

READING PARKING AUTHORITY

Minutes of Reading Parking Authority Board Meeting – January 15, 2025

1) **Meeting Called to Order**

The Reading Parking Authority's regular board meeting was called to order on January 15, 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; and Dr. Rodney S. Ridley, Sr.

Others Present: Rafael Batista, Executive Director; Josue Vega, Finance Director; John Brown, Director of Human Resources; Nellie Martir, Head of Supervisors; Jesse Metheny, Finance Operations Manager; Janice Nieves; and Mahlon J. Boyer, Esquire, General Solicitor.

5) **Annual Reorganization**

Mr. Espinal turned the conduct of the meeting to Mr. Boyer for the reorganization of the Board.

Mr. Boyer called for nominations for Chairman. Mr. Burford nominated Dr. Ridley. Mr. Espinal nominated himself. Mr. Boyer called for a vote and polled the Board. The results of the vote were as follows:

Mr. Espinal voted for himself.

Ms. Vasquez voted for Mr. Espinal.

Dr. Ridley voted for himself.

Mr. Burford voted for Dr. Ridley.

The vote to nominate a new Chairman was a tie. Therefore, Mr. Espinal maintained his current position as Chairman.

Mr. Boyer called for nominations for a Vice-Chairman. Mr. Burford nominated himself. Ms. Vasquez nominated herself. Mr. Boyer called for a vote and polled the Board. The results of the vote were as follows:

Mr. Espinal voted for Ms. Vasquez.
Ms. Vasquez voted for herself.
Dr. Ridley voted for Mr. Burford.
Mr. Burford voted for himself.

The vote to nominate a new Vice-Chairman was a tie. Therefore, Ms. Vasquez maintained her current position as Vice-Chairman.

Mr. Burford then made a motion to delay the reorganization of the Board to February until a fifth member is named to the Board. Dr. Ridley seconded the motion. Discussion was then held.

Dr. Ridley said that board members should vote for someone as an officer of the Board for specific reasons. Mr. Burford said that nominees should explain what their plans are for the Authority.

Ms. Vasquez said that she would focus on confirming the Authority's agenda and goals. There should be continuing collaboration with City agencies to further the work of the Authority.

Dr. Ridley said that he would increase communications with the City and City agencies. He said that there is a lack of communication with the public regarding the Authority and what it is doing. There needs to be increased marketing. There needs to be a 3-year strategic plan for the Authority. The Board needs to speak to the City on behalf of Mr. Batista and take advantage of new opportunities.

Mr. Burford said that the Authority needs to be proactive. The Board needs to take pressure off of Mr. Batista. The Board should talk to City Hall on his behalf. He said that the Authority needs a strong chairman.

Mr. Espinal said that he has been doing business in the City for 30 years. The Authority should do more than talk. It needs to take action and the Board needs to address the manner in which City Council treats the Authority.

After discussion held, Mr. Burford amended his motion to delay the reorganization to March or sooner if a fifth member is named to the Board. Upon a vote taken, Mr. Burford's motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Boyer then returned conduct of the meeting to Mr. Espinal.

6) Public Comment

There was no public comment.

7) Approval of Regular Board Meeting Minutes – December 11, 2024

Mr. Burford made a motion to approve the December 11, 2024 regular board meeting minutes. Second by Dr. Ridley. The motion passed unanimously.

8) Approval of Special Board Meeting Minutes – December 23, 2024

Mr. Burford made a motion to approve the December 23, 2024 special board meeting minutes. Second by Ms. Vasquez. The motion passed unanimously.

9) General Solicitor

a) Sale of John Deere Equipment

Mr. Espinal made a motion to approve the sale of a 2021 John Deere 2441L to James Gilliland for the total amount of \$76,001.00. Second by Mr. Burford. The motion passed unanimously.

b) IMAX

Mr. Boyer said that the new Parking Facilities Agreement with Reading Movies, LLC (IMAX) had been fully executed and went into effect on January 1, 2025. Pursuant to the new agreement, Reading Movies, LLC will pay a fixed cost per year without the ability to reduce the parking spaces it rents.

10) Executive Director Report

Mr. Batista provided an end of year report for 2024. He said that the Authority had net income in 2024 of roughly \$385,000.00. Mr. Batista also introduced and welcomed John Brown and Janice Nieves as new employees of the Authority. He also confirmed that Ms. Martir will now be serving as the Head of Supervisors. She will make sure that the Authority's operations are running smoothly. Her number one focus will customer service to change the public's perception of the Authority. Mr. Batista also confirmed that the Authority is completing its hiring of second-shift PEO's. There will be 5-6 PEO's working on second-shift.

Mr. Batista said that the Green Street surface lot is progressing. McCarthy Engineering is working with the City for plan approval. Construction is estimated to begin in September 2025. Mr. Batista said that there are six parking lots in development at this time.

Mr. Batista said that some of the Authority's salt-spreader equipment is damaged and needs to be replaced. Mr. Espinal made a motion to approve the Authority's purchase of a new salt-spreader from Stork's Plows, a Costars vendor, for the total amount of \$6,600.00. Second by Dr. Ridley. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Batista said that the Authority has a snowrator it does not need. There are interested

buyers. Mr. Burford made a motion to permit the Authority to sell the snowrator for \$20,000.00. Second by Ms. Vasquez. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Batista said that RKL will be on-site next week in regard to its forensic audit. The audit report is almost complete.

a) Amnesty program for 2025

Mr. Batista asked for permission to restart the amnesty program in February. It will only be available to individuals with fines totaling more than \$200.00. The program would run from February 1, 2025 through April 30, 2025. The Authority will offer a 20% discount off the original amount owed if full payment is made. Or, the Authority will waive the late fees for those who agree to a payment plan. Those who elect payment plans will not be eligible for the 20% discount. Last year, the Authority collected roughly \$238,000.00 during the amnesty program.

Mr. Burford made a motion to approve the proposed amnesty program. Second by Ms. Vasquez. The motion passed unanimously.

b) Surveillance System

Mr. Batista said there have been issues with vehicle break-ins and complaints from some of the people parking in the Authority's garages. There are presently no surveillance cameras in 7 out of the 8 parking garages and nothing for the Reading Police Department to view when these incidents occur.

Mr. Batista said that the Authority has received preliminary estimates for the installation of cameras in the garages. The average cost is \$145,000.00 per garage. The Authority would begin camera installations at the Reed & Court and Poplar & Walnut parking garages. Dr. Ridley suggested that the Authority request financial assistance from the City for the installation of the cameras.

Dr. Ridley made a motion to approve the installation of automated security cameras in the Reed & Court and Poplar & Walnut parking garages in an amount not to exceed \$150,000.00 for each garage coupled with a request to the City to contribute towards the cost of the installation. Second by Ms. Vasquez. The motion passed unanimously.

c) AR Collection Program

Mr. Batista confirmed that violations are harder to collect if they are not paid within 1 year. There is roughly \$32,000,000.00 in unpaid violations as of December 31, 2024. Mr. Batista said that he wants to have a collection team for unpaid violations from 2022 and all years previous to that. Violations that cannot be collected will be abandoned and will not be carried forward.

d) LPR – 341 Cherry St.

Mr. Batista said that an LPR system will be installed at the 341 Cherry St. parking lot. The parking lot is presently under PEO surveillance. The LPR will make enforcement better. It will be similar to the system already in place at the Authority's State Lot.

e) PFM Strategic Plan

PFM has submitted a proposal to assist the Authority with a 5-year strategic plan. The proposed cost is \$10,000.00 per month for 4 months. Mr. Metheny said that the Authority contacted other firms, such as RKL, but they cannot assist the Authority because they have performed audits for the Authority. A prior auditor cannot act as a consultant. Dr. Ridley suggested that the Authority consider other firms that offer strategic plans. He also said that the Authority should contact the City to request a financial contribution to offset the cost of the work.

11) Finance Director Report

Mr. Vega said that the implementation of the new ERP system is going well. Most of the new payroll functions have also been rolled out. The Authority's merchant services are now more streamlined and there is a cost savings compared to the prior services used.

a) Financial Statements – December 2024

The Authority's Financial Statements as of December 31, 2024 were presented to the Board prior to the board meeting. Mr. Vega said that revenues were slightly lower in December. He also said that expenses were lower in December 2024 compared to December 2023. The Authority ended 2024 with positive net income.

Ms. Vasquez asked why revenue was lower in December. Mr. Vega said that it was due to multiple factors including employee payments, a required payment to the IRS, and reductions in violations and no-parking sign revenue. Mr. Batista noted that lower revenue in December was similar to prior years.

b) Approval of Accounts Payable

Mr. Burford made a motion to approve payment of the accounts payable from December 12, 2024 to January 10, 2025 in the amount of \$456,608.26. Second by Dr. Ridley. The motion passed unanimously.

c) Fulton Bond Series C

Mr. Vega said that Fulton Bank contacted the Authority to confirm if the Authority wanted to spread out a balloon payment that will be due this year. Mr. Boyer confirmed that the balloon payment is the result of a payment that was deferred during the COVID pandemic. Ms. Vasquez made a motion to approve monthly payments towards the balloon payment, or a payment in full,

as decided by the Authority in consultation with the Board. Second by Dr. Ridley. The motion passed unanimously.

12) Director of Human Resources Report

Mr. Brown said that he has been with the Authority for roughly 3 weeks. Customer service is a major focus. The Authority is using Hubric to assist with employee training. There will be leadership and customer service training in February. Mr. Brown said that he wants to make the Authority a great place to work with a focus on customer service. Ms. Vasquez welcomed Mr. Brown and said that she looked forward to his future work at the Authority.

13) Operations & Departmental Report

Written reports were submitted to the Board prior to the board meeting. Ms. Martir thanked the Board and Mr. Batista for her new role as Head of Supervisors. She said that she wants to help promote the mission and vision of the Authority. She is working with Maria Rodriguez to understand her new role and is also meeting with supervisors at the Authority. There is going to be a new training manual for PEO's and event staff.

14) Board Member Reports

There were no board member reports.

15) Old Business

None.

16) New Business

None.

17) Next Board Meeting

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

18) Adjourn

There being no further business of the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.