



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Select Board

Date: 2024-04-09

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:**

Carlo Bacci, Karen Herrick, Chris Haley, Mark Dockser

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

Town Manager Matt Kraunelis, Executive Assistant Caitlin Nocella, Nancy Docktor, Melissa Murphy, Laura Stella, John Arena, DPW Director Chris Cole, DEI Director Albert Pless, Iris Bond Gill, Town Counsel, Chris Cridler, Linda Snow Dockser

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Caitlin Nocella

Topics of Discussion:

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

Public Comment

Nancy Docktor asked why the board keeps appointing Kevin Sexton, a realtor, to the board of health when she feels there are more qualified candidates. She told the board not to reappoint him because he is only a realtor and the board needs more health professionals on there.

Melissa Murphy noted she hopes the board will discuss tiered water rates soon and have a community session to explain all the tax implications for the upcoming projects.

Laura Stella asked if all the boards and committees can stop overlapping their meetings and only have one meeting per night.

John Arena spoke about the investigation. He feels the voters are owed an answer on what happened.

Liaison Reports

Haley attended the Pickleball event at Memorial Park and it was a great event. The School Committee met at METCO headquarters in Boston.

Dockser noted the Council on Aging and ReCalc are meeting frequently to discuss the new senior center. They are focusing on three sites and now evaluating those areas. They are starting to speak with Permanent Building Committee. ReCalc will be voting on the criteria

tomorrow. They will be having a lot of community meetings to hear neighbors' concerns and thoughts.

Herrick noted the Killam School Building Committee met last night and they will be doing tours of Killam tomorrow night while showing site plans. They will be starting to get some high level cost estimates for the school soon. She thanked everyone involved who put together the rainbow rally event at the last minute; it was a great event.

Bacci echoed Herrick's comments about the rainbow rally event. He was an instructor at the Pickleball fundraiser event at the high school. SWEC is wrapping up their final recommendations.

Town Manager Report

Kraunelis noted he also attended the rainbow rally on the common and thanked Albert Pless for putting it together. He also attended the Pickleball community day which was another great event. He mentioned there are several job postings on our website.

Arbor Day Proclamation

Haley read the proclamation and moved to accept the proclamation as presented. The motion was seconded by Dockser and approved with a 4-0 vote.

Community Diversity Equity and Inclusion Assessment Presentation

Community Diversity and Equity Director Albert Pless introduced Iris Bond Gill of Opportunity Consulting.

She then gave the board a presentation that can be found in the Select Board packet on the Town website.

VASC

Earlier tonight, Bacci and Herrick, the Volunteer Appointment Subcommittee (VASC), met with candidates for the Board of Health and Retirement Board.

Bacci and Herrick agreed on their suggestions for Board of Health.

Herrick noted she would like to see Lannon go on the Retirement Board but Haley feels they need more information about who is currently on the board and their professional background before deciding. It was noted the whole board seems to consist of public safety personnel and the board agreed to find out more about current members before appointing a new member to this board.

Haley wanted to note that the comments made during public comment about Kevin Sexton, a volunteer, are completely unacceptable.

Haley moved to appoint Kevin Sexton to a term on the Board of Health beginning immediately and expiring June 30, 2026. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 4-0 vote.

Haley moved to appoint Joan Wetzel to a term on the Board of Health beginning immediately and expiring June 30, 2025. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 4-0 vote.

Investigation into Board Conduct

Town Counsel was present to answer any questions.

Bacci started off by reading a motion he put together with the help of Town Counsel.

Herrick felt the board didn't have the power to do this but Counsel noted this is within the scope of the board, however, the board cannot force people to participate; so if there is anyone who does not want to participate, they don't have to.

Haley also noted if McCarthy refuses to participate then the investigation is over and won't proceed.

Herrick noted McCarthy is not asking for this and hasn't filed a complaint that we are aware of so she is unsure what the scope of this investigation is.

Herrick motioned to table this agenda item. There was no second.

Chris Cridler called a point of order and asked about the criminal aspects of potential residents - how did this protect their rights? Counsel noted that this is not a criminal investigation.

Linda Snow Dockser called a point of order to ask what the scope of the investigation is.

The board worked on the motion and tweaked some of the wording.

Haley moved to authorize the Town Manager to hire an independent investigator for the following purposes:

- 1. To investigate the facts and circumstances, including statements made and actions taken, surrounding Jackie McCarthy's decision to resign from the Reading Select Board on February 6, 2024, including statements made and actions taken by Select Board members, other elected and appointed officials, and residents, individually, or as part of a coordinated effort to unduly or inappropriately influence Ms. McCarthy's vote for the new Town Manager;**
- 2. To investigate statements made and action taken by Select Board members, other elected and appointed officials, and residents immediately following the February 6 meeting that relate to her resignation and the Board's response; and**
- 3. To provide a written report to the Select Board within 60 days of the investigator's hiring date, unless an extension is provided by the Town Manager, which report shall include the findings of the investigations conducted under Parts 1 and 2, above, as well as the investigator's opinion on whether Ms. McCarthy was threatened or bullied by any of these individuals in order to unduly or inappropriately influence her vote; and whether the Select Board's Ethics and Protocols were violated;**

And further that the Town Manager ask the investigator that individuals interviewed attest to the truth and accuracy of any statement given, and, provided further, that if Ms. McCarthy does not elect to participate in the investigation that the investigation shall terminate immediately without any finding of facts or conclusions.

The motion was seconded by Dockser.

Herrick wanted the record to reflect this investigation was not initiated by McCarthy.

The board voted 3-1 with Herrick opposing.

The board took a 5-minute recess.

CPA Study Committee Modification

The board wanted to change the make-up of the CPA study committee slightly. They are voting to replace ex-officio member of Affordable Housing Trust Committee with ex-officio member of Reading Housing Authority.

Haley moved to amend the CPA Study Committee membership to replace a member of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Committee with a member of the Reading Housing Authority. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 3-0 vote. Haley did not vote.

Future Agendas

The board discussed future agenda items.

Minutes

The board discussed prior meeting minutes.

Haley moved to approve the meeting minutes from February 17, 2024 as amended. The motion was seconded by Dockser and approved with a 4-0 vote.

Haley moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:59 PM. The motion was seconded by Herrick and approved with a 4-0 vote.