

## Town of Ayer

TOWN OF AYER  
TOWN CLERK

### Senior Center Site Selection and Building Committee

Meeting Minutes from December 7, 2023

**Attendance:** Katie Petrossi; Dennis Curran; Dan Van Schalkwyk; Ken Diskin; Chris Prehl; Dave Grubb; Ellen FitzPatrick; Dave Cibor; Carolyn McCreary

**Also in Attendance:** Carly Antonellis (Assistant Town Manager); Christina Zoller (Assistant Town Clerk); Matt Hernon (Town Engineer); Alan Manoian (Dir. AOCED); Geof Tillotson (Resident on Zoom); Mike Hamel (Resident on Zoom); Pauline Conley (Resident on Zoom); Meg (attendee via Zoom)

#### **Call to Order:**

Katie Petrossi welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 6:02pm. Before moving on to the next agenda item Ken Diskin made a Point of Order, stating, we need a motion to approve the agenda.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Dennis Curran and seconded by Chris Prehl to approve the agenda as presented. **Motion passed unanimously (9-0).**

#### **Review and Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes (November 16, 2023):**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Chris Prehl and seconded by Ken Diskin to approve the Previous Meeting Minutes as presented. **Motion passed unanimously. (9-0).**

#### **Investigation of Potential Town-owned Properties for a Senior Center:**

Dan Van Schalkwyk explained the maps presented to the Committee for review. The first map is an overview of the whole Town, highlighting Town-owned properties. Followed by individual maps of each parcel identified. K. Petrossi clarified that the goal is to just review the Town-owned properties, and many will be eliminated strictly due to size or having existing structures. No decisions on properties will be made tonight.

D. Van Schalkwyk stated the initial GIS layers presented included DPW utilities such as water, sewer, and drainage easements, contour lines, grades, and wetlands. GIS can flag as many layers as needed, but a basic overview has been provided. D. Van Schalkwyk recommends eliminating parcels under the Committee's desired size, which is 1.5-2 acres.

The Committee members thanked D. Van Schalkwyk and Matt Hernon for their work.

D. Curran suggested that if there are parcels to eliminate now, can we first go through and eliminate buildings that can't be moved (Police and Fire Stations, etc.) and then all properties deemed too small. K. Diskin agrees.

D. Van Schalkwyk went through each parcel individually with the Committee and properties were eliminated based on unbuildable restrictions such as wetlands, conservation land, Article 97 restrictions, accessibility, and existing or planned Town structures. Parcels that were under the desired size of 1.5 – 2 acres were also eliminated.

D. Curran asked if it is correct that there is no way to override Conservation restrictions?

K. Diskin confirmed that is correct.

The Committee stayed focused on only eliminating properties that fit the specific set criteria for the evening. Properties that might be considered undesirable were left to be discussed later if they did not meet the elimination criteria.

After elimination there were eleven Town-owned properties remaining for a secondary review.

K. Petrossi asked Committee members what additional information they would like to see for these remaining parcels.

D. Grubb would like to see the topography of each parcel.

D. Curran would like the Conservation Commission to provide information on restrictions related to wetlands and buffer zones to better understand the actual buildable area on each parcel, not just what is or is not wetlands.

The Committee members again thanked D. Van Schalkwyk and M. Hernon for their work.

### **Update on Secured Grant Funding:**

Alan Manoian reported that in June a grant opportunity was identified and pursued by the Office of Community & Economic Development (AOCED). An application for a three hundred-thousand-dollar Housing Choice Grant through the MA Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) was submitted. A. Manoian heard in October that the Town was awarded the grant monies to be used for the preliminary process including site plans, engineering, design costs, etc.

A. Manoian clarified that when the grant was submitted, a site of Pirone Park had been declared for the project. He has communicated with the State that Pirone Park is no longer the site, and a new location is being searched for by a new Committee. The State has confirmed to A. Manoian that the grant money is still secure for this new project. Mr. Manoian stated that this grant money expires in June of 2025 and having been awarded this grant, it opens opportunities for other grants to be pursued, including a three-million-dollar open space grant, as the Committee moves forward.

D. Curran asked for clarification if the grant money needs to be spent by June 2025 or just contractually obligated? A. Manoian stated that it needs to be obligated and all work should be invoiced by June 2025.

C. Antonellis added that the State has awarded more grants, and the Town will be making a formal announcement next week about the awarded three hundred thousand dollars.

A. Manoian informed the Committee that there will be a formal award ceremony with the Governor and that Committee members are invited and encouraged to attend if able.



Carolyn McCreary was confused by the “Housing Choice” grant title.

A. Manoian stated that yes, that does seem confusing. The original grant application was for a one hundred fifty-thousand-dollar Community Planning grant. The State made the recommendation for the Town to modify its application for the Housing Choice grant due to the higher dollar amount available.

K. Diskin asked if there is a specific scope of work this grant money can be used for?

A. Manoian confirmed that this grant money can be used for all preliminary work.

K. Petrossi asked C. Antonellis to confirm the deadline for the use of ARPA funds?

C. Antonellis and D. Van Schalkwyk stated that ARPA funds must be committed by the end of 2024 and spent by 2025. C. Antonellis added that the Select Board has previously authorized additional UDAG funds, and they remain available.

A. Manoian added that it is common to ask for contract extensions.

D. Curran confirmed with C. Antonellis that the Town will handle the back-office accounting and managing what monies come out of what accounts.

### **Review of Architect Letter Proposals and Process:**

D. Van Schalkwyk provided a brief explanation on the previous Request for Proposal (RFP) process that the former, now dissolved Building Committee used. He recommends using the RFP process to find an Architect for this project and offered to modify the previous RFP or create a new one.

D. Curran asked what the approximate vetting timeline is from the creation of an RFP?

D. Van Schalkwyk estimates 4 weeks from posting to collect the responses, and then time for the Committee to review and discuss for a total of about 6 weeks.

D. Curran asked at what point in the Site Selection process do we put out the RFP?

K. Petrossi asked if we should bring in the Architect to look at multiple sites or should the Committee choose a site first and then hire an Architect?

D. Van Schalkwyk recommends an on-call scope for now, and as the Committee narrows their scope and selects a site then bring in an Architect.

There was brief discussion over hiring an Architect now or waiting until the Committee is further along in the Site Selection process.

K. Petrossi suggests letting D. Van Schalkwyk upgrade the language in the previous RFP and the Committee can decide to issue it at a later date.

D. Van Schalkwyk stated that a draft RFP could be ready for early January 2024.

### **Update/Discussion on Public Outreach:**

K. Petrossi recapped discussion from the previous meeting about Social Media outreach. Asking if the consensus of the Committee was to use the Town's official Facebook page for the time being while an official outreach plan is developed.

D. Curran asked if there was any thought given to having a separate Facebook page?

C. Antonellis recommends keeping all posts relevant to the Committee and their process on the official Town of Ayer Facebook page to streamline the information sharing process. Having multiple different pages would cause delays in updating information.

K. Petrossi states that other than Facebook, the Senior Center Monthly Newsletter, and Public Forums, right now the best outreach is meeting regularly and encouraging meeting attendance.

### **Public Input:**

Pauline Conley apologized for her connection issues from the previous meeting. She asked why the list of Town-owned parcels D. Van Schalkwyk and M. Hernon provided was not attached to the meeting agenda posting online?

C. Antonellis stated that it was an issue of timing and that the documents will be posted tomorrow.

### **Scheduling of Next Meeting:**

K. Petrossi stated that the next two major topics of discussion will be reviewing the eleven remaining Town-owned parcels and reviewing the draft RFP. She asked the Committee if they would like to meet the first or second week of January 2024.

C. Antonellis recommended avoiding the first week of January as it is right after the holidays.

The Committee decided to next meet on Thursday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 5:30pm in the First Floor Meeting Room of the Ayer Town Hall with a remote participation option on Zoom for the public.


### **Adjournment:**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Dave Cibor and seconded by Chris Prehl to adjourn the meeting. **Motion passed unanimously (9-0).**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by Christina Zoller, Assistant Town Clerk.

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Committee on January 11, 2024

Signed: 

Dennis Curran, Clerk

Documents Referenced/Used at the December 7, 2023 Meeting:

- Materials for the December 7, 2023 Meeting Discussion on “Review of Architect Letter Proposals and Process”.
- Town-Owned Parcel Map (Townwide)
- Town-Owned Parcel Maps
- Town-Owned Property Listing

Documents used during the December 7, 2023 meeting are posted on the Town’s website under the Senior Center Site Selection and Building Committee webpage at [Documents | Town of Ayer MA](#)