



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
READING, MA.
RK
2022 DEC 14 AM 10:19

Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Select Board

Date: 2022-11-21

Time: 5:00 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 via Zoom

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

Town Manager Fidel Maltez, E.A. Caitlin Nocella, Eileen Litterio, Bill Brown, Nancy Tawadros, Lois Bell, May Erwin, Tim Mathieu, Jen Traino, John Halsey, Diana Halsey, Krissandra Holmes, Richard Holmes, Alan Beaulieu, Brook Chipman, Linda Snow Dockser, Bobbie Botticelli, Kerry Dunnell, Sherilla Lestrade, John Arena

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Executive Assistant Caitlin Nocella

Topics of Discussion:

This meeting was held in person and remote via Zoom.

Dockser called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. This meeting was to talk about a winter/holiday display on the Town common.

Town Counsel started off by noting that any holiday display must be done by the town with town funds. It is important to convey this is government speech and the town is not trying to promote any religion. There is a note in the Select Board packet that lays out the issues of Government speech clearly.

Public Comment

Eileen Litterio feels the board should either include all religions or none.

Bill Brown felt Herricks behavior at the last meeting, specifically during the ice arena agenda item, was unprofessional.

Nancy Tawadros wanted to know what the board was actually voting on tonight because she felt the agenda item wasn't clear and there was nothing in the packet.

Tim Mathieu noted the board should display all symbols in harmony.

Jen Traino noted the board is full of hypocrites explaining they voted to put on a menorah on the town common to symbolize inclusion but then refused to vote on a Christmas tree.

John Halsey feels the town common should be used for the towns people to express themselves. The town people should do it not the government. He also feels using tax payers money on this is wrong.

Linda Snow Dockser explained that this is not a competition, it is about inclusion and making everyone in town feel welcomed.

Bobbie Botticeli feels the town should not be paying for any of this.

Sherilla Lestrade doesn't like the way this is being presented and wants the town to celebrate all religions.

John Arena feels this meeting is unnecessary and is not sure how the board ended up here.

Morgan Steir noted he is Jewish and feels all religions should be included or it just becomes hypocrisy. Put a Christmas tree next to the menorah.

Michael Giacalone noted the lights on the trees in the common are done by the Chamber of Commerce and have been that way for years. He feels the board should do nothing else on the common and leave it the way it is.

Angela Binda noted she is saddened by this discussion.

Board Discussion

Dockser feels the board would be taking a huge step backwards if they rescind the previous vote about the menorah. He suggests adding a Christmas tree to the common.

Haley feels the board should rescind their vote and go with nothing on the common as it has been.

McCarthy noted she voted for the menorah last week and will vote to add a Christmas tree tonight.

Herrick echoed McCarthy's comments but also noted process is important. She feels the board should have had discussions in a meeting prior to taking any votes.

Bacci noted he is upset that two lawyers are present tonight wasting tax dollars.

The board edited a motion.

Haley moved to direct the Town Manager to cause a Menorah and a Christmas Tree to be placed on the Town Common to demonstrate the Select Board and the Town of Reading's commitment to diversity and inclusion in the community; and to place a sign near these items stating that these symbols are here to reflect the Town's strong commitment to these purposes. The motion was seconded by Herrick.

The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Herrick – yes; McCarthy – yes; Bacci – no; Haley – no; Dockser – yes.

Select Board Mission Statement for Inclusive Government

McCarthy started off by saying this is not something new, as the board discussed a similar statement or code of conduct at its June retreat. She feels a statement could be helpful in events like this.

Herrick noted the School Committee did an equity statement and this board should do one as well. She suggested working on it at their next retreat in January and also suggested inviting Sudeshna.

Haley feels creating a statement will not change anything and it is just an overreaction to what just happened. He then asked when this got added to the agenda because this was not on the original agenda.

The board agreed to work on this at their retreat.

Bacci moved to adjourn at 6:43 PM. The motion was seconded by McCarthy and approved with a unanimous vote.