund of the Berks County Community Foundation, which will enable the hiring of two students to manage the garden. As part of their responsibilities they will be setting up a garden stand at least once a week on campus to sell the goods from the larger community garden. All proceeds go back into the garden effort and will be used to maintain and expand the garden in future years. One of our goals is to foster a shared experience between Albright students and College Heights Community members. Therefore, you are always welcome to stop by and visit, volunteer, or simply sample the goods at the weekly garden stand. Our first event is scheduled for April 6th at 9am when we will be creating the new garden plots, installing the rain barrels, and doing some general upkeep of the site.



If you are so inclined, please come and join us. We look forward to seeing you there!



*“Attempt the impossible
in order to improve your
work.”*
—Bette Davis—