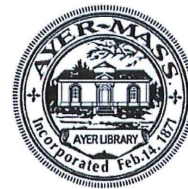


Shaun C. Copeland
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JAN 22 2020

TOWN OF AYER
TOWN CLERK

Town of Ayer
Joint Meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee
Ayer Town Hall – 1st Floor Meeting Room
Ayer, MA 01432



Broadcast and Recorded by APAC

Monday January 13, 2020
Open Session Meeting Minutes

BOS Present: Scott A. Houde, Chair; Shaun C. Copeland, Clerk
BOS Absent: Jannice L. Livingston, Vice-Chair
Fin Com Present: Patrick Diamond, Chair; Mark Smith, Vice-Chair; Terry Harvell, Clerk; Matthew Selby; Lou Conrad
Also Present: Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager
Carly M. Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager

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

Fin Com Call to Order: P. Diamond called the Finance Committee to order at 6:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance: BOS, Fin Com members and meeting attendees stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Reserve Fund Transfer: *General Insurance (01193)* – R. Pontbriand presented a Reserve Fund Transfer Request in the amount of \$7,600 to pay an invoice for flood insurance at the Ayer Fire Department. This expense was originally budgeted for; however, the Town's insurance company conducted a Worker's Compensation Audit mid-year and flagged an unexpected exposure, which required additional coverage.

BOS Motion: A motion was made by S. Houde and seconded by S. Copeland to approve the Reserve Fund Transfer Request in the amount of \$7,600 in account 01193 General Insurance. **Motion passed 2-0.**

Fin Com Motion: A motion was made by P. Diamond and seconded by M. Selby to approve the Reserve Fund Transfer Request in the amount of \$7,600 in account 01193 General Insurance. **Motion passed 5-0.**

Presentation of Initial FY '21 Budget by Town Manager: R. Pontbriand welcomed both Boards and wished them a Happy New Year. He also thanked both Boards for attending as it provides an opportunity for everyone to see the first version of the budget in the early stages of the process. R. Pontbriand began the presentation with giving a brief overview of the budget process, stating that the Capital Budget Committee has made their recommendations and that the Rate Review Committees will begin their deliberations on Water and Sewer Rates in February. He noted that there will be another Public Information Forum on the FY '21 budget on March 9, 2020.

R. Pontbriand stated that the Town was beginning the FY '21 budget process from a position of fiscal stability and strength. He noted the balances in the following accounts: 2019 Free Cash \$1,727,437; 2019 Stabilization Fund \$2,549,033; 2019 Capital Stabilization Fund \$1,960,184. He also noted the Town of Ayer's Bond Rating by Standard and Poor's of AA+/Stable, noting that S&P found Ayer to have a strong economy and strong financial management.

R. Pontbriand then highlighted some of the Town's successes in previous budgets noting several accomplishments, including: the OPEB Trust Fund has grown to over \$2,000,000 since FY '15; the Town's unused levy capacity has grown from \$2,135 in FY '12 to \$2,695,702 in FY '20; the Town's Health Benefits Buyout Program has saved the Town of Ayer over \$1,000,000 since its inception; the Office of Community and Economic Development has secured over \$800,000 in Development Grants since 2016; and the UDAG Fund Balance of over \$3,000,000.

R. Pontbriand then presented slides on the Town's Free Cash History; Stabilization Fund Balance History and Capital Stabilization Fund Balance History.

R. Pontbriand reported that of January 13, 2020 the FY '21 Omnibus Budget totals \$15,853,586, which represents a 2.6% increase over last year's budget. Several key items are still unknown at this point including: ASRSD and NVTHS Regional School Assessments, health insurance, Town Hall Clerical Union Contract Negotiations (currently underway) and Non-Union Personnel Service Contracts. He reported that several of the major budget drivers for the FY '21 budget include the Town's retirement assessment and contractual personnel costs increases (both union and non-union).

R. Pontbriand then presented a slide which showed that 49.5% of the Town's Omnibus Budget is wages, with another 25% being benefits. He noted that this is not unusual in the public sector, which is a service driven environment. Of that 49.5%, 60% are police and fire wages, 18% are general government, 12% are public works, 6.5% are culture and recreation and 2% are human services.

He then highlighted new items in the FY '21 budget including: Assessor's Map Updates, Treasurer/Tax Collector's Office Furniture, an increase in printing services; Ballistic Vests for the Fire Department and others.

R. Pontbriand then presented a slide on the Town's revenue sources, noting that 82% comes from the tax levy; 7% from local receipts; 5% from Free Cash and 3% from State Aid.

He then highlighted next steps in the FY '21 budget process, noting again another Public Information Session on March 9, 2020 at 6:00 PM. Any comments/input by the BOS and/or Fin Com is due in by Feb. 5, 2020. He then stated that all budget information can be found on the Town Manager's webpage of the website at ayer.ma.us/town-manager/2021-budget.

S. Houde stated that the presentation was very well done and asked for comments/questions from either the BOS or Fin Com.

L. Conrad had a question relative to the retirement assessment dropping nearly in half from the previous year. Benefits and Payroll Manager Kevin Johnston explained that it is calculated on a bi-annual basis and that last year the Town had to absorb a significant public safety disability retirement, which drastically increased the assessment.

M. Selby had a question to the Regional Dispatch Assessment and noted the significant increase. R. Pontbriand and Police Chief Murray noted that the figure in the Omnibus will come down after obtaining the State 911 Grant and the assessment from the Town of Shirley.

S. Houde asked about the purchasing of ballistic vests for the Fire Department. Fire Chief Pedrazzi stated that he never thought he would never see the day that firemen had to wear ballistic vests but that this is indicative of a "sign of the times". The Fire Union requested these vests during contract negotiations last year. The Town agreed to buy 9 ballistic vests for the fire apparatus and ambulances. M. Smith then asked about the Ayer Police's recent switch to load bearing vests and weather the Town had budgeted for that. Chief Murray explained the Police Officers are now given a choice between the standard duty belt or a load bearing vests to take weight off their backs and hips. Officers may use their clothing allowance if they prefer a load bearing vest. The armor inside the vest is supplied by the Town of Ayer. S. Houde suggested that P. Diamond and the Finance Committee follow-up with Chief Murray to discuss funding the load bearing vests out of the general police budget instead of their individual clothing allowances.

S. Houde asked if there were any public input/questions. There were none.

BOS Adjournment:

Motion: A motion was made by S. Copeland and seconded by S. Houde to adjourn at 6:55 PM. **Motion passed 2-0.**

Fin Com Adjournment:

Motion: A motion was made by M. Smith and seconded by M. Selby to adjourn at 6:55 PM. **Motion passed 5-0.**

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

Date Minutes Approved by BOS:

Signature Indicating Approval:

21 January 2020
Jamie Reekie