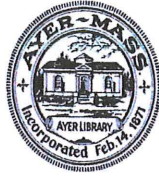


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MAY 22 2020

TOWN OF AYER
TOWN CLERK

Scapellato



Town of Ayer
Community Preservation Committee
Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432
Minutes for 4/23/2020

Location: Remote Meeting via Zoom, accessible to public, due to Pandemic State of Emergency

Members present: Janet Providakes (JP) [Housing Authority]- Chair, Beth Suedmeyer (BAS) [At Large], Jason Mayo (JAM) [Parks & Recreation], Jess Gugino (JG) [Conservation Commission]- Clerk, Colleen Krieser (CK)[At Large]

Not present: Barry Schwarzel (BES) [Historical Commission], Julie Murray (JUM) [Planning Board]

APAC taped and broadcast: YES

10:02 AM – Open Meeting

- **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- BAS moved to accept the minutes for 3/4/2020 as written; JAM 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote.

- **Correspondence / Bills**

- The ad fee for the Legal Notice for the Historical Resources Inventory Public Hearing on March 3 has been paid.
- JP has not received any feedback from Irv Rockwood, of the Sandy Pond School Association, as to whether the SPSA will be proceeding with a project funding application for the next phase of renovation on the historic schoolhouse.
 - Given the Pandemic State of Emergency, it is unclear if SPSA will appear at CPC's May or June meetings to begin the process of readying an application for a Fall Town Meeting vote.

CURRENT BUSINESS

- **Spring Town Meeting Warrant Articles**

- Due to the State of Emergency, Spring Town Meeting is currently postponed from May to June 15.
- The Warrant has been prepared and members reviewed the 3 CPC Articles.
 - Articles 27 and 28 deal with the FY 2021 annual disbursement of CPC funds into its accounts.
 - Because CPC was unable to hold its regular meeting on April 1 due to Town Hall's emergency closure, these Articles were printed without the specific numbered amounts.
 - In addition, the Annual Town Election was also postponed from April 27 and is now scheduled for June 2.
 - This election includes the ballot question seeking to raise CPC property tax surcharge from 1% to 3%. (See discussion below.)



Town of Ayer
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Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432

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- The outcome of this vote will affect the disbursement amounts to be voted on for Articles 27 and 28 at Spring Town Meeting that follows after the election.
- Once the election has taken place, the correct numbers will be posted and made known to Spring Town Meeting prior to the actual votes.
- Article 27 – COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT FY 2021
 - JP presented two versions of the *estimated* disbursement funds as calculated via the Town Assessor and the Town Accountant, based on both the 1% and the 3% surcharge.
 - At 1%, it is estimated that CPC will have \$246,612 to disburse.
 - At 3%, it is estimated that CPC will have \$679,836 to disburse.
 - The Article always includes an annual set-aside of \$5000 for miscellaneous administrative expenses.
 - The rest of the disbursement, whether at 1% or 3%, will be allocated as follows, specific amounts to be filled in later:
 - 10% to open space;
 - 10% to historic resources;
 - 10% to community housing;
 - Remaining 70% (approximately) to budgeted reserve (the undesignated fund that can be used by any of the CPA categories).
 - CK moved to approve Article 27 with the distribution percentages as above; JG 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote.
- Article 28 – COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUND FY 2021 TRANSFER OF FUNDS
 - Again, the specific sum was not printed in the Article due to CPC's inability to meet prior to the closing of the Warrant.
 - This article traditionally transfers \$12,000 for use for due diligence, such as title searches or related administrative tasks, related to potential open space acquisitions.
 - CK moved to approve Article 28 as written in the Warrant and described above; BAS 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote.
- Article 29 – HISTORICAL RESOURCES INVENTORY PROJECT
 - A Public Hearing was held on this application on March 4, 2020.



Town of Ayer
Community Preservation Committee

Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432

Minutes for 4/23/2020

- CPC voted to approve putting this application for \$20,000 in funding from CPC's Historic Resources Category before Spring Town Meeting vote.
 - CK moved to approve Article 29 as written in the Warrant; BAS 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote.
 - JP asked for public input via remote participation and there was none.
- **CPC Annual Town Election Ballot Question**
 - The Town Ballot contains the following Yes/No Question:
 - "Shall this town amend its acceptance of sections 3 to 7, inclusive of Chapter 44B of the General Laws, as approved by its legislative body and summarized below?"
 - The summary then details the request to increase the allowable surcharge on real property from 1% to 3%.
 - This is a two-step process, and CPC completed the first step by securing an approval vote at Fall Town Meeting, Oct. 28, 2019.
 - The second step is passage via Town Election Ballot vote.
 - In between Fall Town Meeting and the (now postponed) Town Election, Governor Baker declared a State of Emergency due to the COVID 19 Pandemic.
 - The surcharge increase question must remain on the Ballot regardless; CPC has no control over that.
 - The surcharge increase from 1% to 3% is estimated to increase a property owner's real estate tax on average an additional \$90/year.
 - JP expressed her view that, if CPC moves forward with trying to create a new Housing Trust Fund (similar to the Conservation Fund) at Fall Town Meeting, such a Fund could potentially be of use in helping with rental assistance, etc., during this difficult pandemic time.
 - The previous day (4/22), JP was on a conference call discussing guidelines for rental assistance in MetroWest.
 - If Ayer had a Housing Trust, this could also facilitate assistance to residents in need, although it was also pointed out that such money would not be available until the following year.
 - JP has also sent a request for information to the Council on Aging as well as local churches to see what sort of actual needs are being identified in the Ayer community at this time.
 - JP asked for discussion as to how CPC moves forward on this, and whether CPC should continue with its March 4 plan to publicize the ballot question as well as have a private donor fund yard signs urging a yes vote.
 - CK said she was torn.

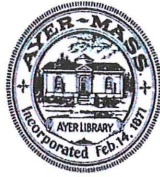


Town of Ayer
Community Preservation Committee

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- On the one hand, she said it was unfair to ask people to give more money to the town when in the midst of a current crisis that has impacted not only public health but jobs and the economy.
- On the other hand, she said the ability to use CPC funds, via a Housing Trust, to assist residents in need was a positive, even if such funds would not be available for a year.
 - CK also noted that residents do have the ability to contact the Town Assessor each year and opt out of paying the surcharge if doing so would be burdensome.
- JAM asked if the ballot question was defeated in June, could it simply be placed on the ballot again next year?
 - JP said no, CPC would have to start the amendment process all over again, first with another Town Meeting vote to approve, and if successful, then second, another election ballot vote.
- JG agreed with CK's mixed feelings on the surcharge increase under the difficult new circumstances of the pandemic.
 - CPC will hold an informational public meeting on the surcharge at its 7 p.m. May 6 meeting.
 - JG advised against doing a 'hard-sell' of the surcharge, but rather that CPC members be open at that meeting about their own mixed feelings now, given the pandemic.
- BAS stressed that it will be important to hear the perspectives offered by residents at that time.
- JP suggested that, in addition to the May 6 informational meeting, it would be good for CPC to hold a second meeting later in May as well.
 - Members agreed to schedule a second meeting at 7 p.m. on May 20.
- Regarding signage, JP thought it best to reduce the number of signs advertising the surcharge ballot question to avoid the appearance of pursuing a 'hard-sell'.
 - The transfer station is one obvious location; CK also suggested the rotary.
 - The purpose of the signage is to ensure residents know there IS a ballot question and that they can go to supportayercpc.org to learn more.
 - Again it was stressed that the ballot question cannot be withdrawn at this point, regardless of the pandemic, so the question will appear on the ballot no matter what.
 - BAS said the wording on the signs should avoid a specific election date as, while the election is currently scheduled for June 2, it is unknown whether, because of the pandemic, it will need to be postponed yet again, along with Spring Town Meeting.



Town of Ayer
Community Preservation Committee
Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432
Minutes for 4/23/2020

- CK said CPC should proceed “as if” the June 2 election will take place, and if it is pushed back later, CPC can always schedule another informational meeting on the ballot question closer to a new election date.
 - These are uncertain times and it is hard for residents, including CPC members, to think or plan too far ahead into the future at this time.
- **Committee Updates**
 - Historical Commission (BES)
 - No report.
 - Housing Authority & Affordable Housing Committee (JP)
 - A few bills have been approved but that is it.
 - Parks & Recreation (JAM)
 - The parks and beach continue to be closed due to the Governor’s State of Emergency.
 - Spring sports season has been wiped out as a result.
 - Parks & Rec will be holding a meeting next week, and will be planning “as if” they will be able to hold normal summer camps.
 - As soon as Governor Baker ends the State of Emergency, the beach should be ready to go.
 - Conservation Commission (JG)
 - ConCom’s new wetland bylaw, approved at Fall Town Meeting 2019, has been approved by the Attorney General, was posted by the Town Clerk, and is now officially in effect.
 - Planning Board (JM)
 - No report.
 - Open Space & Recreation Plan Update Committee (BAS)
 - No report.
- **11:00 AM – Adjourn Meeting**
 - CPC’s Next Meeting, via Remote Zoom: May 6, 7 p.m.
 - JG moved to adjourn; CK 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote.

Minutes Recorded and Submitted by Jessica G. Gugino, Clerk

Date and Signature Indicating Approval by CPC:

5/6/2020 