



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Select Board

Date: 2022-01-18

Time: 7:00 PM

Building:

Location:

Address:

Session: Open Session

Purpose: General Business

Version: Final

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Chair Karen Herrick, Vice Chair Anne Landry, Secretary Mark Dockser, Carlo Bacci, Christopher Haley

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

Bob LeLacheur, Jean Delios, Ade Solarin, Richard Lopez, Mary Giuliana, Ivria Fried, Erin Schaeffer, Ed Ross, Fidel Maltez, Cathy Zeek, Tom Connery, Liz Whitelam, Josh Latham, Simone Payment, Celeste Kracke, Joe Carnahan, Jane Kinsella, Susan, Marianne Downing, Jack Devir

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Jacquelyn LaVerde

Topics of Discussion:

Documents Used:

2022-01-18 SB Agenda

2022-01-18 SB Packet

COVID Update - Select Board 1-18-22 - final

Holidays - Add Juneteenth

Select Board Economic Development Update 1.18.2022

Economic Development Update for 1.18.2022

Sen Lewis--budget earmark worksheet

Town_Select Board 20220118

2021-12-01 Finance Committee Packet

This meeting was held remotely via Zoom.

Chair Karen Herrick called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm and provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

SB Liaison & Town Manager Reports:

Carlo Bacci joined the Recreation Committee meeting last week. Girls Softball Little League will be donating a state-of-the-art scoreboard to Sturges Field, which will be installed in spring, weather permitting. The Recreation Committee is also adopting the Birch Meadow plan updates put forth by the Select Board.

Mark Dockser stated that the Reading Center for Active Living Committee (ReCalc) met last week and will meet again next week. The Committee has made progress in discussion for needs for a Senior Center/Community Center and is inviting public input into that process. The Committee is working with Assistant Town Manager Jean Delios to hire a consultant to

help with a community needs assessment. Members are comparing facilities and best practices from other communities. Mr. Dockser also attended the Commissioners of Trust Funds meeting and noted that the transportation program is working well.

Anne Landry stated that she is hoping that the ad hoc Town Manager Screening Committee can meet next Monday to approve outstanding meeting minutes and thank the Screening Committee, as it should be the final meeting.

Karen Herrick attended the Board of Health meeting and thanked the Board for instituting a mask mandate.

Town Manager Bob LeLacheur mentioned that the Pleasant Street Center is closed for the rest of the week due to COVID. The opening of the center will be reevaluated as soon as possible. Next week there is a special election for the vocational school building project from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm at the High School Field House. JRM, the Town's rubbish and recycling contractor, continues to have difficulty staffing with health issues due to COVID. Residents are encouraged to leave trash and recycling curbside until it is picked up, unless there is a storm or the Town indicates otherwise.

Public Comment:

There was no comment from the public.

Board of Health COVID update:

Board of Health Chair Richard Lopez, Health Director Ade Solarin, and School Director of Nursing Mary Giuliana presented an update on current COVID activity and the recent mask mandate passed by the BOH on January 6th. Dr. Lopez noted there are 350 active cases in Reading with clusters in daycares and at Artis Senior Living. RNA in wastewater has dropped significantly, hopefully a sign that the current surge is turning the corner. The Board of Health issued a mask mandate for the Pleasant Street Center on December 27th, then scheduled a subsequent meeting to gather public input, then passed a mask mandate for indoor public spaces on January 6th. The BOH will review data at each meeting and rescind the mandate when it appears that activity is reasonable.

Mr. Solarin reviewed vaccination efforts, which have been ramped up over the last three weeks. Over five vaccination clinics held so far, 146 residents and 46 Town employees have been vaccinated. The goal is to see the number of people vaccinated in Reading increase, and the next clinic is scheduled for January 24th at the Coolidge Middle School. The Health Department invested \$8,500 to purchase two cases of rapid test kits (288 kits totaling 576 individual tests). The Finance Committee last week approved an \$80,000 transfer for the purchase of a pallet of rapid antigen tests, a total of 15,120 individual tests.

Ms. Giuliana stated that the schools are close to 800 cases. It was 250 cases prior to December vacation, but there was a big jump following the holidays and it is growing harder to track and keep the numbers accurate. Test and stay allows students to be tested daily when they are identified as a close contact to someone who has tested positive. Pool testing is occurring at every school once a week. There have been 1400 pool tests with 33 individuals testing positive as a result of that testing.

Dr. Lopez emphasized that it is not up to individuals to challenge someone not wearing a mask, as they may have a medical condition. It is the job of the Health Department to take complaints and follow up on issues. He also noted that cases may be getting underreported, as tests conducted at pharmacies and testing centers are reported to the state, but positive home tests are likely not.

Executive Session:

Mark Dockser moved to enter into executive session under Purpose 1 to review and respond to Open Meeting Law Complaints filed by Walter Tuvell against the Reading Select Board on July 21, July 23, August 16, August 22, October 21, October 27, November 18, 2021 and January 9 and January 11, 2022, otherwise

known as Tuvell Complaints 5 through 14, to invite Bob LeLacheur, Jackie LaVerde, and Ivria Fried to attend the meeting, and to return to open session for purposes of continuing on with the meeting as posted in the agenda. Motion seconded by Karen Herrick and approved 4-1 by roll call vote: Mark Dockser-Yes, Carlo Bacci-Yes, Anne Landry-Yes, Chris Haley-No, Karen Herrick-Yes.

The Board entered Executive Session at 7:45 pm and reconvened in Open Session at 8:00 pm.

Consent Agenda:

Vote to add the Juneteenth Holiday under Section 9.12 Holidays to the Personnel Policies:

Ms. Landry stated that she supports this motion and looks forward to the Board issuing a Proclamation in advance of, and closer to, the holiday.

Mark Dockser moved to add the Juneteenth holiday to Section 9.12 of the Personnel Policies. Motion seconded by Anne Landry and approved 5-0 by unanimous roll call vote.

Economic Development update:

Economic Development Director Erin Schaeffer provided an overview of the division's function to provide professional technical work to advance the Town's Economic Development goals, which include: planning studies to identify the need to diversify and increase the tax base; and adding to the Town's tax base through managed development. She highlighted development projects downtown and their effect on the tax base, events, projects, and programs that the division is working on, and introduced the Business Improvement District (BID) Steering Committee.

Liz Whitelam, downtown business owner and member of the BID Steering Committee, explained what a Business Improvement District is and what it does. The BID is an organization of the property owners within the district that can pool resources for programming and events, and help advocate for businesses in the area. Reading does not yet have a BID, but the BID Steering Committee is working on collecting signatures from property owners in the district in order to move forward with creating the BID. Information can be found at downtownreadingma.com.

The Board thanked Ms. Schaffer and Ms. Whitelam for their contributions and offered their support. Mr. Haley stated that because he owns a business downtown he is precluded from any discussion of the BID process, but expressed his appreciation for their efforts.

Discuss status of Common District Meeting House at Postmark Square:

Attorney Josh Latham was present on behalf of the Colangelos, owners of The Common District Meeting House restaurant, to provide a status update. The Board approved a liquor license for the establishment on May 4th, 2021, which was approved by the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission (ABCC) in early July. The Colangelos proceeded to apply for building permits, which took longer than expected. The building permit was finally issued on January 10th. All materials have been purchased and stocked in the unit. Construction begins next week and the target open date is mid-May.

Discuss/Announce Earmark Request Submission to Legislators:

Ms. Herrick and Ms. Landry explained that the state delegation will be ready to work on budgets by March. The House of Representatives will take up the budget in April, and the Senate in May. Now is the appropriate time to be looking at projects from staff, and boards and committees. The Town can ask for what it wants, and Reading's representatives will advocate for as much as the state can afford. A good use of earmarks would be to ask for one-time funding requests.

The Town was awarded \$150,000 for the purchase of the Meadow Brook lot.

Ms. Herrick later noted that there were other earmark awards received. Assistant Town Manager Jean Delios stated that there were two earmarks for \$50,000 each: one for the upgrades to the CVS parking lot, the other for pedestrian improvements to the eastern gateway. Both projects are underway with consulting contracts for design services.

Discuss Community Garden:

Cathy Zeek, Simone Payment And Celeste Kracke presented the plan to institute a community garden at the Matera Cabin. The Climate Advisory Committee sustainability plan includes a community garden. A request for \$10,000 was approved and a small exploratory group collaborated with staff in Planning, Conservation, and DPW. After considering features needed and other possible sites, Matera Cabin was the top site.

Phase 1 will consist of 17 garden plots available later this year, with the possibility of adding another 30 plots in the future. In year one, Reading residents will be invited to apply, and once all plots are allocated, additional applicants will be added to a wait list. In subsequent years, gardeners will be able to renew their plots for up to three years, then reapply if plots are still available. The fee for each plot will be \$50 per year, but will be reevaluated based on expenses. Additional funding could come through grants, volunteers, and donations from local organizations. Each year gardeners must sign an agreement and adhere to the guidelines for use.

Parking is scarce at the cabin, and it is a very active place. Each visit should be fairly concise, as the amount of space in each plot should be easy to manage. It is suggested that visitors use the drop off space for their materials, then park elsewhere and walk, rideshare, or carpool to minimize parking issues or overcrowding.

The next step is to go before the Conservation Commission, as the cabin is under their care and control.

The group is also hoping to collaborate with the Library, as the Library is excited to do some educational programming around gardening, and hope to host a site on their grounds.

Ms. Herrick proposed SB consider asking the MADOT to install a cross walk & light at Matera cabin. Ms. Zeek also mentioned if having a conversation with MassDOT about a crosswalk, perhaps asking about adding a left turn, on-demand light for cars turning out of the Matera Cabin parking lot.

Discuss/Vote to Appoint two members to FINCOM ARPA/Free Cash subcommittee:

Ms. Herrick reviewed the origins of a proposed ARPA committee stemming from a conceptual discussion at a Financial Forum in the fall. The Finance Committee proposed a subcommittee to advise the use of ARPA funds based on community priorities consisting of members from the Finance Committee, members of the School Committee, and members of the Select Board, with staff members acting in an advisory role.

Mr. LeLacheur noted that Town Accountant Sharon Angstrom will be at the next meeting, and will ask the Select Board to transfer \$80,000 from the ARPA funds to replenish the Finance Committee Reserve Funds approved for the purchase of COVID tests. Board members agreed that they would be comfortable with that request.

Concerns from Board members included: Finance Committee being the lead on the subcommittee when the Select Board decides how ARPA funds are spent; timing to implement a subcommittee needs to be quick in order to present the proposal to Town Meeting in April, solicit community feedback, and decide how to spend the funds.

Board members were divided on whether to vote now on the subcommittee proposed by the Finance Committee, or restructure the subcommittee. Following a lengthy discussion, Karen Herrick stated that she would draft a charge and a structure for an ad hoc committee under the Select Board.

Discuss Future Agendas:

Mr. Dockser requested adding a Proclamation for Juneteenth on the May 17th agenda.

Mr. Haley noted that the last PARC meeting had a significant attendance to discuss the overnight parking ban and requested adding it to the next agenda.

Ms. Landry suggested getting Mr. LeLacheur's thoughts about the upcoming transition for the new Town Manager at the next meeting.

Ms. Fried encouraged the Board to reconsider the Town Manager evaluation process. Ms. Landry suggested adding that to the agenda once the new Town Manager is officially here.

Mr. Dockser asked for a placeholder for feedback from the discussion from the Lot 5 access to Town Forest.

Approve Meeting Minutes:

The Board reviewed suggested edits to draft meeting minutes.

Mark Dockser moved to accept the meeting minutes of July 12, 2021, December 22, 2021, December 29, 2021, and January 4, 2022 as amended. Motion seconded by Carlo Bacci and approved 5-0 by unanimous roll call vote.

Executive Session:

Mark Dockser moved to enter into Executive Session under Purpose 7 to review and approve meeting minutes for December 21, 2021 and December 29, 2021, to invite Bob LeLacheur, and Jackie LaVerde to attend the meeting, and to not return to open session. Motion seconded by Karen Herrick and approved 5-0 by unanimous roll call vote.