



Town of Reading Meeting Posting with Agenda

2018-07-16 LAG

Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Reading Arpa Advisory Committee

Date: 2022-08-31

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: Reading Public Library

Location: Community Room

Address: 64 Middlesex Avenue

Agenda:

Purpose: General Business

Meeting Called By: Jacquelyn LaVerde on behalf of Chair Marianne Downing

Notices and agendas are to be posted 48 hours in advance of the meetings excluding Saturdays, Sundays and Legal Holidays. Please keep in mind the Town Clerk's hours of operation and make necessary arrangements to be sure your posting is made in an adequate amount of time. A listing of topics that the chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed at the meeting must be on the agenda.

All Meeting Postings must be submitted in typed format; handwritten notices will not be accepted.

Topics of Discussion:

This meeting will be held in-person at the Library Community Room, and remotely via Zoom. It will be streamed live on RCTV.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85319244125>

Meeting ID: 853 1924 4125

One tap mobile

+16465588656,,85319244125# US (New York)

+16465189805,,85319244125# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 646 518 9805 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 853 1924 4125

Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/u/keuVyy5oBB>

AGENDA: Scheduled times are approximate and subject to change

7:00-7:05	Call to Order
7:05-7:10	Public Comment
7:10-7:30	PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION - Request from First Congregational Church of Reading for \$30k for asbestos remediation and \$4k for landscaping
7:30-7:50	PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION - Follow up information from AFSCME/Michael Fiorentino re: premium pay for certain Reading collective bargaining units

This Agenda has been prepared in advance and represents a listing of topics that the chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed at the meeting. However the agenda does not necessarily include all matters which may be taken up at this meeting.



Town of Reading Meeting Posting with Agenda

7:50-8:10	Follow up PRESENTATION (placeholder) /DISCUSSION - Possible follow up with Burbank Y to hear more specifics on their proposal and possible conditions that could apply to an allocation (this may be moved to 9/6 pending availability of representative from Burbank Y)
8:10-8:50	PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION - RAAC members Shawn Brandt and Thomas Wise to present possible premium pay approaches and discussion by RAAC on same
8:50-9:50	CONTINUED ALLOCATION DISCUSSION - RAAC members to continue overall discussion on requests received; possible finalizing of some categories
9:50-10:00	Discuss future agenda items
10:00-10:05	Review/Approve minutes from 8/3/2022 meeting
10:05	Adjourn



To: The Reading ARPA Advisory Committee
Submitted: Tuesday, August 2, 2022

First Congregational Church of Reading, United Church of Christ
25 Woburn Street
Reading, MA 01867
www.churchofreading.org
781-944-0205

To the members of the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee for the Town of Reading:

Thank you for your public service to assist in this exciting opportunity for our community. We believe that the intention and effort behind the ARPA funding for our town, and the distribution of said funds, may mutually benefit our mission and re-invigorate our community after the events of the pandemic in 2020. Like many businesses and non-profits in our community, we were affected by the 2020 Pandemic financially through a reduction of income from normal activities (including church pledges, fundraising, and events like the Olde Redding Faire). Additionally, major community partners were not able to conduct classes or meetings which normally would have occurred in our building. These community partners include Creative Arts, AA and other 12 Step groups, Northeast School of Ballet, Reading Community Concert Band, the Reading Art Association, and others.

In late 2019, First Congregational Church of Reading (FCCR) began exploring ways to make better use of its historic building. FCCR has always had a vibrant connection with the arts community (including hosting the various arts groups and programs listed above). In 2020, just as the pandemic began, the congregation was making steps towards envisioning what it would be like to embrace this part of our collective work to steward and support creative expression and the arts so that all in our community and beyond may have access to the arts and to create a haven for the arts here in Reading, MA. We have spent the last two years researching, planning, and assessing. We've been interviewing our community partners, artists looking for studio space, theatre groups dreaming of a stage to practice on, and others. Many, if not all, of these groups

would struggle to pay a lease in the real estate market of greater Boston and the North Shore. Instead, we see it as a part of our stewardship of our resources – which includes our 111-year-old building – to create a space for our community to have access to the arts, arts education, and for creativity to thrive in our community. In the next few years, we aim to renovate all our old Sunday school classrooms and meeting rooms to become music practice rooms, a dance studio, and shared artist studio spaces. A survey was created and distributed in September 2021 through various town and community venues (online on our website, Facebook groups, Reading Arts Festival, Reading Street Faire, and among our current community partners and its members, including Creative Arts, the town civic concert band, etc.). Responses indicated a strong interest in artist studio spaces, exhibit and performance space, and a place for community gatherings. Many creators are tired of working out of their living or dining room and would greatly benefit from dedicated studio space.

In October of 2021 there was a plumbing issue at FCCR. Lack of activity in the building caused this to become a major flood because no one was on site to note and react to it. Although insurance will cover some of the repairs, this is an old building and once one starts to take things apart, more repairs are required that are not covered by insurance. If you have ever worked on repairs to an old house, you understand the issues of starting to replace drywall only to find termite damage in the studs from 50+ years ago, for example. FCCR's energy and financial reserves have been needed to address post-flood issues rather than to move forward in our initiatives to support the arts.

Nevertheless, volunteers and staff from FCCR began working on projects that could be completed through sweat equity: minor repairs, cleaning, and painting former classrooms to adapt them to artists' studio spaces. However, several of the underlying floors have asbestos tiles. We feel it is important to remove and replace these with flooring that is safe and easy to maintain. We have an estimate of about \$30,000 to replace all these floors, which we envision could provide studio space for ten or more local artists, as well as continue to provide the programming we host to various ages, including children, teens, adults, and the elderly in safe spaces. These are funds that are not available to us in the immediate future between the reduction of income due to the pandemic in 2020, and a focus on remediating water damage in 2021-2022. ***Therefore, we respectfully request \$30,000 for asbestos remediation and replacement of flooring.***

Additionally, during the pandemic we have all come to appreciate the ability to access and use outdoor space. Our church is surrounded by greenspace, some more usable than others. We would like to consult with a landscape professional on how to make this property more usable and inviting. This could include working with Northeast School of Ballet, Creative Arts, and the Town of Reading in developing a plan to improve the area around and in between the two stone buildings and the Town Hall Parking Lot. Many years ago, the church sought to improve access to the downtown area by contributing our land towards the project of expanding the Town Hall

municipal lot on Salem Street, and so we hope that we could work together to envision what the next wave of improvement could be for our downtown outdoor space. Estimates of having a professional work with us to create this plan range from \$3,000 to \$5,000. ***Therefore, we respectfully request \$4,000 for landscape planning.***

We submit our application hoping that the committee might be able to work with us in these endeavors. At the very least, we also hope that perhaps this is an opportunity to reach out to the wider community, artists, patrons of the arts, and those who seek to invigorate our downtown neighborhood, who might have the resources and connections to help our dreams become a reality.

Sincerely,

Rev. Emelia Attridge

Minister of First Congregational Church of Reading, United Church of Christ

Barbara Philbrick

Moderator of First Congregational Church of Reading, United Church of Christ

Betsy Schneider

Member of First Congregational Church of Reading, United Church of Christ

Requester	Amount requested	Amount or added amount MARIANNE chooses to allocate	Amount or added amount MARK chooses to allocate	Amount or added amount CHRIS chooses to allocate	Amount or added amount TOM chooses to allocate	Amount or added amount SHAWN chooses to allocate	Amount or added amount GEOFFREY chooses to allocate	Amount or added amount JOE chooses to allocate	Amount or added amount ANDREW chooses to allocate	ACTUAL ARPA Allocated as of 7/13/2022	Avg (7 RAAC members) allocation over actuals, as of 7/14/2022
Schools											
Reading Public Schools	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$0							2,000,000	\$0
Other (describe)		\$0									\$0
Other (describe)		\$0									\$0
Total ARPA member sub allocation - SCHOOLS		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0
Totals	\$2,000,000									2,000,000	
Town boards											
Reading historical commission	\$13,500	\$13,500	\$13,500	\$13,500	\$0	\$13,500	\$0	\$13,500		0	\$9,643
Conservation Commission	\$31,500	\$23,500	\$23,500	\$23,500	\$20,000	\$23,500	\$23,500	\$23,500		8,000	\$23,000
Reading Trails Committee	\$11,620	\$11,620	\$11,620	\$11,620	\$11,620	\$11,620	\$11,620	\$11,620		11,620	\$11,620
Town Forest Committee	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000		100,000	\$157,143
Other (describe)		\$0									\$0
Other (describe)		\$0									\$0
Total ARPA member sub allocation - TOWN BOARDS		\$148,620	\$148,620	\$248,620	\$131,620	\$248,620	\$235,120	\$248,620	\$0		\$201,406
Totals Town Boards	\$256,620									119,620	



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Reading Arpa Advisory Committee

Date: 2022-08-03

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: Reading Town Hall

Location: Select Board Meeting Room

Address: 16 Lowell Street

Session: Open Session

Purpose: General Business

Version: Draft

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Chair Marianne Downing, Vice Chair Mark Dockser, Shawn Brandt (remote), Geoffrey Coram (remote), Chris Haley, Joe McDonagh, Tom Wise

Members - Not Present:

Andrew Grimes

Others Present:

Town Manager Fidel Maltez, Town Accountant Sharon Angstrom (remote), Community Services Director Jenna Fiorente (remote), Roisin Munson, Gioia Butler, Jess Bailey, Tim McIntire, Michelle Hopkinson, Gail Calazza, Diane Finigan, Gregory Cate, Sherilla Lestrade, Karen Gately Herrick, Laura King (remote), Karesa Killam (remote), Sarah Cestrone (remote), Joellen Killam (remote), Jeniffer Rogers (remote), Ali (remote), Rev Emilia Attridge (remote), Joyce's iphone (remote), Mary Anne (remote), VIP (remote), Meg Powers (remote), Catherine's iphone (remote), Ellen Commito (remote), Ann's iphone (remote), Lauren Gramolini (remote), Vanessa Alvarado, Simone Payment (remote), Hal Torman (remote), Meesh 814 (remote), Mark Farrin (remote), Chuck Webberly, Pastor Joseph Young

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Jacquelyn LaVerde

Topics of Discussion:

This meeting was held in-person at the Town Hall Select Board Meeting Room and remotely via Zoom.

Chair Marianne Downing called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION - Reading Teachers Association representative(s) to present/discuss on pandemic impact on RTA members in consideration of premium pay; follow up RAAC discussion questions on same:

Jess Bailey, president of the Reading Teachers Association, along with members Michelle Hopkinson, Ro Munson, Tim McIntyre, and Gioia Butler, contextualized the experiences of teachers during the pandemic and asked that the RAAC hold all bargaining units to the same standards. Teachers shared their experiences struggling to get kids to wear masks properly, having added responsibility of cleaning, having to alter routines and family interactions, having increased workloads and taking on additional roles, having salaries affected where stipends for extracurriculars were reduced, managing hybrid classroom models, and risking exposure to COVID.

Select Board Chair Mark Dockser called the Select Board to order at 7:10 pm.

The Committee members asked many questions about how many teachers were in-person and when, and which teachers they feel are included in the request for ARPA funds. Ms. Bailey stated that the RTA is not asking for people who have left, or left the profession, but are asking the RAAC to consider people who retired. She also stated that they will work with the administration to collect data as requested by the Committee, including who worked in-person and when, and who and how many staff had their stipends reduced.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION - Reading Paraeducators representative(s) to present/discuss on pandemic impact on Reading paras members in consideration of premium pay; follow up RAAC discussion questions on same:

Gail Calazza, Treasurer of the Reading Paraeducators union, noted that their union agrees with a lot that was laid out by Jess Bailey of the RTA, but wanted to focus on the risks that paraeducators took during the pandemic. The average age of paras is over 50 years-old and many have underlying conditions. This posed risks to themselves, their families, and those who support their elderly parents. Many took leaves, and left the profession for good. Ms. Calazza noted that paraeducators are some of the lowest paid employees in the district. Paras assisted with the hybrid model by working in-person with students, taking on multiple students across multiple grade levels due to the shortage of paras, and working in windowless classrooms where air circulation was a concern. There are approximately 115 paraeducators in the union, about 75% of whom are full time. The Paraeducators are asking that COVID funds be distributed equitably for those who worked from September 2020 to June 2021.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION - Reading School Secretaries representative(s) to present/discuss on pandemic impact on Reading secretaries members in consideration of premium pay; follow up RAAC discussion questions on same:

Diane Finnegan, President of the Reading Association of Secretaries recalled the experiences of the school secretaries during the pandemic. On March 13th, everyone was sent home, but the school secretaries continued to work from home. In May, the secretaries were asked to return to their buildings. They worked with administrative staff to empty lockers and desks, and facilitated the return of belongings to staff and students. The office is the hub of activity of the school, and secretaries were always in the presence of other people, including students who were symptomatic waiting to see the school nurse. Pool testing was also organized by the secretaries. Ten of the thirteen secretaries work year-round, with the other three working August to June. They tracked who was remote or not, and when attendance was affected by quarantine. The Secretaries are asking to be treated equitably in the distribution of ARPA funds, and are asking for pay for nine secretaries who started in May through August 2020, and three who worked from May to June 2020, not including one who retired at the end of June.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION (follow up) - Reading Chamber of Commerce to present/discuss updated request for ARPA funding in view of receiving state grant of \$25k:

Jeniffer Rogers, President of the Reading North Reading Chamber of Commerce, and Laura King, Treasurer, provided an updated request to the RAAC, which was adjusted due to funding coming from the state. The Chamber is requesting: \$15,000 to support membership, which is down due to COVID; \$10,000 for extensive marketing for Shop the Readings; and \$4,000 for signage downtown to alert people to the fact that stores are open during construction. The North Reading Economic Development Committee is also contributing \$8,900 for the Shop the Readings campaign. The \$15,000 helps support new memberships, and memberships for businesses who are past due, but unable to justify the expense at this time, as they are still trying to recover from the impacts of COVID. It will help membership for the next two to three years. The focus is on businesses that need the help.

The Reading ARPA Advisory Committee held a brief recess at 8:43 pm and was called back to order at 8:49 pm.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION (follow up) - Recreation Dept and Reading Youth Lacrosse to present on funding for Lacrosse wall, possible supplemental sources, and RAAC discussion on same:

Chuck Webberly, President of Reading Youth Lacrosse, outlined the benefits of having a lacrosse wall, not just for lacrosse, but also for soccer, tennis, and stick ball skills. Years ago, one of the members on the Youth Lacrosse Board worked in construction and was going to be able to get the wall donated. But that member is no longer on the board, and the organization can no longer get the wall donated. The organization can try to fundraise for a \$10,000 donation, but Mr. Webberly requested that the RAAC support funding the wall project.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION (follow up) - Reading Food pantry to present amended request and RAAC discussion on same:

Vanessa Alvarado presented the amended ARPA request for the Reading Food Pantry based on the Committee's feedback. The total amended request is \$84,600 for \$12,000 for 2 industrial size refrigerators, \$57,600 for gift cards for three years, and \$15,000 for a space consultant to help identify space within Reading that is accessible to neighbors. There is \$25,000 earmarked by the state for future construction, but it is not yet guaranteed, and the Food Pantry cannot count on it until the money is actually received. The \$57,600 for gift cards anticipates having more neighbors in need over the next three years.

DISCUSSION - RAAC member Andrew Grimes to give his allocation recommendations homework to add to overall spreadsheet; RAAC members to continue overall discussion on requests received with focus on areas of significant disagreement or more info needed in spreadsheet allocation recommendations:

Committee member Andrew Grimes was unable to attend this evening's meeting. The Committee was able to continue their discussion without his recommendations. Mark Dockser advocated for additional funding toward a new Senior Center and activities, and affordable housing. Chris Haley advocated for Birch Meadow, as ARPA funds are limited, and Birch Meadow has been waiting for a decade. Tom Wise and Joe McDonagh agreed with Birch Meadow, as the survey indicated a need for more recreation and the project is more shovel ready than a senior center, and Mr. Wise stated that his other priority is water based on survey responses and its alignment with ARPA restrictions. Geoffrey Coram agreed with Mr. Wise, and noted that Town Meeting voted to use ARPA funds for the water tower, and expressed his concern on funding the Imagination Station parking lot at Birch Meadow. Shawn Brandt noted that the Imagination Station parking lot is about creating safe accessible parking and managing stormwater. He also noted that he initially recommended allocating \$100,000 for affordable housing, but now feels it is premature to do that. He also noted that a lot of ARPA funds have already been allocated for water and sewer, and use of free cash would be a more appropriate use for the water tower. Marianne Downing noted that ARPA might not be able to fund it all, but could fund a little of a lot.

Most Committee members agreed that premium pay for essential workers should be considered, though Joe McDonagh stated that while he does not take the work of essential employees for granted, there were many people who faced hardships and were not compensated, and he favored other priorities based on community input and investing in the community for the future. There is more discussion and data needed surrounding the time frame to be considered, what amount or percentage of ARPA funds should be allocated, and the number of employees eligible. Committee members Shawn Brandt and Tom Wise were tasked with creating a formula to assist with allocating which employees might be awarded funds, and how much. Marianne Downing stated she would try to gather the head counts of employees by month.

Discuss future agenda items

The Committee discussed and agreed on August 31st, September 6th, and October 12th for future meeting dates. At the next meeting on August 31st, the Committee agreed to invite back the YMCA and AFSCME to further discuss their requests.

Review/Approve minutes from 7/13/2022 meeting:

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the July 13, 2022 meeting, and requested a minor edit.

On a motion by Mark Dockser, and seconded by Shawn Brandt, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 7-0-0 to approve the meeting minutes of July 13, 2022 as amended.

Roll call vote: Shawn Brandt – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Tom Wise – Yes, Chris Haley – Yes, Mark Dockser – Yes, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Marianne Downing – Yes.

On a motion by Tom Wise, and seconded by Mark Dockser, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 7-0-0 to adjourn at 11:17 pm.

Roll call vote: Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Shawn Brandt – Yes, Tom Wise – Yes, Chris Haley – Yes, Mark Dockser – Yes, Marianne Downing – Yes.