



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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### Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

#### Select Board

Date: 2023-02-07

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 VIA Zoom, Karen Herrick at 7:24pm.

#### **Members - Not Present:**

#### **Others Present:**

Town Manager Fidel Maltez, Executive Assistant Caitlin Nocella, Town Clerk Laura Gemme, Officer Scouten, Assistant DPW Director Chris Cole, Anne Mark, Ellen Rockefeller, Allison Sillers, Susan Bowe, Carl McFadden

**Minutes Respectfully Submitted By:** Executive Assistant Caitlin Nocella

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#### **Topics of Discussion:**

*This meeting was held in person and remote via Zoom.*

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

#### Public Comment

Anne Mark spoke noting she was apart of the Reading Compost Group here in town which encourages food waste composting. She feels there is a growing interest in composting due to the large increase in household participants in the Black Earth Composting program.

Ellen Rockefeller felt the new trash barrels being proposed are too big and heavy for senior citizens. She doesn't think she would be able to lift the barrels, nor does she think people need a barrel that large.

Allison Sillers, also apart of the Reading Compost Group, feels we need to teach our kids how to compost and recycle better instead of giving everyone large trash barrels to fill.

#### Liaison Reports

Bacci went first noting CPDC intended to have a meeting last night but could not due to quorum issues; with that being said, he urged volunteers to come sign up! There are many boards who need help.

Haley noted that the School Committee approved their budget. VASC will be meeting soon to interview a few candidates for some volunteer boards.

McCarthy noted that RMLD BOC approved Greg Phipps new contract last night as the new General Manager. RMLD customers can take a survey on RMLD's website right now. She also thanked frontline workers, town workers and public safety for working over the weekend thru the frigid weather.

Dockser noted the public forum for the senior center yielded a lot of feedback and the immediacy of their needs. ReCalc met last week and were very supportive of moving to a new Senior Center with new programs now. They would also like to come to the board and see what goals they have for them going forward. Council on Aging wanted to express their desire for a designated space for the seniors when moving forward with a new space.

### Town Manager Report

Maltez thanked Chris Cole for getting us the 'Safe Routes to School' grant. Combined with phase 1 of the Birch Meadow project, there will be a lot of traffic and safety improvements around the Birch Meadow complex. He noted we received approval from the Attorney General's office for the 3 Articles that were approved in November Town Meeting. April Town Meeting has 23 Articles so far. The budget is fully complete on the town and school side. The board will hold a public meeting at the next Select Board meeting.

### Elections Update

Town Clerk Laura Gemme gave the board a presentation which can be found in the Select Board packet on the town website. She explained the Votes Act in regards to local elections. If we want to do early voting in person, the town must go through the process to opt-in which would need to be first recommended by the Board of Registrars and then voted on by the Select Board. If we want to do early voting by mail, the town must go through the process to opt-out which would require the board to hold a public hearing before voting on it. We are getting close to the deadline to hold a hearing and they have already started processing vote-by-mail requests. She went through the costs of early voting in the past two state elections. The Board of Registrars met on January 26<sup>th</sup> and voted to recommend in-person early voting during normal Town Hall hours from March 27<sup>th</sup>- March 30<sup>th</sup>.

The board discussed the costs per ballot and it was noted those are figured for state elections as there are none for local elections which usually yield a lower turnout. The board discussed the potential to have early voting on a Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup>. The board agreed having in-person early voting during normal town hall hours makes sense but wasn't sure the Saturday would be necessary for a local election. The board will vote on this at their next meeting.

### New Town Manager Employment Contract

Dockser noted that the Board did a review of the Town Manager at their last meeting and he was given great remarks. He noted when they hired Maltez, he was new to the role as a Town Manager. The board felt they should review Maltez's contract after his review and they wish to create a new three-year contract to keep Maltez here in Reading. The new contract brings his salary to be more consistent with other local town managers.

**Haley moved to approve the new Town Manager Employment Contract as presented. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a unanimous roll call vote.**

### Traffic Amendments

Haley read the hearing notice. Officer Scouten was present to explain and answer any questions. He noted these amendments have already been through and approved by PTTTF. He noted this intersection got traffic lights installed rendering the stop signs and right turn only unnecessary now.

**Haley moved to close the hearing regarding traffic amendments. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a unanimous roll call vote.**

**Haley moved to approve Safety Amendments 2023-1, 2023-2, and 2023-3. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a unanimous roll call vote.**

### Trash and Recycling Barrels

Assistant DPW Director Chris Cole gave the board a presentation about rolling out new trash and recycling barrels to residents. The presentation can be found in the Select Board packet on the town website.

The board discussed what prices will look like when the town needs a new contract in 2026. Not only will prices be significantly higher but most haulers are only taking new clients that have these carts. Rolling the carts out now would help reduce the burden of doing it at the same time as the new contract prices start as well. The board discussed concerns for residents who already invested in these carts and for seniors who feels they are too heavy. They noted the need to get more people to start composting and get our trash weight down.

### Summit Village Easement

Maltez noted this was Article 13 at Town Meeting and was voted on last April. The easement is now signed by the counter-party and ready for the board. This was previously voted on by the board as well- it just needs to be accepted and signed before being recorded.

**Haley moved to approve the foregoing Water Line Easement from Summit Village Condominium Trust to the Town of Reading and agree bound by its terms as presented. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a unanimous roll call vote.**

### Preview of the April Town Meeting

Maltez went through the warrant which can be found in the Select Board packet on the town website. The board will vote to close the warrant at their next meeting.

He noted Article 11 is a new request from the School Committee to create a special education stabilization fund. The creation of the fund must be done by Town Meeting but then the allocation of the funds would be done with a vote of the School Committee and Select Board and would be used for just special education services.

### Town Manager Goals

Bacci noted he liked last years goals but also learning from the construction issues we had this year and how to better communicate between departments, businesses downtown and with the residents.

Haley suggested an interactive map with all the construction going on around town so people better know how to navigate getting around.

Herrick would like to recommit to grant opportunities. Climate mandates for 2030 are approaching and would like to talk about how to make some progress this year towards those.

McCarthy would like Maltez to continue to be a leader at Town Hall and hope to focus on more development and retention of new employees. She also requested more guidance from town staff on the details and obligations for Green Communities designation and funding.

Dockser would like to see training opportunities for employees and leaders. He would also like to see the big projects stay front and center in the community. He also thinks putting the senior center specifically as a goal would be good to show the community the progress.

### Lease Extension for the Reading Ice Arena

Dockser noted the board needs to sign this as a formality. They would like to have conversations after hockey season has calmed down with the Authority about questions being raised in the community.

Haley noted a majority of the questions raised have been answered already and feels the board would be wasting time giving input to an organization they do not have control over.

**Haley moved to approve the lease extension for the Reading Ice Arena Authority as presented. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a unanimous roll call vote.**

#### Minutes

**Haley moved to approve the meeting minutes of January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 as amended. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a unanimous roll call vote.**

#### Executive Session

**Haley moved to enter under Purpose 6 to consider the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of 25 Haven Street and 17 Harnden Street, as the Chair declares that an open meeting could have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the body, to invite Town Counsel Ivria Fried and Jennie Merrill, Town Manager Fidel Maltez and Executive Assistant Caitlin Nocella to attend the executive session, and to reconvene in open session to continue discussions. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a unanimous roll call vote.**

#### Open Session

The board came back to open session at 10:40 PM.

Dockser noted the board discussed responses to the RFP.

**Haley moved authorize the Town Manager to send Notice to Award the Contract to JALA HOSPITALITY LLC, c/o AZAD LEGACY PARTNERS, for the acquisition of 17 Harnden Street, subject to successful negotiations, as discussed during tonight's meeting, and authorize Select Board Member Dockser to engage in such negotiations on behalf of the Board. The motion was seconded by Herrick.**

Haley voiced that he has significant financial questions that need to be addressed in these negotiations going forward.

**The board voted unanimously to pass this motion with a roll call vote.**

**Herrick moved to adjourn at 10:43 PM. The motion was seconded by Bacci and approved with a unanimous roll call vote.**

#### Documents Used:

*2022-02-07 Select Board Packet*