

READING PARKING AUTHORITY

Minutes of Reading Parking Authority Board Meeting – February 28, 2024

1) Meeting Called to Order

The Reading Parking Authority's regular board meeting was called to order on February 28, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. by Nelson Espinal, Chairman. It was held at the Reading Parking Authority, 430 S. 4th Street, Reading, PA 19602, pursuant to notice published and posted according to law.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

3) Moment of Silence

4) Roll Call

A roll call to confirm all individuals present for the meeting was taken. The following individuals were present for the meeting:

RPA Board Members: Nelson Espinal, Chairman; Patricia Vasquez, Vice-Chairman; Kerry Burford, Secretary/Assistant Treasurer; and Adela Rodriguez, Treasurer/Assistant Secretary.

Others Present: Rafael Batista, Executive Director; Josue Vega, Director of Finance, Cindy Sanzo, Accounting Manager; Maria Rosado, Head Supervisor; Nellie Martir, Communication Specialist; and Mahlon J. Boyer, Esquire, General Solicitor.

5) Public Comment

Shiela Perez said that RPA Public Enforcement Officers are continuing to enforce expired vehicle inspections and registrations. She said that a Berks County judge in a prior case involving Albert Dunn had said that the RPA could not enforce expired inspections and registrations. She also said that a different case involving Mr. Dunn was dismissed at the recommendation of the solicitor before the case could be taken on appeal to the PA Commonwealth Court. As a result, the fines were returned to Mr. Dunn. Mr. Espinal asked the solicitor about this. The solicitor said that the case against Mr. Dunn was dismissed because pursuing it was not cost-effective.

Evelyn Morrison said that the Board can revise its Public Participation Policy if it wants to. She said that the RPA solicitor should not take the board meeting minutes because it is a conflict of interest. She said that the secretary should take the minutes and the minutes should be accurate. She said that the solicitor also serves as the Right-To-Know officer. The minutes should be taken by an objective third party. Ms. Morrison said that she is also concerned about the credit card statements provided in response to her Right-to-Know request. According to her, the credit card statements show a gross misappropriation of funds. She thinks the RPA should take an inventory to confirm that tools that were purchased are still present. She said the solicitor has been serving for several years and should be replaced.

Mr. Batista confirmed that the RPA is already taking an inventory. He said that the RPA wants to be transparent and will confirm the inventory when complete.

6) Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the previous regular meeting of the Authority's Board of Directors were circulated to the members of the Board prior to the meeting. Mr. Espinal made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on January 16, 2024. Second by Ms. Vasquez. Mr. Espinal, Ms. Vasquez and Ms. Rodriguez voted to approve the minutes. Mr. Burford abstained from voting.

7) Approval of Accounts Payable

Accounts payable in the total amount of \$1,168,515.69 for the time period of January 11, 2024 to February 22, 2024 were presented to the Board.

Mr. Burford questioned the current hourly rate of the hearing officer. Mr. Batista confirmed that the RPA is looking at lower cost options but noted the RPA has to maintain the position at this time due to its importance. Ms. Vasquez asked if the hourly rate is new. Mr. Batista confirmed that it is not.

Mr. Burford also asked about a Turnpike charge. Ms. Sanzo said that the charge was related to a parking conference that the former executive director and former director of operations attended in Pittsburgh. Mr. Burford asked if the RAWA charge is quarterly. Ms. Sanzo said that it is monthly.

Mr. Burford made a motion to approve the payment of the accounts payable presented to the Board. Second by Ms. Vasquez. The motion passed unanimously.

8) General Solicitor

a) Resolution 2024-4

Resolution 2024-1 was presented to the Board. It confirms that Rafael Batista and Josue Vega will have check signing authority for the Authority's bank accounts including its accounts at Fulton Bank. Ms. Rodriguez made a motion to approve the resolution. Second by Mr. Burford. The motion passed unanimously.

b) Red Cross Parking Agreement

A Parking Agreement between the RPA and the American Red Cross for the use of 3 reserved parking spaces by the Red Cross at the Chiarelli Plaza Garage was presented to the Board. Ms. Vasquez made a motion to approve the agreement. Second by Mr. Burford. The motion passed unanimously.

9) Executive Director

Mr. Batista provided several updates. He confirmed that he appeared before City Council on February 26, 2024. He introduced himself to Council. Mr. Batista is working with the RPA's IT provider to secure data and add security features. He met with the RPA's union representative. He wants to improve things for employees. Mr. Batista met with Fulton Bank to discuss different products. He is working on RPA matters such as marketing, increased revenue, City beautification, and the modernization of payments. Mr. Batista met with the City of Reading's police chief. He said it was a good meeting. He said the RPA now has a good relationship with the DoubleTree Hotel. Elevators and lights have been repaired in the Convention Center Garage and the Hotel has not expressed further concerns to the RPA.

Ms. Rodriguez asked about the status of the McKnight St. parking lot. Mr. Batista said that the parking lot should be fully operational at the beginning of April. He said there is already a waitlist for the parking lot.

Mr. Batista was asked about the RPA's collection efforts. He said that collection letters are being issued. The RPA is also developing a relief program that would allow someone to pay a percentage of what they owe with the remaining balance to be forgiven.

Ms. Vasquez asked about the RPA's social media. Mr. Batista said that the RPA was working with too many companies for its marketing efforts. The RPA is trying to use one company. He said that the RPA is trying to improve customer service and wants to market that on social media.

Ms. Vasquez asked about the RPA hiring an HR director. Mr. Batista said that the last date of the prior HR consultant, Paragon, was February 29, 2024. A new in-house HR director will start with the RPA on March 15, 2024. Mr. Burford said that the Board should be told about any new employee positions that are created and should approve new hires.

10) Finance

a) Financial Statements - January

Mr. Batista said that the RPA is working to get its financials corrected. Mr. Vega said that he is working with Ms. Sanzo to get the financials checked and corrected. He wants to make sure the Board is provided with accurate information. Ms. Vasquez asked about the status of the reconciliations. Mr. Vega said that the RPA is working on this. He said that it is not common to have the bank reconciliations so far behind. He said that bank reconciliations should be at least monthly and need to be up to date. Ms. Sanzo said that the RPA is currently working on reconciliations from April 2023. There is one person now assigned to this task. It takes about one week of work to cover one month of reconciliations. Mr. Vega said that the reconciliations are complicated due to the multiple revenue streams. Resolving the reconciliations is a top priority.

11) Operations

a) Head of Supervisors

Ms. Rosado said that she is meeting with multiple people including ThyssenKrupp in regard to the elevators at the DoubleTree Hotel and RPA department supervisors. She is learning the RPA operations. General discussion was held in regard to the Convention Center Garage elevators and ThyssenKrupp. Mr. Batista confirmed that Reading Elevator is not able to service these elevators because they are proprietary to ThyssenKrupp. The elevators cannot be replaced at this time. Ms. Rodriguez emphasized the need to get away from ThyssenKrupp. Mr. Batista said the only way to do so is to replace the elevators, which would cost over \$1,000,000.00 to do. It is a long term goal.

Ms. Vasquez asked if the RPA was managing employee overtime. Ms. Rosado confirmed that steps have been taken to resolve prior overtime issues.

b) Department report

A report was submitted to the Board before the meeting.

12) Human Resources

A report was submitted to the Board before the meeting.

13) Office Administration

A report was submitted to the Board before the meeting. Mr. Batista confirmed that the RPA is listening to the Board and trying to do more with less.

14) Communications & Special Projects

Mr. Batista confirmed that the RPA is continuing to work on marketing and wants to use one company for marketing instead of four. This will help the RPA save money.

15) Board Member Reports

None.

16) Old Business

Mr. Burford said that booting vehicles results in payments. The RPA does not get paid when vehicles are towed. Mr. Batista confirmed that the RPA is making changes to resolve its projected deficit for 2024.

17) New Business

None.

18) Next Board Meeting

The next regular board meeting will be held on March 19, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. at the Reading Parking Authority, 430 S. 4th Street, Reading, PA 19602.

19) Executive Session

An executive session to discuss personnel matters and pending litigation was announced with no return to public session.

20) Adjourn

There being no further business of the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.