



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Reading ARPA Advisory Committee

Date: 2022-10-12

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: Reading Public Library

Location: Community Room

Address: 64 Middlesex Avenue

Session: Open Session

Purpose: General Business

Version: Final

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

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

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

Town Manager Fidel Maltez, Town Accountant Sharon Angstrom (remote), Town Engineer Ryan Percival (remote), Assistant DPW Director Chris Cole (remote)

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Jacquelyn LaVerde

Topics of Discussion:

This meeting was held in-person at the Library Community Room and remotely via Zoom.

Chair Marianne Downing called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm and reviewed the evening's agenda.

Public Comment:

There was no comment from the public.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION - Update from Town Manager and Town Engineer on pending list of water and sewer infrastructure projects out to 2025 and updated request:

Town Engineer Ryan Percival presented a request for \$1.5 million of ARPA funds to supplement some ongoing water projects. The total cost for downtown water improvements, Gazebo Circle booster pump station, and lead removal program is \$10.2 million. The current Town funding of the projects is \$8.75 million.

Downtown water main improvements total project cost is \$6,569,118. Current available funding is \$6,150,000. Request for ARPA funds to cover the shortfall is \$419,118.

Gazebo Circle total project cost is \$1,965,296. Current available funding is \$1,100,000. Request for ARPA funds to cover the shortfall is \$865,296.

Total project cost for the lead removal program is \$1,700,000. Current available funding is \$1,500,000. Request for ARPA funds to cover the shortfall is \$200,000.

Mr. Percival further explained the breakdown of costs, other sources of funding, and benefits provided for each project.

**CONTINUED PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION/VOTE – Premium Pay Approaches/
Water & Sewer funding/Private Requests/Any Additional Allocations:**

Tom Wise presented updates to the models for premium pay calculations. Two models were added to provide adjustments for lost income of coaches and extracurricular stipends due to COVID. The Committee discussed the models at length and considered lost stipends for coaches and premium/bonus pay. The consensus of the Committee favored the models that included the stipends.

Senior Center:

Mark Dockser stated that the Select Board voted to authorize the Town Manager to engage in negotiations for 17 Harnden Street for a new Senior Center. The estimated cost is \$7 million plus renovation costs. The Town does not currently have a proposal, but is close to having one. He proposed using \$1 million of ARPA funds toward the purchase and renovation of the property, which would reduce the need for additional debt and lessen the burden on taxpayers. Members did not agree with the proposal for many reasons including: reducing the water project allocation will also have an impact on tax and water rates, and debt funding for a new senior center would be spread out over a long period of time, the seniors do not yet seem to agree that it is the right use for the location, borrowing an additional \$1 million would not put a debt override more at risk.

On a motion by Andrew Grimes, and seconded by Mark Dockser, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 7-1-0 not to recommend allocating \$1 million toward the proposed Senior Center at 17 Harnden Street.

Roll call vote: Shawn Brandt – No, Tom Wise – No, Mark Dockser – Yes, Chris Haley – No, Andrew Grimes – No, Joe McDonagh – No, Geoffrey Coram – No, Marianne Downing – No.

Reading Rotary:

The Committee continued the discussion on the requests from private organizations. Reading Rotary requested \$75,000 to support the Fall Street Faire for three years, or \$25,000 per year. Committee members agreed that they were comfortable with supporting one year for \$25,000.

On a motion by Andrew Grimes, and seconded by Chris Haley, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 8-0-0 to recommend to the Select Board to allocate \$25,000 for the Reading Rotary to support one year of the Fall Street Faire.

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

Reading Garden Club:

The Reading Garden Club requested \$12,000 to recoup funds that were not received as a result of not being able to hold their plant sale for three years due to COVID. Most members agreed to fund one year at \$4,000. Tom Wise stated that he allocated \$0 to this request, as he has a difficult time tying it to pandemic impact.

On a motion by Joe McDonagh, and seconded by Chris Haley, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 6-2-0 to recommend to the Select Board to allocate \$4,000 of ARPA funds for the Reading Garden Club for one year of the Plant Sale.

Roll call vote: Shawn Brandt – Yes, Tom Wise – No, Mark Dockser – Yes, Chris Haley – Yes, Andrew Grimes – Yes, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – No, Marianne Downing – Yes.

First Congregational Church:

The Committee considered the request of the First Congregational Church for \$30,000 for asbestos remediation and flooring replacement and \$4,000 for landscaping for garden space. **Andrew Grimes made a motion to recommend allocating \$0 to the First Congregational Church, which was seconded by Joe McDonagh.** Mark Dockser stated

that a lot of good comes out of that location, and while the Town cannot take care of the flooring and other activities, providing funds for the garden seemed reasonable.

Mark Dockser made a motion to amend the recommended amount to \$4,000, seconded by Shawn Brandt. The motion to amend passed by a vote of 5-3-0.

Roll call vote: Shawn Brandt – Yes, Tom Wise – No, Chris Haley – No, Mark Dockser – Yes, Andrew Grimes – Yes, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – No, Marianne Downing – Yes.

On the amended motion, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 6-2-0, to recommend to the Select Board allocating \$4,000 to the First Congregational Church for garden landscaping.

Roll call vote: Shawn Brandt – Yes, Tom Wise – No, Mark Dockser – Yes, Chris Haley – Yes, Andrew Grimes – Yes, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – No, Marianne Downing – Yes.

Reading North Reading Chamber of Commerce:

The Reading North Reading Chamber of Commerce requested \$29,000 to support a variety of initiatives. The average allocation recommendation of individual RAAC members was \$17,000. **Mark Dockser made a motion to recommend \$14,000, which includes \$10,000 to support Shop the Readings and \$4,000 for business support during downtown construction, which was seconded by Joe McDonagh.** Chris Haley stated that many businesses did not renew their memberships simply because they could not afford the \$200-\$300.

Chris Haley made a motion to amend the recommendation to \$29,000 to include the \$15,000 for business support, which was seconded by Shawn Brandt.

Following discussion, and addressing concerns of supporting private businesses, and North Reading support for their businesses, the motion to amend passed by a vote of 6-2-0.

Roll call vote: Shawn Brandt – Yes, Tom Wise – Yes, Mark Dockser – No, Chris Haley – Yes, Andrew Grimes – No, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Marianne Downing – Yes.

On the amended motion, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 6-2-0 to recommend to the Select Board to allocate \$29,000 to the Reading North Reading Chamber of Commerce.

Roll call vote: Shawn Brandt – Yes, Tom Wise – Yes, Mark Dockser – No, Chris Haley – Yes, Andrew Grimes – No, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Marianne Downing – Yes.

Premium Pay:

With the recommendations made so far, there was \$1,855,314 remaining. Based on individual members' allocations, the average was approximately \$1,044,000 for water projects, and \$815,000 for premium pay.

Shawn Brandt made a motion to recommend allocating \$900,000 of ARPA funds for premium pay, which was seconded by Tom Wise.

Chris Haley and Mark Dockser suggested leaving some funds in reserves for the Select Board. Mark Dockser and Joe McDonagh preferred to allocate less than \$900,000 for premium pay. **Joe McDonagh made a motion to amend the recommended amount to \$750,000, which was seconded by Mark Dockser, and failed by a vote of 5-3-0.**

Roll call vote: Shawn Brandt – No, Tom Wise – No, Mark Dockser – Yes, Chris Haley – No, Andrew Grimes – No, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – No, Marianne Downing – Yes.

On the original motion the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 5-3-0 to recommend to the Select Board allocating \$900,000 for premium pay.

Roll call vote: Shawn Brandt – Yes, Tom Wise – Yes, Mark Dockser – No, Chris Haley – Yes, Andrew Grimes – No, Joe McDonagh – No, Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Marianne Downing – Yes.

Reserves:

The Committee discussed whether to recommend a certain amount of ARPA funds for reserves for the Select Board to use for other items that might arise, such as an appraisal for the Walgreens building, wetlands appraisals, and other unforeseen expenses. **Chris Haley made a motion to recommend allocating \$25,000 for reserves, which was seconded by Mark Dockser.** Committee members discussed whether the Select Board needed a reserve fund, as the purpose of the Finance Committee reserve fund is to provide for unforeseen expenses. Upon further discussion, it was the consensus of the Committee that it would be more appropriate to designate \$25,000 for the purpose of conducting a commercial appraisal and other associated costs of the Walgreens property.

Chris Haley withdrew his prior motion and instead moved to recommend to the Select Board allocating up to \$25,000 for due diligence of the potential purchase of 17 Harnden Street, which was seconded by Mark Dockser, and approved by the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee by a vote of 7-1-0.

Roll call vote: Shawn Brandt- Yes, Tom Wise – No, Mark Dockser – Yes, Chris Haley – Yes, Andrew Grimes – Yes, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Marianne Downing – Yes.

Water & Sewer:

After considering and voting on recommendations for all other requests, there was \$930,314 left of ARPA funds to recommend allocating.

On a motion by Shawn Brandt, and seconded by Geoffrey Coram, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 8-0-0 to recommend to the Select Board to allocate \$930,314 for Water and Sewer projects.

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

Premium Pay Model:

On a motion by Andrew Grimes, and seconded by Joe McDonagh, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 8-0-0 to use model four of the premium pay formula.

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

The Committee discussed refining model four and the amount to provide for recovery pay. **Andrew Grimes made a motion to compensate coaches \$500 per reduced stipend for sports and other extra-curricular activities, which was seconded by Marianne Downing.**

Joe McDonagh made a motion to amend the amount to \$750 per reduced stipend, which was seconded by Shawn Brandt, but the motion to amend failed by a vote of 7-1-0.

Roll call vote: Shawn Brandt – No, Tom Wise – No, Mark Dockser – No, Chris Haley – No, Andrew Grimes – No, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – No, Marianne Downing – No.

On the original motion, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 8-0-0 to compensate coaches and extra-curricular instructors \$500 per reduced stipend according to model four of the premium pay formula.

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

On a motion by Andrew Grimes, and seconded by Tom Wise, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 8-0-0 to recommend to the Select Board using Model Four as presented with 25% increased differential for low rate of pay, -25% decreased differential for high rate of pay, -25% decreased differential for low

contact risk, 25% increased differential for high contact risk, and \$500 per reduced stipend.

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

Review/Approve minutes from 9/6/2022 meeting:

On a motion by Mark Dockser, and seconded by Tom Wise, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 8-0-0 to approve the meeting minutes of September 6, 2022 as presented.

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

Discuss and close out/end the ad hoc RAAC committee - if necessary, discuss if any additional meetings needed and plan for same:

RAAC Members agreed to meet one more time just ahead of the Financial Forum on October 26th to approve the final set of minutes from this evening's meeting.

Review and approve summary report for Town Meeting on RAAC activities (will include filling in blanks in a table on allocation recommendations, if any, made earlier during tonight's meeting):

The Committee reviewed and briefly discussed the draft report to Town Meeting. Marianne Downing will complete and provide the final report for Town Meeting.

On a motion by Andrew Grimes, and seconded by Chris Haley, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 8-0 to adjourn at 11:00 pm.

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