



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Reading Arpa Advisory Committee

Date: 2022-03-23

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: Reading Public Library

Location: Community Room

Address: 64 Middlesex Avenue

Session: Open Session

Purpose: General Business

Version: Final

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Chair Marianne Downing, Vice Chair Mark Dockser, Shawn Brandt, Geoffrey Coram, Andrew Grimes, Christopher Haley, Joe McDonagh, Tom Wise

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

Town Manager Fidel Maltez, Town Accountant Sharon Angstrom (remote), School Finance Director Susan Bottan (remote), Finance Committee Members: Chair Ed Ross, Andrew Mclauchlan (remote) Select Board Chair Karen Herrick Public: Nancy and Michael (remote), Barbara's ipad (remote)

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Jacquelyn LaVerde

Topics of Discussion:

This meeting was held in-person at the Library Community Room and remotely via Zoom.

Chair Marianne Downing call the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

Public Comment:

There was no comment from the public.

As five members were present, Finance Committee Chair Ed Ross called the Finance Committee to order at 7:04 pm.

Discuss/define scope of RAAC role in view of Official Charge of RAAC as defined by Select Board, in particular whether or not RAAC scope should include recommending allowed use of anything beyond ARPA grant funds:

Mark Dockser explained that his vision for this Committee was to decide the list of priorities as a community, determine which priorities can be funded with ARPA, and look at free cash and other sources of funding to help decide how to spend the ARPA funds.

Tom Wise suggested thinking strategically and investing the funds in something that will drive investment or additional income in the future, such as investing in water to save on water rates, or investing in school literacy to save on out-of-district placements.

Discuss pros/cons of various options for format of RAAC recommendations, including but not limited to: ranked and reviewed lists of ideas; one or more splits between water/sewer infrastructure, athletics & recreation, schools, community

priorities, etc.; assigning by "bucket"; creating a pie chart of percentages, et cetera:

Marianne Downing shared a comparison of how other communities prioritized their ARPA spending. Acton used some for the school district, as opposed to capital. Wilmington is investing all of its funds into water projects. Brookline had a group that produced a report of priorities, but did not provide a breakdown of how to divide the money.

Town Manager Fidel Maltez created a chart with suggested ARPA spending "buckets" that allocated \$1.25 million to Community Priorities, \$2 million to Water & Sewer, \$2 million for School priorities, and \$2 million for Athletics and Recreation. He noted that based on his discussions in the community, athletics, sports and fields, reducing high water and sewer rates, and investing in young children, were the top three priorities that came up. The Town needs to find ways to provide short term benefits that provide long term savings.

Upon joining the meeting at 7:52 pm, Karen Herrick called the Select Board to order.

The Committee continued to discuss different ways to allocate the money and incorporating staff expertise and community input.

Brief discussion on community input timeframe (formats and types to be discussed at future meeting):

The group discussed ways to solicit input from the community including an online survey, with hard copies available for those who may not have internet access, and hosting community forums. The survey can be advertised at the upcoming Annual Town Meeting.

On a motion by Geoffrey Coram, and seconded by Ed Ross, the Finance Committee adjourned at 8:39 pm, as members left the meeting, and the Finance Committee no longer had a quorum.

Members were tasked with coming to the next meeting on March 29th with suggested survey questions and creating a list of projects that could be considered by the Committee and would fit into the "buckets".

Review and approve minutes of 3/8/2022 meeting:

On a motion by Tom Wise, and seconded by Mr. Brandt, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 7-0-0 to approve the meeting minutes of March 8, 2022. Joe McDonagh had already left the meeting.

Discuss future agenda items, future meeting dates:

RAAC members discussed future meeting dates following Town Meeting and agreed on Wednesday, May 11th and Tuesday, May 24th.

On a motion by Karen Herrick and seconded by Mark Dockser, the Select Board voted 3-0 to adjourn at 8:54 pm.

Roll call vote: Mark Dockser-Yes, Chris Haley-Yes, Karen Herrick-Yes.

On a motion by Mark Dockser, and seconded by Tom Wise, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 7-0 to adjourn at 8:55 pm.