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10:00am


Town of Ayer
Capital Planning Committee Meeting Minutes For
December 8, 2021, 4pm

Attendance: Pat Diamond (Fin Com Representative); Lisa Gabree (Finance Manager); James Stephen; Rick Skoczylas

Absent: Scott Houde (Chair; Select Board Rep); Jim Pinard

Also in Attendance: Fire Chief Tim Johnston; Police Chief Brian Gill; Deputy Fire Chief Jeremy Januskiewicz

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 4pm by R. Pontbriand.

R. Pontbriand read the following remote participation statement:

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law (OML), public bodies otherwise governed by the OML are temporarily relieved from the requirement that meetings be held in public places, open and physically accessible to the public, so long as measures are taken to ensure public access to the bodies' deliberations "through adequate, alternative means." This meeting will be live on Zoom. The public may participate remotely by joining Zoom (Meeting ID# 860 6225 3922) or by calling 312-626-6799. For additional information about remote participation, please contact Carly Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager at atm@ayer.ma.us or 978-772-8220 ext. 100 prior to the meeting.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

The Committee reviewed the DRAFT meeting minutes from the December 1, 2021, meeting.

Motion: A motion was made by P. Diamond and seconded by R. Skoczylas to approve the December 1, 2021, meeting minutes. **Motion passed 5-0** by a Roll Call Vote: P. Diamond, Y; L. Gabree, Y; J. Stephen, Y; R. Skoczylas, Y; R. Pontbriand, Y.

Presentation of the FY 2023 Fire Department Capital Requests:

Chief Johnston presented four FY 2023 capital requests for the Fire Department as follows: \$20,000 for office furniture; \$16,500 for upgrading the audio-visual technology of the training room; \$65,000 for a Deputy Chief vehicle; and \$731,000 for a fire engine (pumper) replacement.

P. Diamond asked if these would be regular borrow items.

L. Gabree advised that the Deputy Chief Vehicle would be a borrow and the fire engine pumper would be a debt exclusion per the Town's Capital Planning Policy.

J. Stephen asked how the transportation of the Deputy Chief worked out this past year.

Chief Johnston advised that the Deputy has no vehicle, and he drives his own car or jumps on an available fire apparatus to go to calls. It has been a challenge at times. The sharing of vehicles has not been ideal.

The Chief added that he is concerned about supply chain availability of vehicles at this time due to the COVID pandemic. If both the Deputy Fire Chief vehicle and Fire Engine Pumper replacement are approved there could still be significant delays in receiving the vehicles. The last major fire apparatus replacement took almost 18 months from the time of approval to receive.

R. Skoczylas asked about using the pick-up truck the Fire Department has.

Chief Johnston stated that the duty crew uses the pick-up truck. It also pulls the fire trailer and is used for emergency responses.

L. Gabree stated that no one ever anticipated supply chain delays due to the pandemic until recently. In the case of the Deputy Fire Chief Vehicle, if it were a borrow, the funds for ordering would be available upon passage of Town meeting in April.

R. Pontbriand asked the Chief to explain what the implications would be if the Fire Engine Pumper replacement were delayed a year.

L. Gabree stated that she just learned today from the School District that they may not incur the debt for the field project until 2024 which would create some room on the Town's Debt Schedule making the Fire Engine Pumper borrow more feasible this year. She stated that originally it was thought that the high school field project debt would hit the debt schedule in FY 2023.

R. Pontbriand stated that this is positive news and asked if L. Gabree could confirm with the School District and advise back.

Chief Johnston explained that the current Fire Engine Pumper is a 1993 vehicle. In 2013, the Town spent \$150,000 to extend the life of the apparatus. It is now reaching 30 years. It is hard to repair the pump and recently we were advised that there is no replacement pump for this engine. There were some minor pump repairs performed between 2016-2019.

Deputy Januskiewicz stated that operationally the Department needs both pumpers. Each pumper holds 750 gallons of water which allows for 3 minutes of fire fighting for each pumper. With only one pumper this would significantly impact our response time and effectiveness to fight fires.

Chief Johnston stated that the other Fire Engine Pumper is a 2001. Though a younger vehicle in age it is in worse condition than the 1993 pumper because \$150,000 was not invested in the 2001 to extend its life.

L. Gabree asked which Fire Engine would be replaced and what would happen to the old one.

Chief Johnston stated that he would keep the 1993 pumper as the second pumper and dispose of the 2001 pumper if the replacement is approved. We kept the 2001 pumper

because we would only get \$5,000 for it and we store it in Westford. If the replacement pumper is approved, we would get rid of the 2001 pumper and keep the 1993 pumper as a spare.

P. Diamond asked for clarification that we would keep the 1993 engine pumper and get rid of the 2001 engine pumper.

Chief Johnston stated that is cored. The 2001 (though a younger model) has all the issues whereas the 1993 engine due to the \$150,000 investment back in 2013 is the better apparatus.

R. Pontbriand thanked the Chief for his detailed explanation especially on the implications of delaying another year. He stated that he is in support of the request to replace the fire engine pumper as presented by the Chief.

J. Stephen stated that he supports the fire engine pumper replacement as presented by the Chief and he is concerned about the supply chain delays but there is not much the Town can do about that. It seems to be impacting everyone due to the pandemic.

R. Skoczylas thanked the Chief and stated that he supports the Chief's FY 2023 capital requests.

P. Diamond stated that he supports the Fire Department FY 2023 requests.

FY 2023 Police Department Capital Requests:

Police Chief Brian Gill updated the Committee on the recent actions of the Select Board to authorize a Reserve Fund Transfer in the amount of \$76,701 to obtain the Police Chief Cruiser. He stated that he had intended to get through another year without a new vehicle, however in recent months since he submitted this capital request the current vehicle has been plagued with mechanical and repair issues and will not pass inspection without approximately \$10,000 in repairs. Additionally, recent delays for vehicles due to supply chain issues were also a concern and the need to order this vehicle sooner rather than later became a reality.

R. Pontbriand advised that the Select Board approved the Reserve Fund Transfer on December 7, 2021, subject to approval by the Finance Committee. Therefore, this capital request for the Police Chief Cruiser in the amount of \$76,701 may be removed from the FY 2023 Capital Plan.

P. Diamond stated that he anticipates that the Finance Committee will approve the Reserve Fund Transfer.

Chief Gill presented the other FY 2023 Police Department capital request in the amount of \$63,238 to redesign and upgrade the police patrol workspace at the Police Station. He advised that the current workspace is 25 years old. The Department has grown since then and the space needs to be updated into more of a functional working space.

L. Gabree asked if the \$63,238 was the total cost for the project.

Chief Gill stated that is the total price for the project.

P. Diamond stated that he supports this request and after 25 years the space needs to be redesigned and updated.

J. Stephen stated that he supports this request.

P. Diamond stated that he liked the Chief's approach of giving the Sergeants and Patrolmen ownership of the workspace. That is important.

Chief Gill presented the FY 2023 Police Department capital request in the amount of \$29,546 for the replacement of the Haz-mat gear for the department. He advised that the current hazmat gear dates to 2001 when the Department first received it as part of a grant following the September 11 attacks. The equipment is used by officers in a scenario with contamination whether biological, chemicals, or radioactive. The equipment is inspected every year. It is seeing signs of wear and tear after 20 years. It was used once in a situation and has been used regularly in training exercises.

Chief Gill further stated that on average the equipment should have a 5-year life span. Ver the last year we have applied for grants twice. We were denied in both cases because the grants are for departments that do not have the gear and it is not for maintenance. We also applied for CARES funding and were denied. This gear is important not just because of COVID but we have infrastructure in town such as the rail lines in which train derailments/accidents could result in contamination responses in which this gear would be needed.

J. Stephen stated that this request is number one on his list and is needed.

L. Gabree asked how many sets of gear this request is for.

Chief Gill stated that we equip every officer so this request would fund the replacement of twenty kits.

P. Diamond asked if oxygen tanks, or a refill station was needed for this equipment.

Chief Gill advised that this equipment is not like the fire department's and does not require oxygen tanks or refilling stations.

P. Diamond asked where this equipment is stored.

Chief Gill advised that if an Officer has a cruiser, they keep the kit in their cruiser or it is stored in their assigned lockers.

New Business:

R. Skoczylas asked L. Gabree if there is a limit on the amount, we can spend this year on Capital?

L. Gabree advised that we are currently under the limit and with the recent news about the high school field project debt being delayed a year there is more room. She stated that many of the small requests this year will be paid for from Capital Stabilization. She will

prepare a running total and funding recommendations as the Committee deliberates and votes at future meetings.

Scheduling of Next Meeting:

The Committee scheduled its next meeting for Wednesday, December 15, 2021, at 4pm on Zoom to begin its deliberations and voting recommendations on the FY 2023 Capital Plan.

Motion: A motion was made by R. Skoczylas and seconded by J. Stephen to adjourn the meeting. **Motion passed 5-0** by Roll Call Vote Roll Call Vote: P. Diamond, Y; L. Gabree, Y; J. Stephen, Y; R. Skoczylas, Y; R. Pontbriand, Y.

The meeting adjourned at 4:53pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by R. Pontbriand, Town Manager

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Capital Planning Committee on December 15, 2021

Signed:  12/15/2021
Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager