

READING PARKING AUTHORITY

Minutes of Reading Parking Authority Board Meeting – April 16, 2025

1) Meeting Called to Order

The Reading Parking Authority's regular board meeting was called to order on April 16, 2025 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; Dr. Rodney S. Ridley, Sr. and Devon Guistwite.

Others Present: Rafael Batista, Executive Director; Josue Vega, Finance Director; John Brown, Director of Human Resources; Nellie Martir, Operations Manager; Jesse Metheny, Finance Operations Manager; Janice Nieves, Communications Specialist; Vanessa Ortiz, Head of Supervisors; Hector Gonzalez, Maintenance Supervisor; Ryan Phillips, IT Systems Coordinator and Thomas A. Rothermel, Esquire, General Solicitor.

5) Public Comment

None.

6) Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – March 19, 2025

Mr. Burford made a motion to approve the March 19, 2025 regular board meeting minutes. Second by Dr. Ridley. The motion passed unanimously.

7) General Solicitor

a) Santander Arena Agreement

Mr. Rothermel reported that the Authority engaged in ongoing negotiations with the Santander Arena for possible sponsorship. The Authority and the Arena are currently parties to a three-year suite rental/sponsorship agreement that is ending. The most recent proposal provides for a three-year marketing partnership agreement at a base cost of \$40,000, with a 2% increase for subsequent years. The agreement does not include a suite rental, but it provides for marketing benefits such as signs and placards. A provision of the current proposal includes special parking rates for hockey games that are subject to further discussion. Mr. Burford made a motion to

approve the Partnership Executive Summary with the Arena dated March 31, 2025, subject to final consent regarding hockey ticket pricing. That Motion was seconded by Ms. Vasquez. The Motion passed unanimously. Dr. Ridley abstained.

b) Berkshire Building Agreement

Mr. Rothermel advised that a draft Parking Facilities Agreement was sent to the developer of the Berkshire Building. Due to construction delays, the developer is not prepared to move forward with the Agreement; it may require further revision with regard to the term.

Mr. Burford indicated that the Reading Recreation Commission placed no-parking signs in a nearby lot proximate to the Berkshire Building. At times, vehicles are booted. Mr. Burford would like that issue addressed so that the public is aware that the RPA is not responsible for enforcement in that particular area.

8) Executive Director Report

a) Amnesty Program

Mr. Batista reported that the amnesty program was gaining good traction. The program is available to individuals who owe more than \$200 in parking violations. Funds collected so far this year are increased from last year, totaling \$73,747.85 to date. Compared to last year, the Authority has collected more funds from less individual users.

b) Juneteenth Event

Mr. Batista advised that the City of Reading made a request for free parking at the South Penn Garage and State Lot for a Juneteenth event scheduled for June 14, 2025. The City also requested No Parking signs on 9th & Penn Street to Franklin Street, and a \$1.00 fee per sign. The Board was in unanimous agreement with the City's request in this regard. Mr. Batista will proceed to process the request.

c) Rate Structure

Mr. Batista developed a new rate structure for the parking garages and surface lots. The new rates will commence June 1, 2025. There will be no distinction in price between locations. Garages and surface lots will have the same rate. Residents who live within two miles of a garage or surface lot will be eligible for the residential rate. In response to a question posed by Dr. Ridley, Mr. Batista confirmed that bulk rate users (i.e. 50 spaces or more) would be afforded a premium rate. The aim in formulating these new rates is to create uniformity, which will result in simpler messaging to the public, and greater use of permitting opportunities at cost-savings to residents. Mr. Batista believes the new rate structure will generate more revenue and avoid excess ticketing. The full rate structure was circulated to the Board in advance of the meeting. The Board was in unanimous agreement with Mr. Batista's proposed rate structure.

9) Director of Finance Report

Mr. Vega reported that the ERP implementation is moving ahead, and is scheduled to go live in May 2025. Payroll implementation is also going well, with benefits and the HR system in the final phase of integration. Overall, the Finance Department is continuing to improve Authority systems and processes.

The merchant services transition is ongoing. Full transition to Fiserv is on track and expected to be finalized this month. Once complete, the new merchant service platform will result in increased efficiency and optimization.

a) Financial Statements – March 2025

The Authority's Financial Statements as of March 31, 2025 were presented to the Board prior to this meeting. Mr. Vega reported that the Authority remained in a positive position. Gross revenues were similar to this time last year, but expenses were higher than in 2024, resulting in lower net income.

b) Approval of Accounts Payable

Mr. Burford made a motion to approve the accounts payable in the amount of \$594,653.76. Second by Chairman Espinal. The motion passed unanimously.

10) Director of Human Resources Report

Mr. Brown reported that he was continuing to work with Departments and individual positions to complete Palocity updates. A new call-off system was implemented to streamline the process. Employees were trained on the new process, which involves scanning a card with their cell phone. Mr. Brown also reported on continued efforts to reinforce existing policies and procedures, a component of which was to reinstate a policy of clocking in and out for lunch. In addition, Mr. Brown is working on implementing a structured performance review system whereby all staff are evaluated. Mr. Brown reported that the Authority currently has five open positions for event staff, which is a per diem position that pays \$17 per hour. He views the event staff position as a feeder to a full-time officer position. Lastly, Mr. Brown plans to attend an upcoming job event at the DoubleTree Hotel on April 21, 2025.

In response to a question posed by Chairman Espinal regarding culture in the workplace, Mr. Brown indicated that it has improved over time. He expects the culture to continue to improve with the planned improvements in policy and procedure.

11) Operations & Departmental Report

A report on the status of hearings and enforcement was provided. Currently, there is a backlog to January 2026 for hearings, which needs to improve. A virtual hearing format is being explored. A proposed assessment of a \$5.00 administrative fee to request a hearing was suggested, with allowance of only one missed hearing date. Overall, the goal is reduce the backlog and streamline the process. This will be accomplished by adding more hearing days, as well as scheduling more hearings per day. A second hearing officer could be added, but may not be necessary once policy updates are implemented. The Board was in agreement to add a second

hearing officer, if needed. Mr. Batista recommended that the Board defer taking action on adding a second hearing officer until July 31, 2025, in order to afford time to assess progress with the scheduled policy changes.

12) Board Member Reports

There were no board member reports.

13) Old Business

Mr. Batista advised that the License Plate Recognition (LPR) system is currently being tested at the 541 Cherry Street lot. Ultimately, the goal is to install the LPR system on all lots.

14) New Business

One new pay station is planned for installation at the Court Street garage by the end of May 2025. The pay station will be paid for by the County and used for jurors.

Mr. Phillips, IT Systems Coordinator, reported that the Authority recently switched company cellphone carriers to T-Mobile, which resulted in savings of over \$600.00 per month. Mr. Phillips also reported that he was working on a proposal for installation of an EV charging station. The station will be an added source of revenue for the Authority. Mr. Phillips plans to report to the Board at the May 2025 meeting after additional EV charging station proposals are secured.

15) Executive Session

At 6:30 p.m., the Board recessed to an executive session to discuss matters involving litigation and personnel. Chairman Espinal called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. upon the close of the executive session.

16) Next Board Meeting

The next regular board meeting will be held on May 21, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. at the Reading Parking Authority, 430 S. 4th Street, Reading, PA 19602.

17) Adjourn

There being no further business of the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.