



Town of Reading

Reading's Town Seal, adopted in 1890, shows the old Lob's Pound Mill, combination grist and saw mill that was located on the Ipswich River for more than 200 years. The pine boughs represent Reading's old name, Wood End, while the arm and sword are from the seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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Reading History

Reading's original settlers came in the 1630's from England to the Massachusetts Bay Colony through the ports of Lynn and Salem. In 1639 some citizens of Lynn petitioned the colony government for a "place for an inland plantation." This grant, known as Linn Village, was enlarged by subsequent land grants, creating the area which now comprises Reading, Wakefield and North Reading.

The first settlers lived along the shores of the Great Pond, now Lake Quannapowitt. On May 29, 1644, the settlement was incorporated, taking the name of Reading from a town of the same name in Berks County, England.

Governing arrangements of the time were simple. The first town meeting in Reading was gathering of the settler in 1644. Land was divided and one settler was given the exclusive right to operate a grist mill upon condition that he spend at least two days a week grinding grist for the other settlers. By 1647 when the next official town meeting was held, development had reached a point where someone was needed to look after town affairs, and seven men were chosen. The following year three surveyors of the highway were appointed. Other than assigning land, overseeing roads and paying ministers, however, there were few demands on the local government because the town was sparsely inhabited. It took a few years before settlements were made in Wood End, today's Reading. By 1685 there were only 49 inhabitants living there. The following year, the heirs of the Sachem, or Head Chief of the Saugus Indians, among them John Quanopohit, officially sold the colonists the territory comprising Lynn, Nahant, Saugus, Lynnfield and Reading which includes the area now known as North Reading, Reading and Wakefield. This was done because the

Massachusetts Bay Charter was revoked and the colonists wanted to safeguard the title to their lands.

Reading Minutemen played an active role in routing the British from Concord in April, 1775. Dr. John Brooks, Captain of the Fourth Company remained in the army for eight years, distinguishing himself in service and eventually becoming the ninth Governor of Massachusetts.

The early 1800's was a period of thriving industry. Although citizens voted in 1803 against any turnpikes being built in town, it took only two years to realize the adverse affect the decision would have on their economy. By 1807 the privately owned Andover-Medford turnpike was laid along what is now Main Street, providing citizens better access to the Boston area.

When plans for a railroad from Boston to Andover began to materialize, Reading residents recognized its advantages and successfully lobbied for it. The first train ran through Reading on July 1, 1845. The B&M railroad provided easier access to southern markets for products made locally. Soon furniture built in Sylvester Harnden's factory, clocks made by Daniel Pratt in his factory (located behind M.F. Charles in what today is the municipal parking lot) and pipe organs manufactured in Samuel Pierce's factory on Pierce Street were sent all over the expanding country.

By 1855 Reading had 13 establishments manufacturing chairs and cabinets. Other industries included sawmills, the manufacture of ice boxes, boots and shoes and men's clothing. In 1866, necktie manufacture began and continued for about 90 years.

When the Civil War struck, there was only one local unit in readiness, the Richardson Light Guard, which was technically from South Reading. The Richardson Light Guard fought at the First Battle of Bull Run. Eventually a second company was formed as part of the Grand Army of the Potomac, and a third joined General Bank's expedition in Louisiana. Reading's total Civil War enlistment was 411, of whom 15 died in action and 33 of wounds and sickness.

Although the Civil War had brought an end to many of the thriving businesses in Reading, the period following the war was one of renewed growth. Thomas Mayall started a processing plant in 1874, making rubberized fabric, first operating out of his home on Summer Avenue and then expanding to an Ash Street location next to the B&M tracks. The world famous Ace Art Company, manufacturers of the photograph mounting corners, was established, as was a stove foundry.

Meanwhile the community grew and as it's activities became more complex, citizens demanded more public services. As each was incorporated into town government, a new board or committee was formed to create policy and manage the function.

Reading erected its first high school building in 1867, although students had been attending high school classes for some time. Town Meeting voted a public library in 1868 with construction starting in February, 1869. Gas had become available in the Town in 1860 and the village water supply in 1890. With the advent of electricity, Reading built its own municipal electric plant in 1894, offering service to neighbors including Wakefield, which later established its own municipal light service, part of Lynnfield, all of Wilmington and North Reading.

With the invention of the automobile, Reading's character was destined for change. The surge of automobile ownership after World War II, followed by the construction of Route 128, now 95, and, fifteen years later Route 93, two major highways which intersected at Reading's southern boundary, caused a population explosion. With Boston only minutes away, and with the building of many companies along the nation's "high tech"

circumferential highway, Reading's popularity burgeoned. Between 1940 and 1980 its population more than doubled.

The continued growth led to the need for changes in government. Beginning in 1944, when Reading voters adopted a representative town meeting in place of open town meeting, four decades marked by intermittent studies of local government structure pointed to the need for increased centralization. In addition, state and federal government mandates for housing, education, conservation and environmental safeguards placed an ever-increasing burden on the largely volunteer town government structure.

When the state passed a Home Rule Amendment allowing towns to improve the structure of local governments, which had developed haphazardly, a local study committee proposed that Reading adopt a charter for a centralized government structure. That proposal, offered in 1975, was defeated.

Meanwhile, like other communities, Reading began to feel the financial restrictions imposed by legislation intended to contain property tax inflation. Turning to its assets, Reading officials and town meeting agreed to sell its valuable possession, one of the largest undeveloped tracts of land bordering Route 128.

Originally Reading's dump, the land was zoned for development as an industrial/office park. Proceeds from this sale and several other pieces of town owned property would provide some financial security.

By 1985 Reading residents were ready once again to tackle the questions of updating and modernizing the fragmented government structure composed of independent elected boards and commissions, a structure which had been expanded, but remained essentially unchanged from early days.

A new charter commission was elected and recommended a selectmen/town manager form of government. The charter, as adopted in 1986, invests the selectmen with major policy making duties and charges the town manager with administration of their policies. The representative town meeting balances the power of this centralized authority.

General Information

Incorporated	1644
Square Miles	9.85
June 2011 Population	24,662
June 2011 Registered Voters	16,961
FY 2011 Tax Rate	\$ 13.80 per thousand

Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 771
Reading, MA 01867
781-944-8824

Registry of Deeds

The Registry of Deeds keeps copies of deeds, mortgages, plans and other papers relating to the title of any property located within the county.

District Court – Woburn

In this court both criminal and civil cases are heard by a judge without jury. Appeals in criminal cases may be taken to juries of six. All misdemeanors may be tried in the District Court and felonies are also tried there, provided the sentence does not exceed five years. The District Court hears civil suits, cases of nonsupport, eviction, illegitimacy, neglect, small

claims and remand sessions. Routine traffic and parking violations are usually handled without a hearing.

Newspapers

There are two newspapers in Reading. The Daily Times Chronicle which is published Monday through Friday and The Reading Advocate which is a weekly paper published Thursday. The Town of Reading also has an online news site, Reading Patch and can be viewed at <http://reading.patch.com>

Transportation

Reading is served by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA or the "T"). Commuter trains provide the Town with rapid transportation to and from Boston. The train depot is located on High Street opposite Haven Street. Schedules and tickets may be obtained at Swissbakers at 32 Lincoln Street.

The MBTA also provides bus service to Malden where commuters can connect with the Orange Line directly to Boston.

There is no other public transportation service within the Town. Privately owned taxicabs from neighboring communities are available, as well as a free Town operated van for senior citizens.

Utilities

Electricity Reading Municipal Light Department
Gas..... National Grid
Water and SewerReading Department of Public Works
Residential Recycling and Rubbish Collection.....
..... Private Company contracted by Department of Public Works
Telephone..... Comcast and Verizon
Cable Television..... Comcast and Verizon

Working Papers

Working papers for residents of Reading can be obtained through the guidance office at the last school attended. If a student attends private school, working papers can be obtained through the high school guidance office.

Local Census

Uses of Local Census

- Information collected for municipal purposes
 - School Needs – Student Population
 - Growth and planning needs
 - Resident Identification for police and fire - Street List (M.G.L. Chapter 51 Section 6)
 - Collection of dog information
 - Proof of Residency
 - Veteran Information
- Information for the Jury Commissioners - Jury List (M.G.L. Chapter 234 Section 4)
- Determining inactive voter status for purge required by the National Voter Registration Act

Voting and Elections

Where to Vote

Reading Memorial High School – Hawkes Field House – Oakland Road

Voter Registration

The Town Clerk maintains the voters roll for Reading. The list is continually updated, adding names of persons newly registered and removing names of persons who have moved within Reading, moved out of Reading, or who have died.

What are the qualifications to be a registered voter?

- A U.S. citizen, and
- A resident of Massachusetts, and
- 18 years old on or before the next election

How may I register to Vote?

Voter registration in Reading has never been easier than it is today. You may visit the Town Clerk's Office at Town Hall and complete a voter registration form in person. You may also register to vote when renewing your drivers license. Mail-in forms also may be obtained by calling the State Elections Division at (800) 462-VOTE.

Upon signing the registration form, you must attest, under the pains and penalties of perjury, that you are legally eligible to register and that the information you provide is accurate and truthful. The penalty for fraudulent registration is a fine of ten thousand dollars or imprisonment for up to five years, or both.

When you register, you may choose to become a member of a political party, select a designation for a political organization which has not achieved party status in the state or choose to become an "unenrolled" voter (commonly referred to as "independent"). Remember that if you register in a party in a primary election you may only receive a ballot for that party. Unenrolled voters may request any ballot in a primary election.

You will remain on the list of voters as long as you vote regularly and complete and return the annual local census. If you move to another city or town, you must re-register to vote in your new community. The Town Clerk conducts the annual census of Reading's 9200 households and publishes the results in a printed resident's list (Street List). The publication contains an alphabetical-numerical list of all residents seventeen and older.

Voter Turnout

Year	Local Elections	State Primary	State Election	Presidential Primary	Presidential Election
2011	14.0%				
2010	13.4% 12.3%	18.4%	66.6% 65.6%		
2009	04.0%	24.6%			
2008	50.8%	14.4%		54.4%	82.1%
2007	14.1%				
2006	12.5%	26.8%	62.1%		
2005	16.2%				
2004	34.7%	11.8%		33.1%	78.5%
2003	49.9% 48.0%				
2002	38.8%	30.3%	67.6%		
2001	43.2%				
2000	51.9% 55.0%	06.6%	80.0%	55.1%	
1999	34.6% 10.5% 06.4%				
1998	15.0%	26.3%	59.6%		

Year	Local Elections	State Primary	State Election	Presidential Primary	Presidential Election
1997	09.3%				
1996	21.0%	6.7%	81.8%	21.7%	
1995	20.8%				
1994	15.2%	23.7%	79.7%		
1993	50.3%	05.4%	25.3		
1992	27.5%	26.1%	91.2%	46.9%	
1991	46.7% 20.1% 32.8%				
1990	20.2%	65.0%	86.0%		

Registration Deadlines

Voter registration deadlines are established by state statute and are adhered to strictly. You may register to vote up to twenty days before any election.

Board of Registrars – 3 members elected for overlapping 3-years terms, paid; plus the Town Clerk.

The Board with the Town Clerk registers new voters, certifies nomination papers and petitions, updating and posting voting lists, making local listings of residents, processing absentee ballot applications, authorizing and issuing certificates to omitted voters on Election Day and conducting election recounts.

Election Timetable

Town	Annual Election	3 rd Tuesday preceding 4 th Monday in April
	Town Meeting	4 th Monday in April (unless a holiday)
State Primary	Every 2 years (even numbered)	7 th Tuesday prior to State Election
State Election	Every 2 years	1 st Tuesday after 1 st Monday in November
National Primary	Every 4 years	1 st Tuesday in March
National Election	Every 4 years	1 st Tuesday after 1 st Monday in November
	Town Meeting	2 nd Monday in November (unless a holiday)

Electoral Districts

Governor and Lieutenant Governor

Governor Deval L. Patrick
 Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray
 State House Room 360
 Boston, MA 02133
 P 617-725-4005
 F 617-727-9725
 Party Affiliation – Democrat

State:

Middlesex and Essex Senatorial District

Senator Katherine Clark
 State House Room 315

Boston, MA 02133
P 617-722-1206
F 617-722-1014
E katherine.clark@masenate.gov
6 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148
P 781-322-0063
Party Affiliation - Democrat

**Reprehensive - 20th Middlesex District
Precincts 1, 4, 6, 7, and 8**

Representative Bradley H. Jones, Jr.
State House Room 124
Boston, MA 02133
P 617-722-2100
F 617-722-2390
E bradley.jones@mahouse.gov
Party Affiliation – Republican

**Reprehensive - 30th Middlesex District
Precincts 2, 3, and 5**

Representative James Dwyer
State House Room 254
Boston, MA 02133
P 617-722-2220
F 617-626-0831
E james.dwyer@mahouse.gov
Party Affiliation - Democrat

Federal:

Sixth Congressional District

Congressman John F. Tierney
17 Peabody Square
Peabody, MA 01960
P 978-531-1669
F 978-531-1996
Party Affiliation – Democrat

Senators

Scott Brown
15 New Sudbury Street
Boston, MA 02203
P 617-565-3170
F 617-723-7325
Party Affiliation - Republican

Senator John M. Kerry
One Bowdoin Square 10th Floor
Boston, MA 02114
P 617-565-8519
Party Affiliation - Democrat

Absentee, Physically Disabled and Specially Qualified Voting

Absentee Ballots

Voters who are unable to vote on Election Day because of physical disability, religious beliefs or travel may vote by absentee ballot. State law limits the availability of absentee ballots to the three listed circumstances only. If you will be absent from Reading for an extended period of time, you may submit a single application for all elections occurring within the calendar year the application is accepted.

Applications for absentee ballots may be obtained from the Town Clerk. Applications may be submitted in person or by mail (with original signatures). The voter, or a family member (residing in the same household) on the voter's behalf, may submit an application. All applications must be signed under the pains and penalties of perjury by the voter, or a family member, before a ballot will be made available, attesting that:

"Under the penalties of perjury, I swear (or affirm) that I am eligible to vote in Massachusetts at the address below, that I will request a ballot only from the city or town below, that I cannot vote in person at the polls on election day because of absence from the city or town, physical disability, or religious belief, and that the information below is true. I have carefully read the instructions on the back of (or with) the ballot, have marked the ballot while alone or with assisting person (if required), and have sealed it in the envelope."

Applications for absentee ballots must be received by the Town Clerk before 12 noon the day before an election. (A voter who is admitted to a health care facility after noon of the fifth day before an election may apply for a ballot up until the close of the polls and may request to have the ballot delivered.)

Absentee ballots generally are available three weeks before an election. You may vote over the counter when absentee ballots are in and you will be away on Election Day.

In a primary election, a voter who is registered "unenrolled" must specify the ballot of the party of choice on the application.

Return of Absentee Ballots

Absentee ballots must be received before the polls close to be counted. However, absentee ballots, completed outside the U.S., for the state general election will be counted if received by 5:00 p.m. on the tenth day following the election. This exception does not apply to Reading Town elections or state primaries.

Do not place Absentee Ballots in the free Town Hall mailbox – Absentee Ballots must be either returned in person or placed in the U.S. Mail.

Permanently Physically Disabled Voters

A voter who is permanently disabled need not submit a request for an absentee ballot every election. If such a voter submits a written statement from a registered physician indicating that he is disabled permanently, the Town Clerk will mail to the registered voter an application for an absentee ballot twenty-eight days before an election or each calendar year. The application will be as complete as the Town Clerk can make it, and the voter in most cases need only sign the application and return it. Upon the Town Clerk's receipt of the signed application, the voter will be sent an absentee ballot for those elections.

If the voter submits an application for an absentee ballot in person, he may obtain the ballot (call first to see if it is available) and vote "over-the-counter." If the ballot is not available, it will be sent to the voter when available. When the application is submitted in person by a family member, the ballot may only be sent by mail to the voter. Ballots may not be "hand carried" out of the Town Clerk's office. Ballots may be returned by mail or in person by the voter or family member. All ballot envelopes must be signed by the voter or, if the voter is unable to sign, by an assisting person.

Specially Qualified Voters

In addition to registered voters, certain “specially qualified voters” may vote by absentee ballot. A “specially qualified voter” is a person who is a Massachusetts citizen, living outside of the United States, who is at least eighteen years old and whose last residence in the United States was Massachusetts. You also may be a “specially qualified voter” if you are otherwise eligible to be a registered voter and your present domicile (a place where you live and plan to remain) is Massachusetts and you are: out of town because you are in the active service of the armed forces or merchant marine of the United States, or a spouse or dependent of such person; or absent from the Commonwealth.

How do I run for an elected office?

Any registered voter of Reading may be a candidate for town elective office. The prospective candidate must:

- Obtain Nomination papers. Nomination papers for Moderator, Board of Selectmen, Board of Assessors, Board of Library Trustees, Municipal Light Board and School Committee are available at the Town Clerk’s Office. Nomination papers are available in the Town Clerk’s Office the last week in December.
- Candidate for elected offices must obtain 50 certified signatures (registered voters) to qualify for placement on the Local Election ballot.
- Nomination papers need to be returned to the Town Clerk’s Office approximately 7 weeks before the election.

Campaign and Political Finance

Nomination and Petition Papers

The first step to running for office or placing a question on the ballot is to gather the required number of signatures of registered voters on petition papers. The number of signatures depends on the office or the type of question.

Candidates or question proponents must gather the required number of signatures on the petition papers. Once the signatures are gathered, the petition papers are submitted to the Town Clerk for certification. The Town Clerk will certify the signature of any registered Reading voter. (If the paper is for the nomination of a candidate for a party primary, the signatures of voters enrolled in another political party or political designation will not be counted.) If the required number of signatures is certified, the candidate or question will appear on the ballot.

Ballot Questions - Local Election - A non-binding public opinion advisory question may be placed on the ballot when 10 qualified voters draw up and sign an original petition with the question on it at least 90 days before the election. Questions must appear on each piece of paper with signatures.

Campaign and Political Finance Filings

State law requires an accounting of all money received or spent in the course of a political campaign.

In Reading, the Assistant Town Clerk serves as the Town’s Campaign and Political Finance Director for all local campaigns. As a result, the financial disclosure statements of candidate and ballot question committees must be filed with the Town Clerk’s Office and maintained for public inspection.

The financial disclosure statements must be on forms prescribed by the Town Clerk and include the name of the candidate or ballot question committee; the address of the committee; the committee’s chairman and treasurer; an accounting of all contributions

received; and a listing of all individuals who contributed over a prescribed amount. The statements also must include an accounting of all campaign expenditures.

Forms, guides, and the law can be found on the Office of Campaign and Political Finance website at: www.state.ma.us/ocpf

The statements, which are filed periodically throughout the year, are reviewed and audited by the Town Clerk. The filing deadlines for Town candidates or questions are:

- The eighth day before a Town or general election, or special election
- The thirtieth day following a general election
- The end of the year – January 20th report, with an accounting of all required information through December 31st of the preceding year

Activities at Polling Places

State law prohibits the display of political paraphernalia within 150 feet of the entrance to the polling location. Signs, stickers and even lapel buttons are not permitted within this restricted zone. Within 150 feet of a polling place, no person shall solicit votes for or against, or otherwise promote or oppose, any person or political party or position on a ballot question, to be voted at the ongoing election.

Town Meeting

“All legislative powers of the Town shall be vested in the representative town meeting...The town meeting shall provide for the exercise of all corporate powers of the Town and for the performance of all duties and obligations of the Town.” (Section 2-10 Reading Home Rule Charter)

Two town meetings are required by the Charter.

- The first business of the annual town meeting is the local election held on the third Tuesday preceding the 4th Monday in April. At this election the voters elect the Moderator, members of the Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Municipal Light Board, Board of Library Trustees, Board of Assessors, and Town Meeting Representatives. The meeting then stands adjourned until the 4th Monday in April. The annual town meeting is primarily concerned, but not limited to, fiscal matters. The annual operating budget for all town agencies come before this meeting.
- A subsequent town meeting is held on the 2nd Monday in November.
- The Board of Selectmen may call other town meetings into session by issuance of a warrant.

There are approximately 6-8 nightly Town Meeting sessions each year.

How do I become a Town Meeting member and what is involved?

Reading has as its legislative body, a 192 member Representative Town Meeting, presided over by an elected Town Moderator. There are 24 members elected for 3 year staggered terms from each of the Town's 8 precincts. To be a Town Meeting member:

- You must be a registered voter
- You are required to take out nomination papers and get 10 certified signatures of voters in your precinct to be placed on the Local Election ballot in the Spring. Nomination papers are available at the Town Clerk's Office in the last week in December. Nomination papers must be returned to the Town Clerk's Office approximately 7 weeks before the election.
- As a Town Meeting member you are expected to read the warrant prior to Town Meeting to inform you of the items that will be discussed during the meeting.

Warrant

The warrant, prepared by the Selectmen, is the agenda for town meeting. It consists of all articles of business to be brought before town meeting. The Selectmen call town meeting by directing the town constables, who act as civil process servers for the Town, to post the warrant in each precinct. The warrant must also be published in a local newspaper at least 14 days prior to the meeting. Town officials, boards and committees submit articles for inclusion in the warrant. Articles also may be entered "by petition" of at least 10 registered voters for the annual town meeting and at least 100 registered voters for the subsequent (or special) town meeting.

Administration

"The administration of all the fiscal, prudential and municipal affairs of the Town shall be vested in an executive branch headed by a Board of Selectmen and a Town Manager." (Section 1-3 of the Reading Home Rule Charter)

Before the Charter was adopted many of the officers and committees were independently elected resulting in a lack of coordination and cohesiveness. The Charter provided for the appointment of most of these positions. However a few important boards continue to be elected so that the voters may maintain a direct control over them and so that the boards can retain their independence. These boards include the Board of Selectmen, the School Committee, the Library Trustees, the Municipal Light Board and the Board of Assessors.

The administrative branch of government is organized into operating agencies each headed by a director.

Board of Selectmen – 5 members elected for overlapping 3-years terms - unpaid

The executive powers of the Town are vested in the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen acts as a Board of Directors of the Town, providing general policy direction to the community, and exercising their statutory responsibilities in a number of areas.

The Board is responsible for policy directives regarding the Department of Public Works, Police, Fire, Human Resources, including collective bargaining, and Community Services departments. The Board issues licenses required by businesses to operate within the Town. The Board appoints the Town Manager to administer its policies. The Board of Selectmen also appoints the Town Counsel, Town Accountant, not more than five Constables, and most appointed boards, committees and commissions. These include the Conservation Commission, Community Planning and Development Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Housing Authority, Board of Health, Recreation Committee, Council on Aging and Cemetery Trustees. As the chief executive board in Town, the Board of Selectmen represents the Town at all types of ceremonies.

Town Manager

Head of Department - Peter Hechenbleikner

Town Manager – The town manager is the chief administrative officer of the Town and is responsible to the Board of Selectmen for the proper administration of all town affairs in his charge. The town manager appoints and may remove a number of administrators, such as the treasurer/collector, town clerk and most department heads and employees except those serving under the school, library and municipal light. The appointment of any full or part-time department head under the direction supervision of an appointed board must be approved by that board. The town manager appoints the police and fire chiefs and the civil defense director subject to confirmation by the Board of Selectmen. The town manager is responsible for administering all personnel policies, negotiates and awards contracts, prepares and submits a proposal annual operating budget, a proposed capital improvement

program and development and implementation of the long range vision of the community. He approves all financial warrants submitted by the accountant for payment by the treasurer. The town manager is responsible for the maintenance and repair of all town property under his control and for the purchasing of supplies and equipment. The town manager or his appointee serves as an ombudsman whose function is to provide a connection between the public and town government.

Town Counsel – The town counsel serves as legal adviser to all Departments of the Town providing general legal advice and services.

Town Accountant

Head of Department - Gail LaPointe

Town Accountant – The accountant prescribes the methods and supervises the accounting records of town officers and agencies. She examines all bills and payrolls submitted for payment to see if they are correct. The accountant receives the budget estimates from all departments, prepares monthly statements of the status of each appropriation for the officer authorized to spend money from it and prepares the annual financial report which is published each year in the Town Report. Her work is subject to periodic audits required by the state director of accounts.

Department of Community Services

Head of Department - Jean Delios

Board of Health – 3 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for 3 year terms - unpaid

The Board of Health enforces regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, establishes policies to safeguard the health of citizens of the Town, enforces state regulations and plans programs to promote and maintain good health for all ages. A hazardous waste committee serves as an advisory committee to the board.

Council on Aging – 10 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms - unpaid

The Council on Aging provides numerous social services to the senior citizens of the Town. The council also makes educational and recreational activities available to older residents.

Housing Authority – 4 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen and 1 appointed by the state for overlapping 5 year terms - unpaid

The Housing Authority provides, manages and processes housing for low income families and the elderly through both housing and rental assistance programs.

Veterans Services – The Director of Veterans Services, a position required by state law, provides information, advice and financial assistance to eligible veterans.

Sealer of Weights and Measures – The sealer protects buyers and sellers in Reading in any transaction involving weights or measurements by periodical inspections of all weighing devices, such as scales in commercial use, gasoline and fuel oil meters, taxi meters and containers used in measuring. Pre-packaged foods sold in Reading are checked by the department periodically during the year and retail markets are also inspected for unit price compliance. Consumer complaints about weights and measurements of food or fuel or any other commodity, with regard to weight or measure, should be reported to the State Division of Standards.

Town Planner – Town Planner’s functions include providing technical and professional support to the Community Planning and Development Commission in the areas of subdivision regulation, master planning, and zoning by-law drafting and review. The Town Planner has actively been involved in several recent development projects, and serves as a point person for the Board of Selectmen on special projects related to the downtown area and as a resource on affordable housing.

Community Planning & Development Commission – 5 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms - unpaid

This commission is charged with making studies and preparing plans concerning the resources, developmental potential and needs of the Town. The commission has the power to regulate subdivision of land. It must hold a public hearing on any proposed zoning changes and report its findings to town meeting. It is responsible for updating, maintaining and implementing the master plan for development of the Town.

Conservation Commission – 7 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms - unpaid

The Conservation Commission’s function is to promote natural resources and to protect watersheds at the local level. The Wetlands Protection Act gives the commission the responsibility for advertising and conducting public hearings regarding activities in or near any wetlands. The commission has the power to issue orders regulating this activity. The act does not prohibit wetland development but directs how the development should be carried out. The commission has a major responsibility to insure the water quality of Reading’s municipal water supply.

Zoning Board of Appeals – 5 members and 2 associate members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for three (3) year terms so arranged that as near an equal number of terms as possible shall expire each year - unpaid

This board acts on petitions for variances in zoning and building bylaws, including the sign bylaws. It also grants special permits, such as for accessory apartments and hears appeals from decisions of the building inspector.

Economic Development Committee (EDC) –

Code Enforcement Officers – appointed by the town manager for indefinite terms, paid.

A building inspector, wire inspector and plumbing and gas inspector are each appointed to enforce zoning regulations through inspections and permit issuance.

Historical Commission – 5 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms, associate members appointed for 1 year terms - unpaid

The Historical Commission is charged with the identification and preservation of the town’s historic assets. The commission serves as the town’s advocate on historic matters, continually updates an inventory of historical or architecturally significant structures and implements a preservation plan within the Town.

West Street Historic District Commission –

Department of Finance

Head of Department and Finance Director - Bob LeLacheur

Board of Assessors – 3 members elected for overlapping 3 year terms - unpaid

While the town meeting decides how much the town departments may spend, the assessors determine the equitable assessments of all real and personal property to raise money to meet these expenditures. The assessors appoint the town appraiser to assist them. The assessors are responsible for updating the assessed valuations as required by state law.

Town Treasurer / Collector – The treasurer/collector is the manager of the town's funds. She collects all taxes and payments due the Town, except the electric bills; pays all bills and payrolls; negotiates all bonds and is authorized to borrow in anticipation of revenue and to invest idle money.

Town Clerk – The town clerk acts as the chief election official, supervising elections and election officials, maintaining voting lists and registering voters. Duties also include keeping minutes of all regular and special town meetings, conducting annual town census, preparing the street list of residents and jury list to the Office of the Jury Commissioner.

The Town Clerk's Office is responsible for recording and certifying all official actions of the Town; reviewing and recording campaign finance statements; registering all vital events of local residents; maintaining public records for the Town; issuing licenses and permits; including marriage licenses, hunting, fishing and trapping licenses, permits for raffles and bazaars; business certificates; dog licenses, and fuel storage permits.

Technology – The Technology Division's responsibilities include providing computer and communication support for all of the Town Departments, purchasing hardware, software and computer related supplies, providing computer training for all departments, and developing long range, town wide communication systems.

Commissioners of Trust Funds – 3 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for 3 year overlapping terms - unpaid

The commissioners oversee various trust funds, which are earmarked for specific purposes. Among these are the workman's compensation fund, the Town and municipal light pension funds, and cemetery and library trust funds.

Human Resources – The Human Resources Division is staffed by the Human Resources Administrator whose responsibilities include the following: Professional Development and Training programs, Safety Committee, Employee and Retiree Benefits, Monthly Employee Newsletter, Personnel Policies review, pay and classification updates, Affirmative Action, Workers' Comp and Indemnification programs, information gathering for Union Contracts, and Drug & Alcohol Screening.

Department of Public Works

Director of Public Works – The direct control of the department is under the Director of Public Works. The policy, rules and regulations of the department of public works are established by the Board of Selectmen. The town manager is responsible for the overall supervision of the department. The Public Works Department is responsible for all public works activities: water supply and distribution, protection of natural resources, sewers and sewerage systems, streets and roads, parks and playgrounds, refuse collection and disposal, forestry services, and maintenance of all municipal buildings and grounds except those of the School and municipal light.

The Board of Cemetery Trustees – 6 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms - unpaid

The Board of Cemetery Trustees sets rules and regulations for the operation of the cemeteries in Town including policies for eligibility to purchase lots, prices for services and

regulations for memorials. The board also controls the expenditures of special cemetery trust funds.

Town Forest Committee – 3 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen for overlapping 3 year terms - unpaid

The Town Forest Committee is charged with the care and supervision of the use of the town forest, including recreation use and protection of town water supply.

Recreation Committee – 9 members, 8 appointed by the Board of Selectmen and 1 by the School Committee for overlapping 3 year terms - unpaid

This committee evaluates program activity and formulates overall plans for program direction. It is responsible for scheduling the use of the town parks and the field house and other public school recreation areas when not in use by the schools.

Department of Public Safety

This department is comprised of the police, fire, animal control and civil defense. All of these functions are under the policy direction of the Board of Selectmen and the administrative direction of the town manager.

Police Department – the police station in Reading is located on Union Street. There is no jail as such but rather a lock up where persons are confined temporarily awaiting bail or arraignment before the Middlesex Court in Woburn. Reading has approximately 40 permanent police officers. These officers are hired and work under civil service regulations. Reading Police Department protects and serves the public through police action. They provide services in several board areas: crime prevention and suppression, crime reduction, investigation of crimes and apprehension of offenders, movement and control of traffic, the maintenance of public order and public emergency services.

Fire Department – There are two fire stations in Reading. The central station is on Main Street, near the center of town and additional station is on the west side of town on Woburn Street. Firefighting and control and fire prevention are the main jobs of the fire department. The Fire Department also handles ambulance service for the Town to provide a high level of emergency care. Inspection of commercial and manufacturing properties, school, apartments, nursing homes and other buildings used by the public are an important part of the department's work. The department also checks fire alarm systems in new construction for proper location and tests for proper installation and operation and conducts a similar inspection for smoke detectors whenever private homes change ownership. The department's personnel, who are under civil service, number approximately 50.

Civil Defense – State law requires each town in Massachusetts to have a civil defense director who is responsible for establishing and maintaining an organization for civilian defense in case of enemy attack or for disaster relief in any natural emergency. The Fire Chief presently serves as civil defense director.

Telecommunications –

Library Department

Board of Library Trustees – 6 members elected for overlapping 3 year terms - unpaid

The Board of Library Trustees controls the selection of library materials, has custody and management of the library and its property, and administers monies received as gifts or

bequest. The actual maintenance of the library building and its grounds is the responsibility of the town manager.

Cultural Council –

School Department

There are eight public schools in Reading – five elementary, two middle, and one senior high school. The Reading school system has been the recipient of numerous state and national awards and staff members have also been highly recognized. In addition to strong academics, the school system also stresses a strong after school athletic program and an arts and music program.

Superintendent of Schools – The superintendent is the chief architect of the educational program in the community and the chief administrator of the programs and policies decided upon the School Committee. He attends all School Committee meetings and supervises the school curriculum, personnel and property.

Independent Boards and Committees

School Committee – 6 members elected for overlapping 3 year terms - unpaid

The School Committee determines the educational policy of the Town of Reading and monitors the operation of the school system. They appoint the superintendent of schools and upon his recommendation select administrators and teaching staff. They are responsible for developing budget, evaluating programs and implementing all state laws related to education.

Regional Vocational School District – 1 Reading representative elected for 4 year term - unpaid

Reading voters elect a representative to the Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School. This regional school, which is located in Wakefield, serves 12 communities.

Municipal Light Board – 5 members elected for overlapping 3 year terms - unpaid

The Municipal Light Board has charge of all the real estate, facilities, personnel and equipment of the Town pertaining to the production of electrical power and establishes policy regarding the administration of the department. Reading Municipal Light purchases power and resells it to consumers in Reading, North Reading, Wilmington and part of Lynnfield. A percentage of the net income is returned to the Town in lieu of taxes.

The Citizen and Government

Open Meeting Law

The best way to understand town government is to observe it in action. All public boards, commissions and committees are required to conduct their business in meetings, which are open to the public. Under the open meeting law, notices stating the time, date and location of meetings must be posted on the bulletin board in the town hall at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. The public may attend, listen and even tape record the meetings but may not speak without permission of the presiding officer. Closed meetings, or executive sessions, may be held only when the following are involved: reputation, character, physical condition or mental health of the individual; discipline, dismissal or complaints about an individual; strategy for collective bargaining negotiations or litigation; deployment of security personnel and devices; allegations about criminal conduct;

negotiations about purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property; compliance with general or special laws or federal aid requirements. The public may have access to the minutes of open meetings and of executive sessions when the reasons for the closed executive session no longer pertain.

If a citizen wishes to discuss a matter with a town board, he may contact that board by letter, email or phone requesting time on the agenda of the board's next meeting.

Public Hearings

Public hearings give the citizen an opportunity to register approval or disapproval of proposed actions by town boards. These may be required by law, such as hearings by the School Committee concerning the budget or hearings by the Community Planning and Development Commission concerning zoning changes, or they may be optional hearings whereby a board is seeking public input on a particular policy or action. In either case, every citizen who wishes to speak is given an opportunity to be heard. Notice of public hearings are posted on the town hall bulletin board, in a three binder on counter outside Town Clerks office and at the police station, as well as published in a local newspaper.

Recall Procedures

- Application - Any holder of an elective office, other than a Town Meeting Member, with more than six (6) months remaining in the term for which he was elected, may be recalled by the voters in the manner provided in this section.
- Recall Petition - Two hundred and fifty (250) or more voters may file with the Town Clerk an affidavit containing the name of the officer whose recall is sought and a sworn statement of the grounds upon which the petition is based. At least twenty-five (25) names of voters shall be from each of the eight precincts into which the Town is divided. The Town Clerk shall, within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt, submit the petitions to the Registrars of Voters who shall forthwith certify thereon the number of signatures that are names of voters.
 - If the petitions contain sufficient signatures, the Town Clerk shall thereupon deliver to the first ten voters listed upon the affidavit, petition blanks in such number as requested demanding such recall, printed forms of which he shall keep available. The blanks shall be issued by the Town Clerk with his signature and official seal attached thereto. They shall be dated, shall be addressed to the Board of Selectmen, shall contain the names of all persons to whom they are issued, the name of the person whose recall is sought, the grounds for recall as stated in the affidavit, and shall demand the election of a successor to the said office. A copy of the affidavit shall be entered in a record book to be kept in the office of the Town Clerk. The recall petitions shall be returned and filed with the Town Clerk within twenty-one (21) days following the date of the filing of the affidavit, signed by at least ten percent (10%) of the voters and containing their names and addresses. However, not more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the total number shall be from any one precinct.
- Recall Election - If the petition shall be certified by the Town Clerk to be sufficient, he shall forthwith submit the same with his certificate to the Board of Selectmen. Upon its receipt of the certificate, the Board of Selectmen shall forthwith give written notice of such petition and certificate to the officer whose recall is sought by mailing the same postage prepaid to his address as shown on the most recent voting list and posting such notice on one or more of the Town Bulletin Boards. If said officer does not resign his office within five (5) days after the date of such notice, the Board of Selectmen shall order an election to be held not less than thirty-five (35) nor more than sixty (60) days after the date of the Town Clerk's certificate of the sufficient petition. If, however, any other Town Election is to occur not less than thirty-five (35) nor more than sixty (60) days after the date of the certificate, the Board of Selectmen shall hold the recall election on the date of such other election.

- If a vacancy occurs in said office after a recall election has been ordered, the election shall nevertheless proceed as provided in this section, and the ballots for candidates shall, notwithstanding a recall provision to the contrary, be counted to determine a successor in office.
- Nomination of Candidates - Any officer whose recall is sought may not be a candidate to succeed himself in the recall election. The nomination of candidates, the publication of the Warrant for the recall election, and the conduct of same shall all be in accordance with the provisions of law relating to elections.
- Propositions on Ballot - Ballots used in a recall election shall state the following propositions in the order indicated:
 - For the recall of (name of officer)
 - Against the recall of (name of officer)
 - Adjacent to each proposition, there shall be a place to vote for either of the said propositions. After the proposition shall appear the word "candidates" and the names of candidates nominated as required in Section 42 of Chapter 54 of the General Laws. If a majority of the votes cast upon the question of recall is in the affirmative, the candidate receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected. If a majority of votes on the question is in the negative, the ballots for candidates need not be counted except as provided above.
- Office Holder - The incumbent shall continue to perform the duties of his office until the recall election. If he is not recalled in the election, he shall continue in office for the remainder of his unexpired term, subject to recall as before, except as provided in this section.
 - If he is recalled in the election, he shall be deemed removed upon the qualification of his successor who shall hold office during the unexpired term. If the successor fails to qualify within five days after receiving notification of his election, the incumbent shall thereupon be deemed removed and the office vacant.
- Repeat of Recall Petition - No recall petition shall be filed against an officer within three (3) months after he takes office, or in the case of an officer subjected to a recall election and not recalled thereby, until at least six (6) months after the election at which his recall was submitted to the voters.

Appointed Committees

A citizen may become an active member of town government by appointment to a town committee. Whenever a vacancy occurs in any town office, the appointing authority must post the vacancy on the town bulletin board. Anyone desiring appointment must file a volunteer application and/or resume with the Town Clerk setting forth his/her qualifications. The application is maintained by the Town Clerk for 12 months from the date of filing.