



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Select Board

Date: 2022-10-25

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: Reading Town Hall

Location: Select Board Meeting Room

Address: 16 Lowell Street

Session: Open Session

Purpose: General Business

Version: Final

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Mark Dockser, Carlo Bacci, Chris Haley, Jackie McCarthy, Karen Herrick

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

Town Manager Fidel Maltez, E.A. Caitlin Nocella, John Means, Eilish Havey, Victor Santaniello, Sean Donahue, Caitlin Coyle, Joellen Cademartori, Marianne Downing

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Executive Assistant Caitlin Nocella

Topics of Discussion:

This meeting was held in person and remote via Zoom.

Mark Dockser called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Public Comment

John Means expressed his concerns about splitting the tax rate. As a small business owner himself, he noted it is not right for Reading. Reading is mostly small businesses who will have to pass the increase onto consumers if the board splits the rate further.

Eilish Havey also expressed deep concerns for splitting the rate and asked the board to please consider keeping it the same.

Liaison Reports

Bacci noted he attended two Recreation meetings in which they discussed a third field proposal from Little League at Joshua Eaton and more lighting on pickle ball fields. The MMA held a webinar on solid waste and recycling where they talked about mattress and the new law that now requires them to be recycled.

Haley noted that ARPA held their last meeting and is now finished. He thanked everyone who participated with the difficult task. Octoberfest, the town's last beer garden of the season, was a huge success with a large turnout. The library held a new resident open house for the first time since the pandemic started. Coffee with a cop and Fidel also had a great turnout.

Herrick also mentioned Octoberfest and the new resident open house while also noting Art fest and the Fire Department Open House were all great events. She attended an MMA Conference for women in

elected office. She attended a new gas line hearing with National Grid to explain concerns about current gas leaks and safety. Downtown trick or treat is tomorrow night.

McCarthy noted CPDC had a meeting about the balconies at 625 Main Street. They have to be removed and replaced with 'Juliette' balconies. They also spoke about the open space next to the water tank. New Resident open house was great. She spoke about median house prices and low inventory in town for affordable housing.

The Council on Aging called to order at 7:30 PM.

ReCalc called to order at 7:31 PM.

Dockser noted we need more volunteers for many town boards. He thanked the town manager and the DPW for handling the recent trash issues.

Town Managers Report

Maltez noted the Town Meeting Warrant books will be available Saturday. There is a financial forum tomorrow night. The Killam School walkthroughs will begin this week for town meeting members.

Solid Waste Contract Update

Maltez noted that we are all caught up with trash and recycling as of now. The crisis appears to have subsided at the moment.

The board noted their little confidence in the situation and feels we should continue looking at other options.

Tax Classification

Town Assessor Victor Santaniello gave the board his yearly presentation to the board. The presentation can be found in the Select Board packet on the town website.

The board opened a public hearing on tax classification and heard public comments.

Haley moved that the Select Board close the hearing establishing the FY2023 tax rate. Bacci seconded the motion and it was approved with a 5-0 vote.

The board discussed shifting the rate slightly more. Bacci and Haley advocated to keep it at 1.02 noting the small businesses in town are still struggling and now is not the right time. McCarthy noted she supported moving from 1.02 to 1.05. Herrick noted she would like to see the rate shift as far as 1.25 eventually but for this year she would vote for 1.05. Dockser also noted he would go for 1.05 this year.

Haley moved that the Select Board adopt a residential factor of .9965 for Fiscal Year 2023. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 3-2 vote with Haley and Bacci opposing.

Haley moved that the Select Board not grant an open space discount for Fiscal Year 2023. The motion was seconded by McCarthy and approved with a 5-0 vote.

Haley moved that the Select Board not adopt a residential exemption for Fiscal Year 2023. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 5-0 vote.

Haley moved that the Select Board not grant a small commercial exemption for Fiscal Year 2023. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 5-0 vote.

ReCalc Update

ReCalc gave the board a presentation which can be found in the Select Board packet on the town website. They then asked to extend their sunset date until July of 2023.

Survey Results

Caitlin Coyle from UMass Boston gave the board a quick presentation of the preliminary results from a few of the survey questions. The presentation can be found in the Select Board packet on the town website.

ReCalc Sunset Extension

The committee noted earlier they would like to be extended due to the current conversation in town surrounding the Walgreens building. They feel their work is not done yet and would like to be extended until next year.

Most board members were fine with the extension; Bacci noted his concerns that this will interfere with the upcoming Symonds Way committee which is set to start off in December.

Haley moved to extend the sunset date of the Reading Center For Active Living Committee (ReCalc) to June 30, 2023. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 4-1 vote with Bacci opposed.

Pay & Class Study

Human Resources Director Sean Donahue and Joellen Cademartori from GovHR were present to give the board a presentation on the recent pay and class study. The presentation can be found in the Select Board packet on the town website.

Non-Union Classification Plan

Maltez showed the board the new classification plan he is proposing. He is promoting Matt Kraunelis, current Director of Administrative Services, to Assistant Town Manager. He will now oversee Administrative and Public Services and his current position will be eliminated. Technology will also become its own department instead of sitting under Administrative Services.

RAAC Recommendations on ARPA Funds

The board had numerous recommendations from RAAC this evening. Marianne Downing, Chair of RAAC, was present to explain to the board their recommendations and votes.

The first recommendation was for \$4,000 to the Garden Club. RAAC voted 6-2 to approve this spending.

Haley move to approve \$4,000 in ARPA funds for the Reading Garden Club as presented. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 5-0 vote.

The next recommendation was for \$25,000 to the Reading Rotary. RAAC voted 8-0 to approve this spending.

Haley moved to approve \$25,000 in ARPA funds for the Reading Rotary as presented. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 5-0 vote.

The following recommendation was for \$29,000 to the Reading Chamber. RAAC voted 6-2 to approve this spending. The board discussed where this money was going to be spent specifically in the Chamber. The Chamber noted they would like to use it to help businesses who can't afford the yearly dues. There was discussion if using the money for membership dues was appropriate and what the money should be used for. There was also discussion that \$29K was more than needed to cover dues for this year. Dockser suggested only approving \$19K for this instead. Herrick suggested asking them to spend the money differently.

Haley moved to approve \$29,000 in ARPA funds for the Reading Chamber as presented. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 5-0 vote.

The next recommendation was for \$4,000 for improvements to the walkway from Town Hall parking lot to the First Congregational Church. RAAC voted 6-2 to approve this spending.

Haley moved to approve \$4,000 in ARPA funds for First Congregational Church as presented. The motion was seconded by McCarthy and approved with a 5-0 vote.

The following recommendation was \$25,000 for due diligence on a potential purchase of 17 Harnden Street, the former Walgreens building. RAAC voted 7-1 to approve this spending.

Haley moved to approve \$25,000 in ARPA funds for due diligence on a potential purchase of 17 Harnden Street, the former Walgreens building, as presented. The motion was seconded by McCarthy and approved with a 5-0 vote.

Up next was a recommendation for \$900,000 for Premium Pay. RAAC voted 5-3 to approve this spending. The board discussed the model that would be used to for this and how employees were rated on different scales from exposure levels and how often. It was noted there were many models before this one was decided on at RAAC.

Dockser feels it's important to do something but there aren't many communities who have done this yet and feels this number is too much. Haley is on board for the full \$900K noting our employees deserve it. He then mentioned a letter from an employee who left that was complaining they won't get the money because they no longer work for us. McCarthy noted she thinks this model makes a lot of sense and she plans to support the \$900K. Herrick noted she is fine with the model but feels a smaller number would be better. She is concerned that nothing has been done to help with affordable housing. She recommended trim the last couple requests to leave them with some more money to divvy up.

Haley moved to approve \$900,000 in ARPA funds for Premium Pay as presented. The motion was seconded by McCarthy and approved with a 3-2 vote with Dockser and Herrick opposed.

The last recommendation was \$930,314 for Water Enterprise Support/Capitol Costs. RAAC voted 8-0 to approve this spending and the last of the ARPA funds.

Haley moved to approve \$930,314 in ARPA funds for Water Enterprise Support/ Capital Costs as presented. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 5-0 vote.

Future Agendas

The board decided to cancel their November 22nd meeting as it is in the middle of Town Meeting.

Haley moved to adjourn at 11:39 PM. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 5-0 vote.