



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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### Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

#### Finance Committee

Date: 2023-06-28

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:**

Chair Ed Ross, Joe Carnahan, Geoffrey Coram, Endri Kume, Joe McDonagh (remote), Marianne McLaughlin- Downing, Emily Sisson, John Sullivan

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

Mark Zarrow

#### **Others Present:**

Town Manager Fidel Maltez, DPW Director Jane Kinsella (remote), Assistant DPW Director Chris Cole (remote), Karen Gately Herrick (remote)

**Minutes Respectfully Submitted By:** Jacquelyn LaVerde

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

This meeting was held in-person in the Town Hall Select Board Meeting Room, and remotely via Zoom.

Chair Ed Ross called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm, and introduced and welcomed new members: Endri Kume and John Sullivan.

#### **Liaison Reports:**

Marianne McLaughlin-Downing reviewed topics from the last Select Board meeting. The Select Board had a discussion on Grove Street Lot 5. After much discussion, they approved new tiered water rates by a vote of 3-2. Because there was significant resident concern on multi-unit housing and larger families, the Board will continue discussion over the coming year ahead of next year's water rates.

Ed Ross shared that he was on the Screening Committee for the new School Department Director of Finance. Dr. Derek Pinto was the recommendation of the screening committee and the School Committee voted to appoint him last week.

Mr. Ross also reported that the Killam School Building Committee went through the process of selecting the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) in May and June. There were four firms interviewed by a smaller steering committee. The first-ranked firm selected had to withdraw. The Town is now going through the process with the second-ranked firm. Right now, the Town is waiting to finalize the contract with the OPM and get on the MSBA schedule. At this point, the town is on target with the dates set out at the start of the project.

#### **Vote on FINCOM Reserve Transfer Request: Forestry Bucket Truck:**

DPW Director Jane Kinsella explained that the forestry truck was a FY22 purchase. There was \$275,000 allocated for the truck that had a one-year build cycle. The purchase order

was created for the amount of the quoted price, instead of the full \$275,000, releasing \$16,000 back into the general fund. Somewhere close to the one-year mark, the vendor notified the town that they were having issues with getting some parts for the same pricing. The truck, which was originally expected back in February, is now expected by the end of summer. Town Manager Fidel Maltez noted that they considered legal recourse they could take with the vendor not honoring the quote, but none of the possible outcomes were favorable. But they opted to settle, as the vendor agreed to cover a majority of the overages, and the Town could still get the truck it wanted.

The request is for a \$10,000 transfer from Finance Committee Reserves to cover some of the cost difference. The vendor is absorbing an additional \$30,000 in cost overages.

**On a motion by Emily Sisson, seconded by Joe Carnahan, the Finance Committee voted 8-0-0 to transfer \$10,000 from the FINCOM Reserve Fund for additional expenses for the forestry bucket truck as presented.**

**Roll call vote: Joe McDonagh – Yes, Marianne McLaughlin-Downing – Yes, Emily Sisson – Yes, Joe Carnahan – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Endri Kume – Yes, John Sullivan – Yes, Ed Ross – Yes.**

**Discussion on Grove Street Parking Lot on Lot 5:**

Town Manager Fidel Maltez reviewed the purchase of the parcel known as "Lot 5" on Grove Street at November 2021 Town Meeting for \$450,000, with the intention of making it a parking lot to allow access to the Town Forest and remove some parking from Grove Street. The Town received an earmark from the Commonwealth for \$150,000 towards the purchase or development of the property. Engineering firm Weston & Sampson worked on the design of the parking lot, with the layout requiring a lot of environmental approvals by both local Conservation and the state. The project is fully designed and ready for construction.

At their last meeting, the Select Board approved parking restrictions on Family Circle, which is frequently used for parking for Town Forest. That began a discussion of moving faster to construct the parking lot on Lot 5. The Select Board suggested approaching FINCOM to request funding for the parking lot. The project has not yet gone out to bid, but the preliminary cost estimate of the project is \$175,000. Mr. Maltez stated that it will be going out to bid soon, and he should have a firm number in about four to six weeks. Then the Committee can discuss whether to use Reserves to be replenished at November Town Meeting, to get the project moving sooner, or just wait to fund the project at Town Meeting without using Reserves.

The Finance Committee expressed a reluctance to approve such a significant amount of reserves, which would leave little help for other unforeseen things that might arise before reserves can be replenished at November Town Meeting. Mr. Maltez explained the safety concerns and benefits of completing the project sooner, rather than waiting for funding at Town Meeting. But the Committee asked to learn more about other sources of funding and other options for discussion at their next meeting.

**Discuss FY24 Meeting Schedule:**

The Committee reviewed the proposed FY24 meeting schedule and agreed to it.

**Future Agenda Items:**

Future meeting topics will include: update on Grove Street Lot 5, a preview of year-end financials, BOLT Library Landscape Committee, reorganization of the Committee, reassessing liaison assignments, an update from RMLD, and an introduction to the new School Finance Director.

**Approve Meeting Minutes:**

Emily Sisson moved to approve the meeting minutes of March 8, 2023, seconded by Marianne McLaughlin-Downing.

Joe Carnahan moved to amend the liaison reports for clarity. He then moved to accept the proposed changes, seconded by Emily Sisson.

**On a motion by Marianne McLaughlin- Downing, and seconded by Emily Sisson, the Finance Committee voted 6-0-2 to accept the meeting minutes of March 8, 2023 as amended, with Endri Kume and John Sullivan abstaining, as they were not yet members of the Committee at that meeting.**

**Roll call vote: Marianne McLaughlin-Downing – Yes, Emily Sisson – Yes, Joe Carnahan – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Endri Kume – Abstain, John Sullivan – Abstain, Ed Ross – Yes.**

**On a motion by Emily Sisson, seconded by Marianne McLaughlin-Downing, the Finance Committee voted to approve the meeting minutes of March 15, 2023, with a friendly amendment by Joe Carnahan by a vote of 6-0-2, with Endri Kume and John Sullivan abstaining, as they were not yet members of the Committee at that meeting.**

**Roll call vote: Marianne McLaughlin-Downing – Yes, Emily Sisson – Yes, Joe Carnahan – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Endri Kume – Abstain, John Sullivan – Abstain, Ed Ross – Yes.**

**On a motion by Emily Sisson, seconded by Joe Carnahan, the Finance Committee voted 8-0-0 to adjourn at 8:25 pm.**

**Roll call vote: Marianne McLaughlin-Downing – Yes, Emily Sisson – Yes, Joe Carnahan – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Endri Kume – Yes, John Sullivan – Yes, Ed Ross – Yes.**