

READING PARKING AUTHORITY

Minutes of Reading Parking Authority Board Meeting – November 20, 2019

Executive Session. The Reading Parking Authority (“RPA”) Board of Directors met in executive session prior to the start of the regular board meeting to discuss personnel matters.

1) **Meeting Called to Order.**

The regular board meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m. It was held at the Penn Room, Reading City Hall, 815 Washington Street, Reading, PA 19601.

Individuals Present.

RPA Board Members:

Linda Burns-Glover, Chairperson

Lawrence Miller, Vice-Chairperson

Misael Marmolejos, Treasurer

Bill Murray, Secretary

Others Present: Lieutenant Nathan L. Matz, RPA Executive Director; Cynthia Sanzo, RPA Accounting Supervisor, Kristen Stubblebine, RPA Office Manager and Mahlon J. Boyer, Esquire, General Solicitor.

Members of Public: Jeremy Long, Reading Eagle; Mark Vergenes, Mirus Consultants; Evelyn Morrison, Lynwood Bates, Al Dunn, and Cristobal Arroyo.

2) **Pledge of Allegiance.**

3) **Moment of Silence.**

4) **Public Comment.**

A. **Lynwood Bates.** Mr. Bates addressed the Board. He has been a PEO for the RPA for approximately seventeen years. He attended the Board Meeting to observe the meeting.

B. **Evelyn Morrison.** Ms. Morrison addressed the Board. She was following-up in regard to the tow of her vehicle that allegedly damaged the vehicle. She had gone to the RPA and spoke to Michael McGrath. She received information for the RPA’s insurance coverage. According to Ms. Morrison, the RPA’s insurance carrier denied her claim because the RPA holds no liability. She subsequently tried to submit a claim to Matos Towing but has been unable to get their

insurance information. She took her vehicle to a dealership for review but is waiting for further insurance information.

Ms. Morrison suggested that she had submitted a Right-to-Know Request to the RPA. Her request addressed several points of information, including the RPA's insurance coverage. Ms. Morrison gave the Board a written letter, dated November 20, 2019, to request certain information from the RPA. Ms. Morrison did not submit a Right-to-Know Request on the official form used by the RPA, which is available on its website and also at its office. Ms. Morrison asked if the RPA has a Right-to-Know Officer. Lieutenant Matz confirmed that the RPA Solicitor, Mahlon J. Boyer, Esquire, is the RPA's Right-to-Know Officer.

C. Al Dunn. Mr. Dunn addressed the Board. Mr. Dunn believes that the RPA has no right to enforce expired inspections and vehicle registrations. Mr. Dunn suggested that a Berks County Court of Common Pleas Judge had previously issued an opinion in a case involving Mr. Dunn, which indicated that the RPA does not have the right to enforce expired inspections and registrations. Attorney Boyer confirmed for Mr. Dunn that he had performed a review of the Berks County docket for every case involving Mr. Dunn and that no written opinion by any Court of Common Pleas Judge appeared in regard to this particular issue. The Board requested that Mr. Dunn provide any information he has to Attorney Boyer for review.

D. Cristobal Arroyo. Mr. Arroyo addressed the Board. He is an RPA employee. He works in maintenance. He said that he is enjoying his job and is being treated well. He will do extra work if asked. He thanked the Board for his employment.

5) Approval of Meeting Minutes from October 23, 2019.

Mr. Lawrence Miller made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2019 RPA Regular Board Meeting. Second by Mrs. Linda Burns-Glover. Motion passed unanimously.

6) Approval of Accounts Payable.

Mrs. Linda Burns-Glover made a motion to approve the RPA accounts payable invoices for November 2019 via the RPA's general fund in the total amount of \$170,821.52. Second by Mr. Lawrence Miller. Motion passed unanimously.

7) General Solicitor Report.

A. 2nd & Washington. The RPA's General Solicitor, Mahlon J. Boyer, Esquire, addressed the Board. He confirmed that he had been in contact with First American, a title company. First American was retained to assist the RPA and the Reading Redevelopment Authority for the transfer of title for part of the real property at the 2nd & Washington garage from the Redevelopment Authority to the RPA. First American has completed its review of the property and the title history. First American has prepared a deed for the transfer of the property. Attorney Boyer will work with First American and the Redevelopment Authority to schedule a final closing for the transfer of the property to the RPA.

8) Labor Solicitor Report. None.

9) Executive Director Report.

A. Appeal Revamp-Update. Lieutenant Matz said that work on the Appeal Revamp is continuing. Therefore, there is no update at this time.

B. HUB-Update. Mr. Mark Vergenes from Mirus Consultants provided an update in regard to the installation of the new gates at the RPA garages. He confirmed that the installation of the gates was completed in October. Subsequently, there was an issue with the software for the gates. However, those issues have been resolved and the gate system has been stable after all of the necessary upgrades were completed.

Mr. Vergenes noted that there is different pricing per garage based upon proximity to an event venue. The cost for parking is less for those garages that are farther from the venue compared to the garages that are close in proximity, which cost more. Mr. Vergenes and Lieutenant Matz confirmed that the RPA is cognizant of the event parking prices compared to the cost of the tickets for any specific event. Mr. Murray stated his understanding and agreement that the cost for parking should be related to the ticket prices. Lieutenant Matz noted an example. Recently, there was a Paw Patrol event. The tickets for the Paw Patrol event were \$12.00 each. Therefore, the highest fee charged for parking was \$10.00.

Mr. Vergenes said that HUB is still finalizing the software for events. Lieutenant Matz said that the RPA is still taking cash for events. However, under the new system, there will be RPA Ambassadors that direct customers how to electronically pay for event parking. Mr. Marmolejos asked if there will be a future ability for website payments. Lieutenant Matz said that such payments are in process.

Mr. Vergenes noted that the RPA is working on signage at the garages. There is going to be a walk through at Popular & Walnut to determine signage that may be needed there. He said that there cannot be enough reminders for customers in regard to parking information.

C. Residential Garage Proposal. Lieutenant Matz said that there has been much feedback from citizens and the RPA Board of Directors regarding residential parking. At this time, the average monthly permit cost for City parking is approximately \$80.00. Lieutenant Matz suggested residential parking in the RPA facilities at the cost of \$39.00 per month, which is a 50% reduction of the average monthly permit cost.

Mr. Murray addressed possible residential parking at the Popular & Walnut Garage. He noted, according to the former RPA Executive Director, that the Popular & Walnut Garage was at capacity. However, there is available parking at that garage and especially with the RPA's ability to move Berks County employee parking from Popular & Walnut to the Convention Center Garage. Lieutenant Matz said that the RPA will monitor the new JMS Software information to determine if a relocation of parking is necessary.

Mrs. Linda Burns-Glover asked if the proposed residential parking would be available at all of the RPA's facilities and Lieutenant Matz confirmed that it would be. She asked if there would be any time limit on the parking and Lieutenant Matz said that there would be no time limit. The residential parking will be 24/7 access that is unrestricted. Mr. Marmolejos noted that the top floor at Popular & Walnut always seems to be empty. He wondered if a lower price could be offered to residents for top floor parking.

Lieutenant Matz confirmed that any vehicles parked by residents in an RPA facility will need to be in good repair with current registration and inspection. He said that there are approximately 50 residents using RPA garages at this time. They currently pay \$60.00 per month. Residents using the 7th & Penn open parking lot, approximately 75 of them, currently pay \$39.00 per month.

Mr. Lawrence Miller made a motion to approve residential parking at RPA facilities not to exceed \$39.00 per month. Seconded by Mr. Marmolejos. Motion passed unanimously.

D. City Financial Agreement. No report.

E. Vision Update. Lieutenant Matz is working hard to increase RPA professionalism. As part of that, Kristen Stubblebine has been hired as the RPA's Office Manager. She has already started staff training. There is now new paint and carpets to improve the appearance of the RPA and a new office layout.

In the future, RPA employees will be in uniform with a professional look. Mark Vergenes is looking into this. Specifically, whether it will be better to buy uniforms and/or lease them. Mr. Murray noted that new uniforms should avoid friction with the Reading Police Department and should not appear similar to police colors. Lieutenant Matz recognizes that the color of the RPA uniforms is also a safety issue.

Mrs. Linda Burns-Glover asked how soon a uniform would be issued to a newly hired employee. Lieutenant Matz said that the issuance would be immediate. Mrs. Linda Burns-Glover noted a concern with regard to paying for a uniform for an employee that is still probationary. Lieutenant Matz said that an employee that does not move forward with the RPA will need to return his or her uniform to the RPA. The RPA will keep an inventory of uniforms to reuse them and there may be no issue if the RPA leases the uniforms.

F. 2020 Budget (Draft). Lieutenant Matz noted a "10,000 foot" view of the budget at this time. The budget is going to be broken into subcategories. Lieutenant Matz said that the total actual revenue for the RPA in 2018 was \$7,029,195.00. The draft budget proposes revenue of \$7,367,500.00. The projected revenue is conservative and especially in regard to the technology upgrades at the RPA.

Lieutenant Matz said that one of the big unknowns for 2020 is the City Police ticket revenue. This is further complicated because there is no confirmed agreement between the RPA and the City for annual payments going forward. At this time, the RPA is projecting a police ticket payment to the City of approximately \$450,000.00. There is also a projected payment for parking

meter lease payments to the City. Mr. Murray noted that the draft budget contains significant payments to the City.

There will likely be significant adjustments for the projected 2020 RPA expenses. Lieutenant Matz said that one of the biggest increases for expenses in 2020 is employee costs. This is based on increased salary costs due to the new employees hired at the RPA as well as the increased cost of benefits for its current employees.

Mr. Murray asked if a final budget will be ready for the Board's review at its December 2019 Board Meeting. Mr. Vergenes confirmed that it would be ready at that time.

G. Community Action Committee Update. Lieutenant Matz said that the formation of the committee is still in progress. Lieutenant Matz provided an RPA document issued in regard to the committee. It is noted therein that the Advisory Committee will be charged with providing thoughtful recommendations to address parking issues and opportunities. It will also permit residents and businesses to voice concerns. Recruiting for the committee is slated to start with invitations to Reading citizens and businesses. Interested individuals are asked to submit a letter of interest and a resume to the RPA. Initially, the Committee will consist of five members and will be limited to no more than seven participants. The Committee is going to meet monthly to discuss issues and concerns related to parking. Solutions, recommendations or concerns will be documented and drafted into proposals, when appropriate, for review by the Executive Director.

10) Finance Manager Report.

A. October Financials. Ms. Cynthia Sanzo addressed the Board. Ms. Sanzo confirmed that the year-to-date revenue of the RPA is favorable to budget in the amount of \$81,438.00. The total operating expenses, year-to-date, are favorable to budget in the amount of \$200,495.00. She confirmed that the RPA is in good shape financially.

B. Fulton Bank. The RPA is presently working on setting up its new accounts with Fulton Bank.

C. PARIS. The RPA is moving forward with the PARIS Software. The RPA should be able to take credit card payments online beginning next week.

Kelly Ryan recently sent demand letters for unpaid violations. Mr. Murry asked if Kelly Ryan gets a percentage of the collected violations and Lieutenant Matz confirmed that they do.

11) Office Manager Report. Ms. Kristen Stubblebine addressed the Board. She has been the office manager at the RPA for approximately two weeks. She noted that she is working on office professionalism and optics. She is working to make customer service better. She is conducting staff training for customer service. There are also now weekly staff team meetings. She hopes to have employee feedback for future improvements.

The RPA is working on its phone system. It is trying to make it more user friendly. The RPA is trying to be more responsive to voice-mails. The RPA is also working on the cleanliness of the office and general employee behavior.

Mr. Murray was pleased to hear this report. He noted how important it is to have a professional environment and good decorum.

Mrs. Linda Burns-Glover asked if the RPA had recently closed for an entire day. Lieutenant Matz confirmed that the RPA had shut down on a Thursday and Friday for office renovations. The RPA tried very hard to give public notice of the shut down, including its website and through social media posts. The RPA tried very hard to minimize any public problems or issues that would be created. Grace periods were extended for all pending parking violations due to the shut down.

12) Maintenance Supervisor Report. Lieutenant Matz noted preventative maintenance regarding snow removal during the winter months. Some of the top decks on the garages will close. There will be no salting or plowing of the top decks. This will significantly reduce deterioration at the garages. The RPA is going to use the available occupancy data to confirm which decks to close.

13) Board Member Report.

A. Linda Burns-Glover. Mrs. Linda Burns-Glover felt that Lieutenant Matz's recent report to City Council was outstanding. She also asked if there will be confirmed use of the gates for event parking by the next Board meeting, December 16, 2019. Mr. Vergenes said that all of the gates and the use of the gates for event parking should be up and running by that time.

B. Misael Marmolejos. Mr. Marmolejos said that Mr. Vergenes has made great improvements. He noted to Lieutenant Matz that he is doing a great job also. It is far better than the past operations at the RPA. Mr. Marmolejos is a big believer in customer service and thanked Lieutenant Matz for working on that.

C. Lawrence Miller. Mr. Miller noted all of the progress that has been made over the past year at the RPA. Past issues such as the inability of the RPA to provide written contracts to which it was a party showed systemic problems at the RPA. Much work has been undertaken to resolve the prior problems. An organization needs good practices in place to do its work. He noted how the current RPA Board does not fight amongst themselves but works together. Any new and future Board members will need to be honest and diligent. They will need to listen and learn.

D. Bill Murray. Mr. Bill Murray noted the RPA's Right-to-Know Policy. He said that such requests are part of the Authority's daily operation. He does not want the release of public information to be a problem. Disclosures should be practical. Attorney Boyer noted that the submission of the required Right-to-Know forms by citizens requesting information is helpful to the RPA as well as the citizens. It confirms the requests made by a citizen and permits them to make a grievance if the request is not followed through.

Mr. Murray also said he has served on various boards for approximately 35 years. In all of that time, he has not seen Board Members put through such rigors like the RPA Board. There will be discussion in the coming days about an issue involving a particular board member and in relation to his service as an RPA Board Member.

In spite of the challenges, Mr. Murray has never seen such success on any of the Boards he has served on. There have been great accomplishments at the RPA over the past two years. He noted his shock and dismay at the first RPA Board Meeting he attended in 2017. Bills had been paid by the RPA before approval at the Board Meeting. There was a forensic audit at that time which proceeded with much difficulty because the RPA could not present the records requested by the auditor. Mr. Murray has seen incredible accomplishments and especially over the last few months despite the RPA's problems.

14) Old Business. None.

15) New Business. None.

16) Next Board Meeting.

The RPA's next regular Board Meeting will be on Monday, December 16, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. at Reading City Hall, 815 Washington Street, Reading, PA 19601. An executive session will take place at 4:30 p.m.

17) Adjourn.

Mr. Misael Marmolejos made a motion to adjourn at 7:21 p.m. Second by Mr. Lawrence Miller. Motion passed unanimously.