



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Finance Committee

Date: 2023-07-26

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, Marianne McLaughlin-Downing, Emily Sisson (remote), John Sullivan (remote), Mark Zarrow (remote)

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

Town Manager Fidel Maltez, CFO Sharon Angstrom, Community Services Director Andrew MacNichol, Senior Planner Mary Benedetto, Karen Gately Herrick

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Jacquelyn LaVerde

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.

Liaison Reports

Geoffrey Coram reported that the School Committee reorganized. Tom Wise is now Chair, and Erin Gaffen is now Vice Chair. Dr. Derek Pinto is the new School Finance Director.

Joe Carnahan reported that the RMLD Board of Commissioners has a new member, Pam Daskalakis.

Marianne Downing provided updates from the latest Select Board meeting, where they reviewed, but did not finalize the FY25 tax rate. The Board previewed the construction tracker webpage that was implemented by staff. There was a public forum last night on a dog park in Reading. The next step is to identify a location for a dog park, and the consensus indicated Hunt Park was a possibility. The Symonds Way Exploratory Committee is getting active with requests for uses for the property.

Mark Zarrow reported that at the RMLD sub-audit committee meeting, he learned that the current auditor, Melanson, was acquired by Marcum, so the auditor for both RMLD and the Town is going to change to Marcum. RMLD was also recently caught in a phishing issue, and has updated their policies as a result.

Ed Ross stated that at the Killam School Building Committee meeting last week, the Committee reorganized. Carla Nazzaro is the new Chair, and Karen Gately Herrick is the

new Vice Chair. The KSBC also was introduced to the new OPM representative, and heard about project timelines. Next up is the selection of a designer. Mr. Ross noted that it will be important for members of the Finance Committee to help the community understand the reasons for the project, and its pros and cons, as it will go before the voters at some point.

Vote to Reorganize Finance Committee

Town Manager Fidel Maltez opened the floor for nominations for Chair.

Joe Carnahan nominated Ed Ross to continue as Chair, seconded by Joe McDonagh.

Emily Sisson nominated Joe Carnahan, seconded by Ed Ross.

Joe McDonagh nominated Marianne Downing, seconded by Emily Sisson.

Joe Carnahan stated that he loves being on FINCOM and hopes to spend another eight years on the Committee, but plans on voting for Ed Ross for Chair.

Marianne Downing stated that she is honored to be nominated, but supports Ed Ross for Chair for continuity. She noted that as Chair of RAAC, she understands what goes into putting an agenda together. She plans to stay on FINCOM as long as she can and would be happy to accept a secondary role such as Vice Chair.

Ed Ross thanked everyone and stated that he understands the need for change. He noted that he does enjoy being Chair, and is getting slightly better at it, but if someone new is Chair and needs an experienced Vice Chair, he would be happy with that as well.

Voting was done alphabetically by last name. By a vote of 8-1, Ed Ross was voted as Chair.

Roll call vote 1-8 for Joe Carnahan as Chair: Mark Zarrow – No, Emily Sisson – Yes, John Sullivan – No, Geoffrey Coram – No, Joe McDonagh – No, Joe Carnahan – No, Ed Ross – No, Marianne Downing – No, Endri Kume – No.

Roll call vote 3-6 for Marianne Downing as Chair: Mark Zarrow – No, Emily Sisson – Yes, John Sullivan – No, Geoffrey Coram – No, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Joe Carnahan – No, Ed Ross – No, Marianne Downing – Yes, Endri Kume – No.

Roll call vote 8-1 for Ed Ross as Chair: Mark Zarrow – Yes, Emily Sisson – Yes, John Sullivan – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Joe Carnahan – Yes, Ed Ross – No, Marianne Downing – Yes, Endri Kume – Yes.

Chair Ed Ross then opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chair.

Emily Sisson nominated Joe Carnahan, seconded by Marianne Downing.

Ed Ross nominated Marianne Downing, seconded by Mark Zarrow.

Voting was done alphabetically by last name. By a vote of 5-4, Joe Carnahan was voted Vice Chair.

Roll call vote for Joe Carnahan as Vice Chair: Mark Zarrow – No, Emily Sisson – Yes, John Sullivan – Yes, Geoffrey Coram – No, Joe McDonagh – No, Joe Carnahan – Yes, Marianne Downing – No, Endri Kume – Yes, Ed Ross – Yes.

Discuss Liaison Assignments

The Committee reviewed the liaison responsibilities and agreed on the following assignments:

- Ed Ross: Audit Committee, Killam School Building Committee, Select Board
- Joe Carnahan: Select Board, Department of Public Works, Facilities Department

- Geoffrey Coram: School Department and School Committee, Public Safety Departments
- Marianne Downing: Select Board, School Department and School Committee, Charter Review Committee
- Endri Kume: RMLD, Administrative Services Department, Department of Public Works
- Joe McDonagh: RMLD, Library and Board of Library Trustees, Reading Ice Arena Authority
- Emily Sisson: Public Services Department – Community Services, Symonds Way Exploratory Committee, Public Safety Departments
- John Sullivan: Public Services Department – Community Development, Reading Center for Active Living Committee
- Mark Zarrow: Audit Committee, Permanent Building Committee

Before the next meeting, members will review their assignments. At the next meeting, any requested changes will be made, and the list will be finalized.

Presentation by Community Development Staff regarding MBTA Communities

Community Services Director Andrew MacNichol shared information on MBTA Communities. The law was passed by the state and mandates that all cities and towns in the Metro-Boston area allow for multi-family housing (3+ units) by right on a lot. There are 177 communities going through this. Based on Reading's designation of a Commuter Rail community, the Town must comply with the law by the end of calendar year 2024. The law is trying to increase housing stock with access to MBTA transportation, and alleviate the increasing burden of housing costs.

Senior Planner Mary Benedetto explained that the biggest takeaway is that Reading does currently comply with the law. And while Reading does currently have multiple multi-family districts, the way they are currently written do not comply with the law for technical reasons. There are multiple paths the Town can take to comply, and community input is needed to help inform staff of the best fit for Reading. The hard deadline to comply with the law is December 2024. Staff hopes to bring changes to Town Meeting in April 2024. The Community Development Department is addressing this aggressive timeline in two phases. The first phase is engagement to get the information needed to start narrowing down ways to move forward, including a community survey. The second phase will consist of a series of community forums.

The Planning Division has a detailed webpage dedicated to the MBTA Communities Process with frequently asked questions. Mr. MacNichol and Ms. Benedetto noted that they need the help of the Committee and residents to help spread the word.

Discuss BOLT Library Landscape Committee

Town Manager Fidel Maltez reviewed the concerns regarding the Library Landscape Committee (LLC) plans from a finance standpoint, such as whether it is considered a capital project, included in the capital plan, and whether there is a funding mechanism for it. He met with the Library Landscape Committee and stated that they will ask the Board of Library Trustees to include Community Development Director Andrew MacNichol, a Select Board member, and himself, and he will ask if the BOLT might want a FINCOM member as well.

Mr. Maltez explained that the LLC is in the dreaming and envisioning phase. At this point there is no funding, and they are trying to identify a need. Joe McDonagh noted that at a Trustee meeting, the BOLT seemed to indicate a plan to use operating money from the Friends of the Reading Library, or the Reading Public Library Foundation endowment. If anything will be built, it will be required to go through public bidding.

Future Meeting Agendas:

The next meeting is scheduled for August 23rd. Topics will include: a discussion on Free Cash estimates, finalizing liaison assignments, a visit from new School Finance Director Derek Pinto, a preview of November Town Meeting, Financial Forum planning, and an

update on Grove Street Lot 5. RMLD is scheduled to attend the following meeting on September 20th to provide a year-to-date update.

Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Geoffrey Coram, seconded by Joe McDonagh, the Finance Committee voted 8-0-1 to approve the meeting minutes of June 28, 2023, with Mark Zarrow abstaining, as he was not present at that meeting.

Roll call vote: Geoffrey Coram – Yes, Joe McDonagh – Yes, Joe Carnahan – Yes, Marianne Downing – Yes, Endri Kume – Yes, Mark Zarrow – Abstain, Emily Sisson – Yes, John Sullivan – Yes, Ed Ross – Yes

On a motion by Joe Carnahan, seconded by Joe McDonagh, the Finance Committee voted 9-0-0 to adjourn at 8:20 pm.

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