



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
READING, MA.
GP
2023 OCT -5 PM 3:55

Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Select Board

Date: 2023-09-12

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:**

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

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

Town Manager Fidel Maltez, Executive Assistant Caitlin Nocella, Bill Brown, Michele Williams, Nate Williams, Nancy Ziemplak, Nancy Docktor, Eileen Manning, HR Director Sean Donahue, Town Engineer Ryan Percival

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Executive Assistant Caitlin Nocella

Topics of Discussion:

This meeting was held in person and remote via Zoom.

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

Public Comment

Bill Brown has some questions about how associate members work and he thinks it is something the Bylaw Committee should look at.

Nate Williams noted he is in support of the pickleball request.

Nancy Ziemplak noted there was an odor in the PSC and she thanks the town for looking into that.

Nancy Docktor wants to know why we renovated space at the Police Department for the Health Department but they haven't moved there.

State Delegation Visit

Representative Haggerty noted the State passed the budget in July and Reading is set to get \$11.4 in Chapter 70 education money, \$4.1 Million in unrestricted government aid, \$25K for the performing arts center at the high school, 35K for a certified preservationist to restore some monuments at Laurel Hill cemetery, and \$600K is chapter 90 money. They are currently pushing for the release of the Green Communities regulations so Reading can work towards those initiatives.

Representative Jones noted they filed two home rule petitions before the last session ended. They filed two others in the new session. They are working on the one pertaining to the Board of Health and expanding the number of members on the board. He congratulated the town on a great Fall Street Fair.

Senator Lewis noted they fully funded their Chapter 70 budget as well as their special education circuit breaker including state reimbursement for transportation which was just recently added in. The fair share amendment AKA millionaire's tax did get approved by the voters so that will go into effect for the first time this budget cycle. That money will go into a trust fund and will be transparent on how it is spent. The funds are only appropriated for education purposes and some of that money was used to fund free universal school meals for all students in Massachusetts permanently. Some of the funds from the tax are also being used to fund the Chapter 90 money which will increase Reading's allocation. They are also working towards making higher education more affordable including free community college for residents and better financial aid for the state four-year schools. Lastly, some of the funds from the tax will be used to better the MBTA.

Laision Reports

Bacci noted the Fall Street Fair was great. Recreation met last night and they introduced a new coordinator. They are discussing changing how pickleball is reserved. They also discussed a dog park and got a Phase II update at Birch Meadow. He mentioned Black Earth Compost and asked people to join.

Haley mentioned the overdose awareness event put on by the Coalition. The Fall Street Fair and the dunk tank raised \$1000.

Dockser noted Council on Aging met and discussed changes on the RFP for the senior center. There is a lot of interest about what is happening at Symonds Way. ReCalc also met and are working on the new charge.

McCarthy noted CPDC gave preliminary approval to a subdivision on Beacon Street. The site plan review for McDonalds was continued. Staff is hard at work with MBTA Communities; they have a public forum coming up next week. She thanked our first responders for their quick response to last Fridays storm. There will be a Trash and Recycling forum next week as well. She thanks Krystal from the Coalition who is moving onto a new opportunity in Chelsea.

Town Manager Report

Maltez noted there are three procurement items out for bid right now. A few respondents from the RFQ for Symonds Way are asking for additional time which staff will be granting noting it will be beneficial for better responses. The commuter rail closure has been in effect and there will be additional busses around town until it is complete. There will be a trash and recycling forum next week. There will also be a MBTA Communities forum next Tuesday as well. The pop-up farmers market will be this weekend. Octoberfest will be September 23rd on the common.

Hearing – Personnel Policy; Military Leave

Haley read the hearing notice opening the public hearing.

HR Director Sean Donahue was present to answer any questions. The board discussed this at their previous meeting and had no further questions.

Dockser moved to close the hearing regarding the personnel policy. The motion was seconded by Haley and approved with a 4-0 vote.

Haley moved to approve the Town Personnel Policy: Military Leave as presented. The motion was seconded by Dockser and approved with a 4-0 vote.

Pavement Plan

Town Engineer Ryan Percival gave the board a presentation on the Towns' pavement plan and the details that go into it. The presentation can be found on the town website in the Select Board packet.

Maltez noted there is an article going before Town Meeting this November to ask for money to cover the shortfall this year due to an increase in material costs and labor shortages.

Food Pantry Request for Funds

Maltez gave an update on the status of the ARPA funds. The Food Pantry was already given \$46,200 in ARPA funds originally but have noted that increased costs are leaving them struggling still. They are now requesting an additional \$28K in funds.

While the board is empathetic with the Food Pantry, some members are also worried about other potential requests that may come forward.

The board would like the Food Pantry to come back and answer some more questions about their activities and fundraising.

Pickleball Presentation

The Reading Pickleball Players Association gave the board a presentation asking for the Town to pay for temporary pickleball courts behind the Burbank Ice Arena. The presentation can be found in the Select Board packet on the town website. They were hoping to get an article before November Town Meeting. It was noted the meeting warrant has already been done and is set to be closed at their next meeting.

It was noted an alternate way to get on the Town Meeting warrant would be to do a citizen's petition.

Town Meeting Warrant

Maltez went over the November Town Meeting warrant with the board again. He noted he will have a more formal update at their next meeting on the Fire truck cost increase.

The board heard from Jessie Arnold, Chair of the Bylaw Committee, regarding Article 11, the snow removal bylaw. She noted the reason the Bylaw committee is doing this is because an instructional motion was made at Town Meeting. They have looked at other towns' bylaws and they all do it differently. They spoke with Town Counsel and then they drafted this bylaw.

Bacci wanted to amend Article 6 to keep pickleball courts in the article. Maltez noted this article is related to one specific property of Phase II and this property is not where the courts are going.

Capital Plan

Maltez explained the Capital plan documents in the Select Board packet to the board. They are asking FINCOM to do an additional .5% for a total of 5.5%. This capital plan is balanced with the 5.5% and they plan to go back to 5% in FY26.

Special Committee for Charter Review

McCarthy Move to appoint Haley as the Select Board designee on the Special Committee for the Charter Review. The motion was seconded by Dockser and approved with a unanimous roll call vote.

Future Agendas

The board discussed future agenda items.

Minutes

The board discussed previous meeting minutes and decided to vote on them at their next meeting pending clarification.

Bacci moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:47 PM. The motion was seconded by Dockser and approved with a unanimous roll call vote.