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TOWN OF AYER
TOWN CLERK

Town of Ayer
Senior Center/Community Center Building Committee
Ayer Town Hall - 1 Main Street
Ayer, MA
First Floor Meeting Room

Wednesday, July 12, 2023, 4pm In-Person and Zoom Meeting
Open Session Meeting Minutes

Committee Present: Carly Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager; Katie Petrossi, COA Director; Jeff Thomas, Parks and Recreation Director; Dan Van Schalkwyk, DPW Director; Kevin Malantic, Parks and Recreation Representative; Dennis Curran, COA Representative; Ellen FitzPatrick [Arrived 4:25pm]; Marge Withee

Absent: Christine Logan

Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions: C. Antonellis called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM on Wednesday, July 12, 2023.

C. Antonellis asked for an amendment to the Agenda to add the approval of the previous meeting minutes from the June 15, 2023 meeting.

Motion: A motion was made by K. Malantic and seconded by D. Curran to amend the agenda to include the approval of the meeting minutes from June 15, 2023. **Motion Passed 5-0**

Public Input:

Pauline Conley (Resident) stated that she had input regarding the previous meeting minutes for June 15, 2023 and would wait to address when the approval of the minutes comes up.

Nell Anderson (Resident): We need a proper Senior Center for Seniors to meet. The proposed location at Pirone Park would only be on a field that is only used ten days out of the year as a ballfield. There are other fields at Pirone Park and in Town where baseball can be played. The Senior Center would be used year-round, at least 240 days a year as opposed to a ball field that is used 10 days a year. Thank you.

Beth Suedemeyer (Resident): I would like to follow up on my comments from the last meeting regarding the Article 97 process which will be required for this project. I support the concept of the project, but I do not support the loss of Open Space to build it. The current use of the field as a ball field is not relevant as there are other potential uses/needs for this open space. Keep the continuity of the park and the open space. More public input is needed and in terms of finding a suitable space for this project.

Cynthia Lefaye: I love the concept of a community center in Town. I do not support taking away open space. Please consider a different location.

Jim Pinard: I agree with the two previous speakers. My concern is about open space. This is not the best location. I do not have any land in Town for this project, but I am against putting it on Pirone Park.

Carolyn McCreary (Resident): This group has worked very hard over the last two years to find a location. The concept of a Senior/community Center is a great idea. There are no viable locations for this project as the group has worked on this for over two years. If someone has land and a location, please let them know. This is what we have to work with, and we should proceed with this location. I am in support of the project.

David Grubb (Resident): I am in favor of this project and its location on a portion of Pirone Park. Having both inside and outside recreation opportunities centrally located is a great benefit for the community. I encourage the project to move forward, and I am in support.

[E. FitzPatrick Arrives at 4:25pm]

Organization of the Committee:

C. Antonellis stated that at the last meeting the Committee had discussed this and wanted to wait until this meeting. The Committee should nominate individuals for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Clerk and if the nominations are seconded then a simple majority vote of the Committee would be in order.

D. Curran nominated Katie Petrossi as Chair. K. Diskin seconded the nomination.

K. Petrossi stated that she would accept if K. Diskin were Vice Chair.

D. Curran seconded K. Petrossi's nomination for K. Diskin to be Vice Chair. K. Diskin stated that he would accept.

C. Antonellis asked if anyone was interested in being Clerk.

D. Curran offered to be the Clerk. K. Malantic seconded.

The proposed slate of officers for the Committee was: K. Petrossi, Chair; K. Diskin, Vice Chair; D. Curran Clerk.

Motion: A motion was made by K. Malantic and seconded by M. Withee to approve the slate of officers as follows: K. Petrossi, Chair; K. Diskin, Vice Chair; D. Curran Clerk. **Motion passed 6-0.**

Update on Article 97 Process for the Pirone Park Site Location:

C. Antonellis provided a brief update. She submitted the initial information to the State on June 6, 2023 and frustratingly to date has not heard back from the State. She also contacted Senator Eldridge's Office to assist. She will continue to follow up and hopefully will have an update by the next meeting. We will keep Article 97 as a standing item on the meeting agenda.

D. Curran asked if there is anything the Committee can do to facilitate a response from the State?

C. Antonellis stated that you could also reach out to Senator Eldridge but he is aware and working on it. It is very frustrating that this is taking so long for a response.

B. Suedemeyer (Resident) stated that the Committee should confirm where it was sent and encourage you to contact DSC regarding the process. It is a more rigorous process now and you may have to buy land to make up for the land used for the project. No town has been through the new process. Perhaps contact Melissa Cryan at DSC.

Update on Plan for Project Funding:

Antonellis acknowledged, Alan Manoian, the Town's Director of Community and Economic Development.

Alan Manoian stated that his Office has applied for a \$300,000 competitive grant from the State Department of Housing and Community Development for grant funding for the development of this project. To date he has not heard anything from them, which is generally a positive sign. We will not know until September.

C. Antonellis stated that this funding would be toward the development of the conceptual design and project due diligence for the project for consideration by Town Meeting.

C. Antonellis further advised that she and K. Petrossi had met on site with an Architect for the purposes of developing a cost estimate for the next level of design and due diligence for consideration by Town Meeting. We are also open to other viable locations but we remain in a "chicken and egg scenario" in which we do not have a definitive site, yet we need some level of project design and due diligence in order for Town Meeting to make an informed decision. The Committee discussed last meeting about requesting up to \$150,000 in ARPA Funds from the Select Board which was also presented to the Select Board at their meeting, and they asked this Committee to develop a funding request and come to the July 18, 2023 Select Board Meeting.

D. Curran stated that we should ask for \$500,000 instead of \$150,000 in ARPA Funds for this project. The ARPA Funds would benefit Seniors who were hit very hard by the COVID-19 Pandemic and to date no ARPA Funds have been authorized by the Select Board to benefit Seniors.

K. Diskin stated that he disagreed with asking for \$500,000. At their last meeting, the Select Board seemed uncomfortable with a \$500,000 request. If we go for \$500,000 and they do not approve, then we get nothing. We need up to \$150,000 for the project design and due diligence to be in a position to make a presentation to the Town Meeting and for Town Meeting to have the information to make an informed decision.

D. Curran stated that a project of this scale is going to require even more than \$500,000.

C. Antonellis stated that the Select Board pushed back at the \$300,000 amount for this project at this phase. They are looking at an amount to get to Town Meeting.

K. Petrossi stated that with the \$150,000 and if we get the \$300,000 grant from the State we should be in a strong position.

D. Curran stated that we need the financial resources to move forward. We are still not talking about anything concrete. We should ask for \$500,000 and if the Select Board says no then we ask for less. Senior should not be shy.

C. Antonellis stated that ARPA Funds are federal funds under the authority of the Select Board and they must be designated by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026. I feel that \$150,000 is appropriate.

K. Diskin stated that he also feels the \$150,000 is appropriate. This will get us to Town Meeting with a proposal that Town Meeting can make an informed decision. If Town Meeting approves, we still have to go through a public funding process which will also involve Town Meeting and the voters.

E. FitzPatrick stated that she felt that \$150,000 was appropriate at this time.

K. Petrossi agreed.

Motion: A motion was made by K. Petrossi and seconded by E. Fitz Patrick to formally request up to \$150,000 in ARPA Funds from the Select Board for the purposes of project design and due diligence for the Senior/Community Center Project. **Motion passed 6-0.**

K. Diskin stated that he would draft the request letter for the Select Board Meeting on July 18, 2023.

Discussion/Plan for Public Outreach and Information:

K. Petrossi stated that the Committee should consider having a public information session on the proposed project and all of the information to date. We should also consider doing a survey of the public asking what amenities and components the public would like in the project. She passed a DRAFT survey for review by the Committee.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the survey and stated that they would like to further review and offer comments with the goal of approving the survey at the next meeting.

Mike Hamel (Resident) stated the survey should only go to registered voters.

J. Thomas stated that he found a lot of value in the survey he recently did on the Pirone Park Playground Project.

C. Antonellis stated that members should review the DRAFT survey and send any comments to K. Petrossi directly. She also presented the FAQ Sheet developed by K. Malantic for the Committee to review and hopefully approve at the next meeting.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from June 15, 2023:

C. Antonellis recognized Pauline Conley (Resident).

Pauline Conley (Resident) stated that on Page 2 of the DRAFT Meeting Minutes from June 15, 2023 it states that Beth Sudemeyer is a former CPC Member, she is actually a current Member.

C. Antonellis stated that we will correct. She also stated that we will add Ken Diskin as being in attendance as he was inadvertently omitted from the DRAFT minutes and the correction of E. Fitz Patricks' name.

Pauline Conley (Resident) stated that the June 15, 2023 meeting was not recorded and she wanted to make sure the following points that were made at the June 15, 2023 meeting are reflected in the meeting minutes / record:

- The site location at Pirone Park is not final.
- Jeff Thomas commented about the wetlands located at the back of Pirone Park.
- The proposed plan is flexible.
- Dennis Curran stated that everything is on the table at this point

C. Antonelli stated that these points will be reflected in the July 12, 2023 meeting minutes (the minutes of this meeting) as stated.

Scheduling of Next Meeting:

The Committee scheduled the next meeting for Wednesday, July 26, 2023 at 4:15pm.

Adjournment:

Motion: A motion was made by K. Malantic and seconded by D. Curran to adjourn the meeting at 5:16pm. Motion passed 6-0.

The meeting adjourned at 5:16pm.

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

Signature Indicating Approval: 

Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager

Date Approved by Committee: July 26, 2023