



Town of Ayer

**Executive Bi-Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, May 14, 2020, 2:00pm**

Ayer Town Hall – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Meeting Room  
1 Main Street, Ayer, MA 01432

*Remote Public Participation Meeting Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Accordance with the Provisions of the Governor's Emergency Order Pertaining to the Open Meeting Law*

**Attendance:** Scott Houde (Selectman); Patrick Diamond (Fin Com Chair); Mark Smith (Fin Com Vice-Chair); Lisa Gabree (Finance Manager); Barbara Tierney (Treasurer/Tax Collector); Carly Antonellis (Assistant Town Manager); Robert Pontbriand (Town Manager)

**Others in Attendance:** Kevin Johnston, Benefits and Payroll Manager

**Call to Order:** The Executive Bi Board was called to order at 2:00pm in the First Floor Meeting Room of Town Hall using remote public participation (Zoom Meeting) due to the COVID-19 Pandemic in accordance with the provisions of the Governor's Emergency Order Pertaining to the Open Meeting Law.

R. Pontbriand read the following statement into the record: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, Governor Baker issued an Emergency Order Temporarily Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. 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 broadcast live on Channel 8, Zoom. The public may participate remotely by following the call-in information on the bottom of the live broadcast screen.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

R. Pontbriand asked that the approval of the previous meeting minutes be deferred to the next meeting. The Bi-Board concurred.

**Overview/Discussion of the Town's Finances and the COVID-19 Pandemic:**

R. Pontbriand provided an overview of the Town's Finances because of COVID-19. To date, the Finance Manager has calculated the Town has incurred \$18,000 in unexpected COVID-19 related expenses. If the current trend continue is estimated that the amount will be approximately \$35,000 by June 30, 2020. Additionally, it is anticipated that 75% of these expenses will be reimbursable by the Coronavirus Relief Fund and/or FEMA/MEMA funds.

B. Tierney reported that the Town's collections reports show that 95% of the revenues for FY 2020 have been collected.

R. Pontbriand advised that a Spending Policy was put in effect on April 24<sup>th</sup> which requires all Departmental Spending over \$1,000 to be reviewed and pre-approved by the Town Manager and Finance Manager with funding sources examined.

L. Gabree stated that the Town will have better numbers and a better sense of the potential economic and financial impacts of COVID-19 by late August or early September.

R. Pontbriand agreed and stated that the Town will continue to monitor revenues and spending monthly and report to the BOS and Fin Com.

R. Pontbriand further advised that the Town is in strong financial conditions with strong reserves in stabilization, capital stabilization, unused levy capacity, unrestricted UDAG, \$1.5 million in free cash, and the Town is eligible for up to \$700,000 in Coronavirus Relief Funds through December 31, 2020.

**FY 2021 Budget Update: Discussion on Proposed Plan for the Annual Town Meeting (June 15):**

R. Pontbriand advised that the Annual Town Meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday, June 15, 2020 at 7pm in the High School Auditorium using a plan incorporating social distancing and proper sanitization. He advised that the Internal Finance Group has developed the following proposed plan for the Annual Town Meeting for the purposes of being proactive with respect to the potential/unknown economic/financial impacts of COVID-19. The proposed plan is as follows:

- The FY 2021 State Aid for the Town of Ayer is \$995,000.
- The State is anticipating a revenue shortfall of approximately \$7 billion in the Fall.
- The plan would be for the Board of Selectmen to recommend that the Annual Town Meeting defer the following Town Meeting Articles to the Fall 2020 Town Meeting as follows:

Article 14: UDAG Replenishments: \$230,000

Article 25: Forward Funding of the  
Town's Pension Assessment: \$300,000

Article 26: Stabilization Fund: \$949,139

TOTAL: \$1,479,139

- This will allow the Town to have \$1,479,139 in available funds to address any potential impacts to State Local Aid as well as an additional buffer to address other potential budgetary impacts.

S. Houde stated that he liked the plan and could support it.

P. Diamond stated that it is a good plan and forward thinking.

R. Pontbriand stated that he will be presenting this proposed plan to the BOS at their next meeting for their approval. If approved the plan will then be presented to the Annual Town Meeting.

### **Overview/Discussion of the Potential 1/12 Budget Scenarios:**

The Executive Bi-Board discussed the potential 1/12 budget scenario if the Town is not able to have Town Meeting to approve the FY 2021 Budget by June 30, 2020. Though it appears that the Town Meeting will occur on June 15<sup>th</sup> it is important to prepare accordingly. A 1/12 budget allows the Town to spend on a month to month basis using the previous year's fiscal budget for that month (i.e. July 2020 monthly budget spending limit would be constrained by the appropriation amount from July 2019, etc.)

R. Pontbriand advised that he will be working with the Finance Manager, the Town's Internal Finance Team and Town Counsel to develop the appropriate 1/12 budget plan if it is needed. The BOS and Fin Com will be briefed if needed on the plan prior to implementation.

### **Discussion on Proposed Plan to Monitor Revenues and Spending Due to COVID-19:**

The Town's Internal Finance Team consisting of the Finance Manager, Treasurer/Tax Collector, Assessing Administrator, Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager have implemented a system of monitoring the Town's revenues and spending on a monthly basis for the purposes of determining any financial impacts due to COVID-19.

B. Tierney reiterated that the collections rate for FY 2020 is at 95%.

L. Gabree restated that we need until the end of August/early September before we have some financial history and accurate numbers to begin to quantify the potential impact.

R. Pontbriand stated that revenues and spending will be reported to the BOS and Fin Com monthly or as needed.

### **Review and Discussion of the DRAFT 2020 Budget Book:**

C. Antonellis presented the DRAFT 2020 Budget Book and the Executive Bi-Board reviewed. The plan is for the Bi-Board to do a final review and vote to approve the FY 2020 Budget Book at the next Bi-Board Meeting on May 28, 2020.

S. Houde thanked C. Antonellis for all of her work on the DRAFT 2020 Budget Book.

### **Clear-Gov Update:**

R. Pontbriand advised that the Finance Manager, Assistant Town Manager, and Town Manager met with Clear-Gov remotely regarding the next steps in the development of the Town's "Digital Budget Book". The Town will be providing Clear-Gov with all the financial information needed to build the DRAFT "Digital Budget Book". Once that process is completed the Executive Bi-Board will be asked to review the DRAFT "Digital Budget Book" and to offer input on changes, edits, etc. The DRAFT is expected to be completely by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

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

The Bi-Board scheduled the next remote public participation meeting for Thursday, May 28, 2020 at 2pm.

**Adjournment:**

**Motion:** A Motion was made by S. Houde and seconded by L. Gabree to adjourn the Executive Bi-Board Meeting. Roll Call Vote: S. Houde, Y; P. Diamond, Y; M. Smith Y; B. Tierney, Y; L. Gabree, Y.; C. Antonellis, Y; R. Pontbriand, Y. Motion Passed. 7-0

The Executive Bi-Board adjourned at 3pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Executive Bi-Board on: June 3, 2020

Signed: Robert A. Pontbriand 6/3/2020  
Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager