



Town of Ayer

Capital Planning Committee

Meeting Minutes of February 2, 2023

Attendance: Scott Houde (Chair); Rick Skoczylas; James Stephen; Barbara Tierney (Finance Manager); Robert Pontbriand (Town Manager); Kurt Fraczkowski (Fin Com); Jim Pinard

Absent: Christopher Hillman

Also in Attendance: Fire Chief Tim Johnston; DPW Director Dan Van Schalkwyk; Water and Sewer Superintendent Kimberly Abraham

Call to Order:

S. Houde called the meeting of the Capital Planning Committee to order at 5:00pm in the First Floor Meeting Room of the Ayer Town Hall.

S. Houde stated he would like to move the Kiddie Junction Playground Project agenda item to the end as the Chair of the Parks Commission, Jason Mayo will be coming later. The Committee concurred.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes (January 19, 2023):

The Committee reviewed the DRAFT January 19, 2023 meeting minutes.

MOTION: A motion was made by J. Stephen and seconded by J. Pinard to approve the January 12, 2023 meeting minutes. **Motion Passed 7-0.**

Update/Review/Discussion/Vote on Funding Recommendation for Fire Department FY 2024 Capital Request: Ladder Truck Replacement:

R. Pontbriand provided a brief overview of the Fire Department FY 2024 Capital Request to replace the Ladder Truck which was previously presented by Chief Johnston to the Capital Planning Committee. R. Pontbriand stated that at the previous Capital Planning Committee Meeting questions were raised regarding potential funding options for the Ladder Truck especially in terms of potentially using either free cash or capital stabilization funds to give the taxpayer some relief.

B. Tierney stated that this is an ideal time for a debt exclusion in terms of debt falling off of the Town's debt schedule and the favorable borrowing rates.

R. Skoczylas asked about the status of a future Elementary School project?

S. Houde stated that the Select Board has been discussing this and has also made a request of the Regional School Committee to submit a letter of intent for this project to the Massachusetts School Building Authority to start the formal process for this project.

J. Pinard stated that he would like to see the Town give relief to the taxpayer, especially with all the projects.

R. Skoczylas agreed.

S. Houde stated that everyone is of course in favor of tax relief for the taxpayers. However, in the case of the Ladder Truck, the Debt Exclusion actually makes the best financial sense in that the cost impact to the taxpayer is minimal and would also not hit the taxpayer for another 18 to 24 months until the Town actually receives the Ladder Truck.

R. Pontbriand concurred with S. Houde. It would not be wise to use Capital Stabilization funds or other one-time funds such as free cash to pay for the Ladder Truck. Assuming historic free cash rates, it would take at least two to three years to replenish Capital Stabilization if it were used for the Ladder Truck and that is assuming current free cash trends which are not a guarantee. Capital Stabilization should be reserved for unforeseen catastrophic or emergency purposes or built up over time for major building or infrastructure projects.

R. Skoczylas stated we know we need to replace the West Main Street Bridge; replace the Fire Ladder Truck; and finish the Playground. That is a lot, but it needs to get done and perhaps the debt exclusion for the Bridge and the Ladder Truck makes sense.

J. Pinard stated that we should keep the cushion of the Capital Stabilization Fund and given all of the information it would make sense to fund the Fire Ladder Truck with a debt exclusion.

J. Stephen stated that he supports a debt exclusion for the Fire Ladder Truck as the optimal financing option as we need to keep an even keel and not dip into reserves such as Capital Stabilization unless we absolutely must.

S. Houde stated that having a financial cushion gives the Town some financial flexibility with respect to all our known and potentially unknown capital needs.

Motion: A motion was made by J. Pinard and seconded by J. Stephen to recommend that the Select Board authorize a Debt Exclusion in the amount of \$1,629,687 subject to approval by Town Meeting and by ballot at the Annual Town Election for the purposes of replacing the Fire Ladder Truck.

Motion Passed 7-0.

Chief Johnston thanked the Capital Planning Committee for their support.

Update/Review/Discussion/Vote on Funding Recommendation for DPW FY 2024 Capital Request: Replacement of West Main Street Bridge:

D. Van Schalkwyk appeared before the Committee regarding his previous request to replace the West Main Street Bridge. He stated that the final amount for the project is \$3.5 million, and that amount includes a 12% project contingency. He also stated that he continues to work with MassDOT regarding further funding for the project as well as looking for potential federal and state funding sources.

R. Pontbriand stated that if additional funding is secured the \$3.5 million could be reduced but at this time that is the maximum needed for the project.

J. Stephen stated that we need to replace this bridge as soon as possible.

S. Houde stated that we could recommend a Debt Exclusion not to exceed \$3.5 million and further contingent upon federal or state funding sources that would result in adjusting the amount accordingly.

Motion: A motion was made by J. Pinard and seconded by R. Skoczylas to recommend that the Select Board authorize a Debt Exclusion not to exceed the amount of \$3.5 million subject to approval by Town Meeting and by ballot at the Annual Town Election; and further if additional funding is secured that the \$3.5 million is adjusted accordingly. **Motion Passed 7-0.**

Update/Review/Discussion/Vote on Funding Recommendation for DPW FY 2024 Capital Request: Grove Pond Water Treatment PFAS Upgrades:

D. Van Schalkwyk and K. Abraham stated that at this time they do not have enough information to make a sound request with respect to the Grove Pond Water Treatment PFAS Upgrades. The consultant has not completed their analysis and study at this time. Currently, it is best to withdraw from this project until the study and scope is complete with an accurate dollar amount.

J. Stephen stated that you will not be ready for this Annual Town Meeting.

D. Van Schalkwyk stated that they would not be ready for this Town Meeting, but the project is still needed and very important.

K. Fraczkowski stated that it appears the addition of PFAS to the system has now resulted in a loss of production and perhaps there is no technology that may be a solution.

K. Abraham stated that is correct and that the consultants are the experts and they worked on this similar issue that happened in Hudson, MA.

The Committee agreed to withdraw the Grove Pond Water Treatment PFAS Upgrade Project at this time and will revisit in the future.

Update/Review/Discussion/Vote on Funding Recommendation for Parks Department FY 2023 Capital Request: Kiddie Junction Playground Project:

Jason Mayo, Chair of the Parks Commission appeared before the Committee and stated that the Commission appreciates the Committee's continued support for this important project. He stated that it is going to take an additional \$970,000 to complete the project as previously presented and discussed with the Committee. We have also met with the Select Board regarding this project. H stated that we met with the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) on February 1, 2023 to start the application process for \$500,000. The CPC Committee voted to recommend \$750,000 in CPC funds for the project subject to Town Meeting Approval. There will be a public hearing on this conducted by the CPC on March 1, 2023. Therefore, assuming the \$750,000 from CPC is approved we would need an additional \$220,000 to complete the project.

Motion: A motion was made by R. Skoczylas and seconded by J. Stephen to recommend that the Select Board authorize the borrowing of \$220,000 for the Kiddie Junction Playground Project subject to approval by the Annual Town Meeting. **Motion Passed 7-0.**

S. Houde stated that this concluded the work of the Capital Planning Committee at this time. He stated that we may need to meet again sometime before Town Meeting if there is a change or new development that impacts any of our recommendations.

J. Stephen stated that he has really enjoyed these meetings this year and that everyone is working together for the common good of the Town.

Scheduling of Next Meeting:

The Committee agreed not to schedule another meeting unless needed as S. Houde had stated.

Adjournment:

MOTION: A motion was made by R. Skoczylas and seconded by J. Stephen to adjourn the meeting at 6:00pm. **Motion passed 7-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by R. Pontbriand, Town Manager

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Capital Planning Committee on November 9, 2023.

Signed: 
Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager