



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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### Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

#### Select Board

Date: 2023-03-07

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

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

#### **Others Present:**

Town Manager Fidel Maltez, Executive Assistant Caitlin Nocella, Peter Kramer, Melissa Murphy, Liz Whitelam, Angela Binda, Jessie Arnold, Town Accountant Sharon Angstrom

**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.*

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

#### Public Comment

Peter Kramer feels the DPW staff is not being paid enough and that is why they keep leaving. He also thinks they do a terrible job snow plowing.

Melissa Murphy feels the Select Board should look at implementing a second water meter while discussing rates for next year.

Liz Whitelam noted she saw the discussion about Town Counsel was on the agenda and wanted to come and publicly praise and thank her for all her hard work. She worked with Ivria when she was on the PARC committee and she is a fantastic resource for the town to have.

Jessie Arnold also was present to express gratitude and thanks towards Ivria. She worked with her while on the Bylaw Committee and feels her knowledge and answers are extremely thorough and helpful.

Angela Binda echoed the prior two comments in regards to Town Counsel and would like to express her support and thanks to Ivria.

#### Liaison Reports

Bacci went first noting the Board of Health is updating their tobacco regulations and will be holding a public hearing in the spring. They are also working on a community health needs assessment. He also noted the March 11<sup>th</sup> pickleball event.

Haley noted Winterfest is this Thursday on the common. The VASC interviewed some great candidates and they have some recommendations for the full board tonight.

McCarthy noted there is a therapeutic art program for adults with disabilities on March 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. There is an event on March 30<sup>th</sup> for overcoming hurdles to disabilities inclusion. Lastly, there is a vaccine clinic on Friday.

Herrick attended the Mass School Building Association's latest meeting which Fidel will update more on. Reading Housing Authority met last night and were discussing the new trust. She noted residents were speaking about the transportation issues/ timing of available rides. There was a change of ownership on Minot Street and the new owner plans to raise the rent and she is wondering if there is anything we can do to help those residents. She attended the Council on Aging meeting and they were discussing starting a "friends of..." type group.

Dockser noted RECALC met with the Council on Aging and discussed the rendering of a potential building at Harnden Street. The Council is very enthusiastic about a new building and coming together to look at what is potential to happen sooner rather than later.

#### Town Manager Report

Fidel noted the Killam School has been officially voted on to enter the next phase of the project to do a feasibility study. The Town put out a press release which can be found on the town website and in the Select Board packet. He then noted due to inflation and supply chain issues, the Birch Meadow project Phase 1, which ARPA set aside \$1.5 M for, is severely over budget. He explained the three options would be to just do the infrastructure, just do the building or do it all. All of these options will need more money from Town Meeting which is Article 14 in the warrant. He plans to bring a recommendation to the board at their next meeting. Lastly, there will be a public forum to discuss the trash and recycling carts proposal again on March 27<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. The Assistant DPW Director Chris Cole will give a presentation.

#### Quarterly Finance Update

Town Accountant Sharon Angstrom gave the board a presentation of the town's finances for this quarter. She noted everything is on track for this time of year. The full presentation can be found in the Select Board packet on the town website.

She then went through the Towns' Municipal Financial Self-Assessment. This presentation can also be found in the Select Board Packet on the town website.

**Haley moved to appoint Sharon Angstrom as Town Accountant for a term July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. The motion was seconded by McCarthy and approved with a 5-0 vote.**

#### Town Counsel Discussion

Haley feels since there is no review process for Town Counsel, we should see if there are some things that can be improved upon. He spoke of the issue with the holiday display discussion and feels there could have been a lot more done in the beginning of that whole item with \$550 spent before the vote and \$9000 afterwards.

Bacci noted he wanted this agenda item because he feels the board should look at their options and see what else is out there to make sure they are getting what they want and at a good rate.

McCarthy feels Ivria's analysis of the holiday display was sound and she appreciates how she responds to the board with her answers. She normally agrees that shopping around is best but noted there are only a handful of firms who handle municipal law.

Herrick noted she appreciates how responsive Ivria is and how thorough she is in her answers. She has enjoyed working with her over the years and feels she helped us greatly when 59 Middlesex sued the town. She also noted that she was on the Town Manager search committee in which Ivria was excellent in that process as well. She is very satisfied with the services we are receiving and doesn't feel the needs to undergo the process of looking at other firms.

Dockser also noted he appreciates the way Ivria answers the boards and gives precise answers with the options the board has. He believes the services they have been receiving are exceptional. He noted he spoke with some other communities who use Miyares & Harrington and received all strong comments. He also noted we have a history with Miyares & Harrington and there is a benefit to that.

Maltez echoed a lot of previous comments made and noted he is thankful to be working with Ivria.

Haley expressed some concerns about the handling of 59 Middlesex Ave and that it was not a win for the Town.

#### VASC

McCarthy went through and explained the candidates, their backgrounds, and which roles they applied for. Haley noted the candidates were all well qualified and they even had someone who is moving to Reading next month apply for a position already.

#### **Haley moved to appoint:**

- **Liz Rogers to a full position on the Cultural Council with a term expiring June 30, 2026.**
- **William McCants to a full position on the Conservation Commission with a term expiring June 30, 2025.**
- **Chris Cridler to a full position on the ZBA with a term expiring June 30, 2024.**
- **Tony Rodolakis to an associate position on the Conservation Commission with a term expiring June 30, 2024. (Applicant requested the associate position vs. full)**
- **Mark Wetzel to a full position on the CPDC with a term ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024**
- **William Hughes to a full position on the Town Forest Committee with a term ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024**
- **Salvatore Clemente to an associate position on the Animal Control Appeals Committee with a term ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 5-0 vote.**

#### Water & Sewer Rates Discussion

Town Manager Maltez gave the board a presentation on going to a tiered water rate system. The lowest tier would capture small users, seniors, people living alone; the middle tier would capture the average residential user and the top tier would capture commercial accounts and larger residential users. Moving to a tiered system would give the lowest users a reduction but give the larger users a cost increase. The presentation gave the board some projections in new bills per user along with a recommendation on rates per each tier. The full presentation and information on the new proposed tiered system can be found in the Select Board packet on the Town website.

Haley noted his concerns about the tier 4 and 5 people getting a 12% increase. He also asked about second water meters noting now would be a good time to roll out a program for those as well.

Dockser feels the number of people that would feel the 12% increase is slim compared to how many more would benefit in the lower tiers. He feels the 5 tiers seems about right with maybe a little bit of tweaking with rates.

Bacci feels this is a good start but they need to look more into the future not just for FY24.

McCarthy asked about process, and it was noted the consultant will give another presentation at their next meeting and then the board will vote at a future meeting in the Spring. The rates would go into effect in September.

Herrick appreciates the work to look into a tiered system. She noted most other communities have already done this and thinks it would benefit the residents greatly. She also noted there is a history that can be looked into about why second water meters have been consistently voted down in the past.

Dockser noted that the MWRA assessment is the problem and what is hurting our rates. The board reiterated a desire to continue discussing what can be done about that.

#### Vote to close Warrant

Maltez noted that two citizen petitions came in after the board already closed the warrant but still before the deadline so the board must re-open the warrant and add them to it. They will be Article 24 and 25 in the warrant.

**Haley moved to reopen the 2023 Annual Town Meeting Warrant. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 5-0 vote.**

**Haley moved to insert two citizen petition articles submitted pursuant to Section 2.1.7 of the Town's General Bylaws into the 2023 Annual Town Meeting Warrant. The motion was seconded by Bacci and approved with a 5-0 vote.**

**Haley moved to close the 2023 Annual Town Meeting Warrant now consisting of 25 articles. The motion was seconded by Bacci and approved with a 5-0 vote.**

#### Discuss and Vote on Town Manager Goals

Maltez gave the board a presentation on his goals for the next year. The presentation can be found in the Select Board packet on the town website.

The board gave their thoughts and discussed the construction tracker idea, the health department staff/budget, and grant opportunities. Dockser also requested that training of staff be raised in importance as a key goal for this year.

**Haley moved to approve the town manager goals as amended. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 5-0 vote.**

#### Fostering Volunteerism

Dockser noted he looked around at other communities and it seems we are not alone with the vacancies. He also looked into how other communities were advertising their vacancies. Most commonly was the website but right on the front page at the top so it is very visible.

Haley noted he did get some feedback from a volunteer who used the website to find the vacancies and noted while he did find them, it would be much better if it was easier to find, like on the homepage.

McCarthy also noted recent feedback was opportunities being heard about through word of mouth from other residents/volunteers.

Haley suggested sending out volunteer vacancies in notices/water bill mailings. He also suggested giving out gift cards to local businesses to people who volunteer.

The board agreed posters around town and town buildings would be helpful.

17 Harnden Street

Dockser noted there is no update for this agenda item so they will postpone it until their next meeting when hopefully there is an update to discuss.

Future Agendas

The board discussed future agenda items.

Minutes

The board edited previous meeting minutes.

**Haley moved to approve the meeting minutes from February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023 as amended. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 5-0 vote.**

**Haley moved to adjourn at 10:38 PM; with a second from Herrick the motion passed with a 5-0 vote.**

*Documents Used:*

*2023-03-07 Select Board Packet*