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Town of Ayer

RATE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes for October 2, 2019

Attendance: Jannice Livingston (Chair); Rick Skoczylas; Mary Spinner; Mark Wetzel (DPW Superintendent); Pam Martin (DPW Business Manager); Lisa Gabree (Finance Manager); Robert Pontbriand (Town Manager)

Absent: Mark Smith (Fin Com Representative)

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order in the First Floor Meeting Room of the Ayer Town Hall at 3:34pm by J. Livingston.

Approval of the September 10, 2019 Meeting Minutes

The Committee reviewed the DRAFT September 10, 2019 Meeting Minutes.

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by R. Skoczylas to approve the meeting minutes from September 10, 2019. **Motion passed 6-0.**

Review and Discussion on the Transfer Station Rates (Permits and Bags) Recommendation:

M. Wetzel passed out a memo explaining the composition of the Transfer Station Rates which included a series of potential rate recommendations for the Committee to consider. He pointed out that approximately 70% of the Transfer Station Budget is fixed with another approximately 30% which is driven by disposal costs. He advised that the Town needs to generate approximately \$285,000 from permits and bags.

L. Gabree passed out a memo discussing the general fund subsidy of the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund explaining how the subsidy works.

M. Wetzel advised that one of the main challenges is that usage of the Transfer Station from residents is going down.

Discussion on Proposed Policy Recommendation: Increasing the Senior Citizen Age from 60 to 65 years of age for the Transfer Station Senior Rate:

The Committee discussed the proposal of increasing the age from 60 to 65 years of age to be eligible for the Senior Rate permit for the Transfer Station.

R. Pontbriand advised that 65 years of age is the Senior Rate for all other discounted Town programs.

M. Spinner stated that she agreed with increasing the age to 65 to be consistent with all other Town programs.

Motion: A motion was made by R. Skoczylas and seconded by M. Spinner to recommend that the Board of Selectmen increase the age from 60 to 65 years of age to be eligible for the Senior Rate Transfer Station Permit. **Motion passed 6-0.**

Discussion on Proposed Policy Recommendation: Not Offering Pro-Rated Transfer Station Stickers (Except for New Residents):

M. Wetzel advised that recently many residents were purchasing transfer station stickers at a pro-rated basis rather than purchasing them for a full year. This practice has resulted in a potential loss of some revenue from permit sticker sales. Additionally, many long term residents have made this a practice.

M. Spinner stated that she has always agreed with not giving pro-rated stickers.

M. Wetzel advised that in the case of new residents who just moved to Town, the issue of pro-rating the sticker the first time is fair. After that, however there should be no pro-rating.

M. Spinner concurred with M. Wetzel as did the Committee.

Motion: A motion was made by M. Spinner and seconded by J. Livingston to recommend that the Board of Selectmen adopt a policy of not offering pro-rated transfer station stickers except for new residents who have just moved to Town. **Motion passed 6-0.**

The Committee returned to the discussion about a rate recommendation for the Transfer Station.

R. Skoczylas stated that as much as we do not like to raise rates, the Town needs to do something in order to ensure that at least \$285,000 is generated. He further asked about the scenario of raising the price of bags by .50 cents.

M. Wetzel advised that if permits are increased by \$5.00 this would generate the \$285,000 needed and would be easier to administer than raising the price of the bags.

J. Livingston stated that she was in favor of the scenario of raising the permit fees by \$5.00 and not the bags. She further asked if the Town was reaching the point where we need to have a discussion on the future of the Transfer Station. She further explained that the motion from the last time the Transfer Station was studied there were very specific circumstances that need to occur before triggering that discussion again.

M. Wetzel responded by stating that at this time it appears to be financially a wash as to whether to go to curbside or keep the transfer station. Of course, more research and discussion would be needed. The issue of whether to keep the Transfer Station open is perhaps best explained as a Town cultural decision.

The Committee reached a consensus that the recommendation to raise the permit fees by \$5.00 as opposed to increasing the costs of the bags was in the best interests of the Town and the transfer station users.

Motion: A motion was made by Rick Skoczylas and seconded by J. Livingston to recommend that the Board of Selectmen raise the transfer station permit fees by \$5.00. **Motion passed 6-0.**

R. Pontbriand advised that all these recommendations will be presented to the Board of Selectmen for their consideration and approval on October 15, 2019 as part of their regular meeting.

New Business:

The only new business was to add the Rate Review Committee Meetings to the Budget Calendar.

Scheduling of Next Meeting:

The Committee set the next meeting for Wednesday, January 22, 2020 at 4pm for the purposes of starting the water and sewer rate review process.

Motion: A motion was made by M. Spinner and seconded by R. Skoczylas to adjourn the meeting at 4:34pm. **Motion passed 6-0.**

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

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Rate Review Committee on: January 22, 2020

Signed:  1-22-2020
Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager