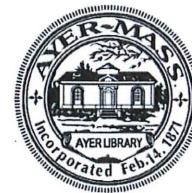


Town of Ayer
Meeting of the Ayer Board of Selectmen
Ayer Town Hall – 1st Floor Meeting Room
1 Main Street
Ayer, MA 01432



Broadcast and Recorded by APAC

Monday March 30, 2020
Open Session Meeting Minutes

BOS Present: Scott A. Houde, Chair; Jannice L. Livingston, Vice-Chair; Shaun C. Copeland, Clerk

Also Present: Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager; Carly M. Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager

Call to Order: S. Houde called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Remote Access: S. Houde stated that pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, MGL Chapter 30A, Section 18 and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Ayer Board of Selectmen is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort has been made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided in the Order. S. Houde then gave the directions to the public on how to call into the meeting.

Approval of Revised Meeting Agenda Motion: S. Houde stated that he is revising the agenda by moving the COVID-19 Preparedness Update and the Revision of the Town's COVID-19 Directive to 6:00 PM.

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Copeland to approve the revised meeting agenda. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Announcements: S. Houde stated that the Town Manager has recently reached out to the Ayer business community asking for donations of Personal Protective Equipment.

J. Livingston congratulated the community on a successful virtual bear hunt event. She also announced that on Wednesday April 1, 2020 community members are being asked to light a candle or a luminary in support of doctors, nurses and all those on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic.

S. Houde then wished APAC member Barry Schwarzel a happy birthday!

Town of Ayer Coronavirus/COVID-19 Preparedness Update: R. Pontbriand stated that Chief Murray would be joining him momentarily. He thanked all Town employees for their professionalism during this unprecedented time. He then gave an update relating to Town services and noted that a new, larger drop box has recently been constructed by the Building Commissioner for residents to drop off plans, correspondence, etc.

Chief Murray stated that at the Police Department, "all hands are on deck". Due to the reduced traffic, the department has curtailed motor vehicle stops. Relating to Dispatch, Emergency Medical Dispatch protocols are in full swing and every caller is being asked if they have flu-like symptoms. He stated that PPE is in still in demand and that several companies have donated PPE to the Department. Chief Murray then showed the BOS

masks and shields that have been produced in conjunction with the Ayer Shirley Regional School District students.

Town of Ayer Coronavirus/COVID-19 Preparedness Update: R. Pontbriand offered recommendations to update the Town's March 14, 2020 Directive. The closure of public buildings was originally scheduled through April 7, 2020; he is now recommending extending that to May 4, 2020 based on the Governor's recommendations for schools; he is also recommending that the BOS cancel all public meetings through April 7, 2020, with the exception of the BOS and Board of Health; and on April 8, 2020 other public bodies are able to meet via remote participation.

Motion: A motion was made by S. Copeland to accept all recommendations put forth by the Town Manager.
Motion passed 3-0.

S. Houde asked any participants on the phone if there were any questions relating to the directive. There were none.

Public Hearing: Adoption of the FY 2021 Water and Sewer Rate Recommendations: S. Copeland opened the Public Hearing at 6:29 PM by reading the Public Hearing Notice that was advertised in the *Nashoba Valley Voice* on March 13, 2020 and March 20, 2020. DPW Superintendent Mark Wetzel joined the BOS for a presentation about the FY' 21 Rate Recommendations. M. Wetzel recognized members of the Rate Review Committee and stated that the committee spends a lot of time evaluating capital projects and impacts on the rates, while trying to minimize exposure to the rate payers. M. Wetzel said that relating to the water rates, the PFAS Treatment costs are very high. The Town was successful in obtaining a grant from the Army to pay for the Grove Pond Treatment Center, but also need to spend approximately \$6 million for the Spectacle Pond Treatment Facility. Relating to the sewer rates, the Town is in the middle of a 10-year improvement program for the aging treatment facility. M. Wetzel also stated that the overall goal for setting the rates is to recover costs and avoid significant fluctuations for ratepayers. He then went over the budgets for both the water and sewer departments. He is proposing the following rate increases per cubic feet for Water: Step 1, increase of \$0.26; Step 2, increase of \$0.32; Step 3, increase of \$0.38; and Conservation Rate, increase of \$0.38. For sewer rates, the following rate increases per cubic feet are being proposed: Step 1, increase of \$0.26; Step 2, increase of \$0.29; and Step 3, increase of \$0.33. Overall, the average bill for an Ayer resident would increase \$10.40 for water and sewer users, for a total increase per year of approximately \$20.80. For Water & Sewer Connection fees, the fee increase for the Connection Fee would increase from \$3,600 to \$4,500; the second meter fee would increase from \$1,080 to \$1,350; the annual fire sprinkler would increase from \$200 to \$250; and the sewer connection fee would increase from \$4,800 to \$5,400. M. Wetzel noted that the Rate Review Committee has voted to approve all increases as noted above.

S. Copeland asked if the water and sewer users on a fixed income could apply for waivers. M. Wetzel stated that there is a senior citizen discount program and users have the availability to be put on a payment plan if necessary. S. Copeland then asked how the rates affect the capital improvements. M. Wetzel stated that the he and the Town Accountant use a rate model, which they use to input all information and try to use reserves to stabilize increases.

J. Livingston stated that a couple of years ago, there was no increase in water but then the Town encountered the PFAS issue and that the Rate Review Committee tries to keep increases as low as possible.

M. Wetzel stated that the Town has done a lot more with green energy which has resulted in significant efficiencies and cost savings for the water and sewer users.

S. Houde asked if there were any questions from the public via the remote participation feature. There were none.

Motion: A motion was made by S. Copeland and seconded by J. Livingston to approve the proposed water rate for FY '21 as presented. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Motion: A motion was made by S. Houde and seconded by J. Livingston to approve the proposed sewer rate for FY '21 as presented. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Copeland to approve the proposed connection fees sewer rate for FY '21 as presented. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Copeland to close the Public Hearing at 6:58 PM. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Discussion/Recommendation Regarding Postponing the Ayer Annual Town Election - Susan E. Copeland, Ayer Town Clerk: S. Copeland joined the BOS to discuss the postponement of the Annual Town Election. There have been many changes with dates due to COVID-19 concerns. Relating to the Annual Town Election, the nomination papers process has begun and been completed. She presented 3 plans for the BOS to consider: Plan A would be to conduct the election as scheduled on April 27, 2020; Plan B would be to change the Annual Town Election date to June 2, 2020, which also coincides with the State Special General Election for the State Rep.'s seat; Plan C would be to postpone the election and choose a new date by June 10, 2020. Town Clerk Copeland is recommending Plan B, which would be having the election on June 2, 2020, which will combine two elections on a single day.

J. Livingston stated it would be silly to postpone the Annual Town Election without a date. She is in favor of the June 2, 2020 date.

Motion: A motion was made by S. Houde and seconded by J. Livingston to postpone the April 27, 2020 Annual Election and move until June 2, 2020. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Adjournment:

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Copeland to adjourn at 7:11 PM. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Minutes Recorded and Submitted by Carly M. Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager

Date Minutes Approved by BOS: May 5, 2020

Signature Indicating Approval: 