

**Town of Ayer**  
**Executive Bi-Board**  
**Meeting Minutes for January 31, 2023**



**Attendance:** Scott Houde (Chair); Kurt Fraczkowski (Fin Com Chair); Barbara Tierney (Finance Manager); Carly Antonellis (Assistant Town Manager); Robert Pontbriand (Town Manager)

**Absent:** Sebastian Cordoba (Fin Com Vice Chair)

**Call to Order:**

The January 31, 2023 meeting of the Ayer Executive Bi-Board was called to order at 2pm on Zoom by S. Houde.

S. Houde read the following statement into the record:

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, in accordance with Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law (ONL), 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# 854 0032 4335) or by calling 929-205-6099. For additional information about remote participation, please contact Carly Antonellis, Assistant town Manager at [atm@ayer.ma.us](mailto:atm@ayer.ma.us) or 978-772-8220 ext. 100 prior to the meeting.

**Review/Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (November 15, 2022):**

The Bi-Board reviewed the DRAFT Meeting Minutes from November 15, 2022.

**Motion:** A motion was made by C. Antonellis and seconded by B. Tierney to approve the November 15, 2022 meeting minutes as presented. **Motion Passed (5-0) by Roll Call Vote: S. Houde, Y; K. Fraczkowski, Y; B. Tierney, Y; C. Antonellis, Y; R. Pontbriand, Y.**

**FY 2024 Budget Update:**

R. Pontbriand provided a brief update on the status of the FY 2024 Budget. The First Public Budget Forum took place on January 18 and the next one is scheduled for March 8. The Town's energy and fuel budgets are a significant budget driver this year as a result of increased energy costs, inflation, and the Town's energy aggregation contracts are scheduled to expire in November 2022 and though the Town will enter into new agreements with favorable rates they will not be at the same rates of three years ago.

B. Tierney advised that revenues and collections remain on target.

**Discussion on Recommendation for Increasing the Debt Exclusion Threshold in the Capital Planning Policy:**

R. Pontbriand stated that unfortunately the Town's network server crashed over this past weekend and remains down. As a result the Town has basic email but cannot access any of the files on the network which unfortunately includes the presentation slides for this discussion.

B. Tierney advised that based on her research into the issue of a debt exclusion threshold, many Towns actually do not have a specific dollar threshold. Their policy relies heavily on the amount of available debt capacity on their respective debt schedules. That being said, in terms of increasing Ayer's threshold from \$350,000, that would make sense based on inflation and increased costs over the last several years since the threshold was last increased.

R. Pontbriand concurred with B. Tierney in terms of support for raising the debt exclusion threshold from its current level of \$350,000 to perhaps \$500,000. This would take into account increased costs, inflation, and as a matter of policy would make sense. The Town would still have appropriate controls on expenditures up to \$500,000 in that they would still need to be vetted through the Capital Planning Process; subject to review by the Finance Committee; subject to approval by the Select Board to place on the Town Meeting Warrant; and would still require Town Meeting Approval.

S. Houde stated that he is conceptually interested and supportive of raising the debt exclusion threshold. In light of the network being down and not being able to access the presentation slides for this discussion, we should further discuss in detail at the next meeting before formulating a potential recommendation.

R. Pontbriand brought up the other outstanding issue which is the current dollar threshold for a capital expenditure. In addition to meeting the criteria of a one-time expenditure, the current threshold is \$10,000. This could also be potentially raised for the same reasons as the debt exclusion threshold. Interestingly based on his research most Towns have a dollar threshold of either \$10,000 or \$20,000. From his perspective, if this threshold were to be raised it should not be more than \$50,000 at the most and should perhaps be around \$20,000 to \$25,000.

S. Houde stated that the Bi-Board will pick up this conversation at the next meeting when the network is functioning and we can look at all of the information.

**Final Review of DRAFT Financial Policies Proposed Revisions/Updates and Next Steps to Completion:**

R. Pontbriand stated that in light of the network being down he suggested that the Bi-Board defer this item to the next meeting as the use of the shared screen with the working DRAFT of the Financial Policies would best facilitate the discussion.

S. Houde agreed.

The Bi-Board agreed to take this item up at the next meeting due to technical difficulties.

**New Business:**

There was no new business.

**Scheduling of Next Meeting:**

The Bi-Board scheduled its next meeting for Tuesday, February 14, 2023 at 2pm on Zoom.

**Adjournment:**

**Motion:** A motion was made by B. Tierney and seconded by C. Antonellis to adjourn the meeting at 2:32pm. **Motion Passed (5-0) by Roll Call Vote: S. Houde, Y; K. Fraczkowski, Y; B. Tierney, Y; C. Antonellis, Y; R. Pontbriand, Y.**

The meeting adjourned at 2:32pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by R. Pontbriand, Town Manager.

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Executive Bi-Board on February 21, 2023.

Signed:   
Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager