

AYER BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1992
2ND FLOOR MEETING HALL
TOWN HALL, MAIN ST., AYER, MA. 01432

7:30P.M. OPEN SESSION

The Board met with Chairman Jones, Selectman McKinney and Selectman Slarsky.

The Minutes of October 27, 1992 were read and accepted.

The Weekly Warrant was examined and approved in the following amounts: P/R: \$336,430.66
Exp: 185,739.58

The Board met with Vicki Paret, Mass. Small Cities Coordinator for Communities Opportunities Group (COG) the Town's administrators of the Grant.

Mr. Higgins advised the Board that he had requested Mrs. Paret's presence this evening to discuss the back ground on how the Board established the Mass. Small Cities Program, the mechanics of the program-how it operates, and to give a status report as well.

Mr. Higgins stated there has been some concern about the method in which some applications have been processed. Mr. Higgins stated prior to the program being established Mrs. Paret and he had discussed the best method/alternative to process the applications. Mrs. Paret and Mr. Higgins arrived at the decision that a Lottery would be the best way to proceed. Mr. Higgins stated Mrs. Paret has run this program in many other communities, and knows the pitfalls. Initially the concern was, what is the fairest way to process the applications knowing that there was a great demand for the funding based on the preliminary survey. There was a high probability that the demand would exceed the funding. Communities Opportunities Group had concerns with the "First come first serve method" because of several reasons:

1. Many people work during the day and would be at a disadvantage.

2. Elderly and handicapped would also be at a disadvantage.

Mr. Higgins stated it was driven by an attempt to set this up in the fairest way possible.

Mrs. Paret stated the Town has 56 applications representing 90 units and we have funding to assist thirty (30) units.

Chairman Jones requested how far along in the process are we? Mrs. Paret stated COG has eight (8) units under contract, and have another fifteen (15) units approved which are in some stage of work write up or out to bid.

Mr. Higgins stated the Lottery was held to attach numbers to the applications for review in processing applications. If it so happened that the person/s were deemed ineligible COG would move on to the next number in sequence. COG is up to number 12 with several emergency cases preempting the sequence, which arose during this time. The prospect of the funding going any further than twelve (12) is highly unlikely at this point. What we are relying on is the other grant application submitted last month to keep the program going. The present Lottery would stay in place and COG would continue on funding applications in sequence.

Mrs. Paret submitted the guidelines established depicting two (2) categories: Owner occupied and Investor Owned properties. Mrs. Paret reviewed with the Board the types of emergency situations preempting the lottery sequence: two (2) roofs caving in, no heat, lead poisoned child.

Mrs. Paret stated the reason COG did not look at income eligibility before entering the lottery was due to time frame for verifying income documentation being so extensive to have done that would have postponed the Lottery to long.

Selectman Slarsky requesting whose regulations are these, that COG is following? HUD.

Mr. Higgins stated it was the "Luck of the Draw" and the Town would be above reproach, in the processing of the applications.

Selectman Slarsky requested of Mr. Higgins to state for clarification purposes the role of the Board of Selectmen in this process. Mr. Higgins stated the Board's involvement has been to date not gone beyond the application for the Grant certifying that the Town intended to go forward with the program, after the structure for the program was approved. It has been incumbent upon Mrs. Paret and Mr. Higgins to administer the Grant.

Selectman McKinney stated the Selectmen make no decision on who eligible. Mr. Higgins stated that is correct. Selectman Slarsky requested Mr. Higgins to state if any of the Selectman have applied for a grant. Mr. Higgins stated absolutely not. Selectman Slarsky requested if there was any discussion re: a Board member applying for a grant? Mr. Higgins stated absolutely not. Mrs. Paret stated in the Contract documentation there is a "Conflict of Interest Statement" prohibiting this activity.

If there is an "Emergency Situation" and it is approved by Mrs. Paret and Mr. Higgins as a "Emergency" the applicant would get preferential treatment and leap-frog over other Lottery applicants. That's the only exception which is made to the Lottery process.

All Emergency requests once inspected by COG's rehabilitation Specialist as qualifying, then has to be inspected by the Town's

Building Inspector for verification.

Selectman Slarsky stated his displeasure with citizens being critical, and irritated they didn't get into the program, and displaying great deal of contempt implying Board members had applied for grants and received them.

Mr. Higgins stated this is the second program conducted in the Town of Ayer and we went out of the way to show that the program was above reproach, encouraged anyone who was interested in seeing the names of the participants to come in and look but respect the participants privacy rights.

The Board thanked Mrs. Paret for coming to the meeting and updating the citizens re: the Town's rehabilitation program and performance policy.

Chairman Jones requested Selectman Slarsky update the Board and citizens to the latest development re: the Federal Prison. Selectman Slarsky stated he had attended a meeting November 9, 1992 at Post Headquarters, F.D. with Gary Patterson, from the Base Closure Commission. Yesterday, Nov. 10, 1992, was the final day of the Federal Screening for re-use by the Federal Agencies on Fort Devens. The only Federal request from the Federal Government is from the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The Prison requested two hundred forty two (242) acres plus or minus, which is substantially less than original request of seven hundred (700) acres. The only area they are interested in is the hospital and related acreage around the hospital. Selectman Slarsky presented a map depicting the area of interest by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The map was modified so that Mirror Lake would not be in the confines of the Prison. Selectman Slarsky stated they also had a minor request by the Air force for Housing as well. The Dept. of Defense had no issues with the request and saw not reason why it wouldn't be approved. Selectman Slarsky requested of the officials the time frame for construction and was told up to two years. When Selectman Slarsky requested why the hold up of two (2) years. He was told the MEPA process, has to be complied with before they actually begin dividing the land. The Prison on a leased bases could begin to occupy the land within weeks or a month. A 300' buffer will be built all around the prison grounds so that you will not see the prison grounds from the road. The cemetery will stay were it is. Selectman Slarsky requested of Carter Hunt if there was money for demolition of buildings. He was told absolutely none. Selectman Slarsky elaborated on burnt out building located on West Main St. and other buildings that are in substandard condition stating that the Town should request a meeting be scheduled with base officials expressing the Boards concern re: this matter. Selectman Slarsky also expressed his concern that the Town of Ayer should be ready to apply for surplus buildings/grounds desired when they become available.

Selectman Slarsky also advised the Board to his meeting and tour

with Colin Pease of B&M Railroad today, November 10, 1992. Selectman Slarsky stated he was anxious to see the rail line from Ayer to Boston and the new terminal. Selectman Slarsky stated the trip was very interesting and enjoyable.

The Board met with the Advisory Board. Present for the discussion was Chairman William Oelfke, Coleen Norstrom and Dennis Daudlin.

Chairman Jones opened the discussion expressing his concern re: potential requests of the Reserve Fund.

Chairman Jones reviewed with the Advisory Board the Reserve Fund request by the Ayer Fire Dept. for emergency fire fighting gear mandated by the Fire Academy effective 1/1/93 of \$14,929.00.

The Board also reviewed with the Advisory Board the Reserve Fund Transfers approved to date: November 3, 1992.

Library	\$3,500.00	10/8/92	repairs to roof leak
Fire Dept.	\$1,000.00	10/8/92	supplies only roof leak

Chairman Jones expressed his concern with mechanism/procedures in place presently not knowing where the money is earmarked and to work as a team and not independently of each other.

Mr. Oelfke stated in that respect the Advisory Board submitted the report before the Board this evening. This report is one way the Board found to create the mechanism to mutually share data regarding potential requests for Reserve Fund monies. This report to be submitted to the Selectmen on a monthly basis. Mr. Oelfke stated he hoped this form will serve as a foundation for working more closely with each other.

Selectman Slarsky requested at this time for more specific information to be stated on the form. Specifically whether or not the funds have been reserved or approved. The Advisory Board to revise the form to state action taken.

Chairman Jones requested the Board's action on the Reserve Fund Request from the Ayer Fire Dept. Selectman McKinney moved the Board approve the amount of \$14,929.00 to upgrade fire-fighting gear mandated by the Mass. Fire Academy effective 1-1-93, seconded by Selectman Slarsky, VOTE: Unanimous, so moved.

Mr. Oelfke, speaking for the Advisory Board stated he saw no reason why the Advisory Board would not approve this request and stated the Board would take this up at their next meeting.

Selectman Slarsky made the following disclaimer statement. He is a member of the Ayer Fire Dept., this action is a result of a safety mandate from the Mass. Fire Academy and equipment is for the safety of all the members of the Fire Dept. full and

volunteer and is a unanimous vote of the Board of Selectmen.

The Board reviewed with the Advisory Board the FY-94 Budget Process.

Mr. Higgins advised the Board that budget discussions will open in early December 1992, and early projections will be available by late December early January 1993.

Mr. Higgins stated the big issue will be the School revenues. Discussions with Jack Berberian have already begun as to what might come in, this is going to be very complicated and impacts will be felt. Selectman Slarsky stated he was at the high school last week and the total enrollment this year is 362 students for grades 9-12, roughly 90 students per class. The Town has gone from a high student population in 1975 of 1800 students to 362 in 1992. It personifies the Town's education issue and where education is heading in the Town of Ayer.

Chairman Jones stated this brings the Board back to the Educational Forum the Board wishes to conduct.

Mr. Higgins stated he met with Mr. Markham, Sharon Summers and Irene Miller to see how quickly we could pull together a presentation to the Town re: this issue. The financial data is still missing at this time we are still waiting on the Dept. of Education. Mr. Higgins stated he is targeting Thursday, January 14, 1993 as a tentative date to conduct the forum. This forum will address declining enrollment to the loss of Devens, School Choice, loss of Shirley tuition and to examine the Town's ability to provide a comprehensive curriculum given the declining enrollment, financial climate re: PL-874, financial implications re: School Choice and including the possibility of regionalization in the discussion. Mr. Higgins stated he has prepared a rough agenda for this forum. A final Agenda will be submitted to the Board, School Committee and Regionalization Com. for your review within the next week.

Chairman Jones expressed his concern re: severing the relationship of educating Fort Devens students due to the financial impact to the Town. Mr. Higgins stated this issue is currently being investigated by Town Counsel who is pursuing the Town's legal requirements to educate Fort Devens students.

Selectman Slarsky brought up another serious matter the retirement of the Supt. of Schools and the search process to fill this position.

Selectman McKinney stated the Selectmen are going to rely very heavily on this person next year during the transition, and hoped this search process has been initiated. Selectman Slarsky stated he had heard of a retired Superintendent's Assoc. which take on short term assignments, and who are very heavily credentialed and if that expertise is available we should tap into this

organization.

Chairman Jones stated that is a valid concern for the community, who is going to steer the ship?

The Board reviewed the proposed timeframes proposed by the Ayer Advisory Board: 1994 BUDGET

1st week of Dec.	- Estimate revenues & set dept.budget guidelines
Mid December	- send out Budget formats to Town Departments
Jan 31, 1993	- Department budgets due in to Selectmen
Feb 1-Feb 28	- Selectmen/Advisory Board review budgets
Mar 1-Apr 15	- Selectmen & Advisory Board meet/joint review
Apr 20	- Advisory Board finalize budget recommendations
Apr 26	- Adv Board recommendations ready for election
Apr 29	- Adv. Board holds Public Hearing
May 5	- Adv. Board finalizes budget recommendations
May 10	- Annual Town Meeting

Selectman Slarsky requested the Public Hearing to be conducted on April 29, 1992 be a joint Public Hearing with the Selectmen. Sharon Summers requested also that the Selectmen insert in the proposed timeframe, and recommended by the DOR's Financial Report in 1988, that the Selectmen somewhere before the 3rd week in April, give their recommendations re: the budgets under their jurisdiction. The Board approved both of these suggestions.

The last item addressed with the Board was the possibility of a Special Town Meeting the first of December 1992.

Mr. Higgins stated that the time to prepare the warrant articles and Public Hearing process has gone by to conduct a Public Hearing for the 1st of December. The holiday season is upon us and the earliest the Board could conduct a Special Town Meeting would be January 1993. Mr. Higgins advised the Board that the Planning Board will not be able to assemble the Interim Planning Overlay district for the land at Fort Devens until December. The Planning Board has to conduct a Public Hearing prior to the Special Town Meeting. In that respect Mr. Higgins suggested a postponement of the Special Town Meeting until later in the year. Memo's to all Department Heads went out November 4, 1992 alerting them to the possibility of this meeting.

The Board concurred with Mr. Higgin's assessment of the need for a Special Town Meeting being postponed until later in the year.

HEALTH INSURANCE UPDATE: Mr. Higgins advised the Board that Minuteman Nashoba Health Group (MNHG) conducted a bid process to secure proposals for health insurance plans. All major health care providers were sent bids. Five bids were received. The Minuteman Nashoba Board of Directors reviewed the bids in consultation with the Towns insurance consultant. (Insurance Cost control) The unanimous decision of the Minuteman Group was that the TUFTS Plan provided the most comprehensive coverage at

the most reasonable rates. The Minuteman Nashoba Health Group voted to go with TUFTS effective January 1, 1993. The TUFTS Plan will offer a PPO and a HPO. The Minuteman Nashoba Health Group will also provide the Harvard Community Health Plan as a low cost alternative.

The Board was advised that the Treasurer has been working with the Union representatives since May advising them of the potential change. A general insurance forum was held for all employees October 29, 1992. The Insurance Advisory Committee which has representative from ten employee groups from Ayer met on November 5, 1992 and voted to accept the TUFTS proposal.

Mr. Higgins stated the benefits of the TUFTS plan seem to far outweigh any negatives. By staying in the Minuteman Nashoba Health Group the Town gains more purchasing power. Based on the favorable vote of the Insurance Advisory Committee, Mr. Higgins stated it is in our best interest to stay with the Minuteman Nashoba Health Group as they change to the Tufts plan.

The Board was advised that the open enrollment period ends on December 4, 1992. The Ayer Teachers Assoc. (ATA) has requested the School Committee meet with them to bargain this issue. The Board was advised that negotiations are on hold until this meeting has happened.

The Board to be advised of formal vote in the near future.

The Board reviewed the request from the Ayer Industrial Commission re: hiring a student to prepare a description of available land in Ayer and other amenities available to industry. The intent is to use this information in a marketing campaign to promote industrial growth.

Mr. Higgins advised the Board of the next Joint Boards meeting Thursday, November 12, 1992 at Fort Devens in the Museum Building.

The Board reviewed the Alcohol Renewal Applications. The Board was advised that one alcohol license will not be submitted for renewal due to arrears in unpaid taxes to the Town.

Selectman McKinney moved the Board approve the following establishments FY-93 alcohol License renewal:

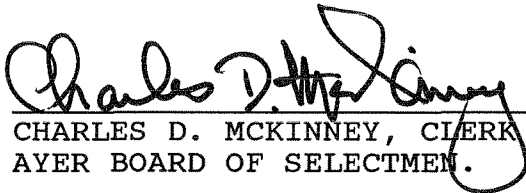
Jack-O-Lantern
Ayer Package Store
Roux's Liquor
C.R. Pierce
Ayer Gun & Sportsmen's Club
Nashoba Restaurant
Carlin's
Larry's Inc./ Karens
Tony's of Ayer

LaSita
The Fort Corp.

Seconded by Selectman Slarsky, VOTE: Unanimous so moved

Selectman McKinney moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by
Selectman Slarsky, VOTE: Unanimous, so moved.

9:45: Selectmen's Meeting adjourned.


CHARLES D. MCKINNEY, CLERK
AYER BOARD OF SELECTMEN.

DATE:

Dec 21, 1992