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OCT 10 2023

Town of Ayer

Rate Review Committee

TOWN OF AYER
TOWN CLERK

Meeting Minutes from September 20, 2023



Attendance: Jannice Livingston, Chair; Dan Van Schalkwyk, DPW Director; Kimberly Abraham, Water & Sewer Superintendent; Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager; Andy Loven; Kurt Fraczkowski (Representing Fin Com)

Absent: Andrew Sealey (Fin Com Rep.); Barbara Tierney; Pam Martin

Call to Order: The September 20, 2023 meeting of the Rate Review Committee was called to order at 4:00pm on September 20, 2023 by J. Livingston. (Note: This was an in-person meeting only.)

J. Livingston welcomed Andy Loven of Ayer to the Rate Review Committee as its newest member. She provided an overview of what the Committee does.

Andy Loven introduced himself and stated that he looks forward to working on the Rate Review Committee.

J. Livingston also thanked Kurt Fraczkowski, Chair of the Ayer Fin Com, for representing the Fin Com at today's meeting.

Review and Approval of the Meeting Minutes from September 6, 2023:

The Committee reviewed the DRAFT Meeting Minutes from September 6, 2023 and there were no edits.

Motion: A motion was made by D. Van Schalkwyk and seconded by K. Abraham to approve the meeting minutes from September 6, 2023. **Motion Passed (6-0).**

Update and Discussion on Independent Professional Financial/Operational Analysis of Transfer Station:

D. Van Schalkwyk provided a memo to the Committee and an overview of the proposal to have an independent professional financial operational analysis of the Transfer Station. The analysis would be done in two parts: 1.) data collection and analysis; 2.) meeting with the Committee and developing recommendations based on the analysis.

D. Van Schalkwyk stated that the proposed fee of \$21,000 for the study from Weston and Sampson seems high and could perhaps be negotiated down. He recommends that we solicit some more proposals to get a better price. The price should be more in the \$15,000 range. We should get at least two more proposals.

J. Livingston stated that we should get a couple more quotes. We do not need to do an RFP. We need to do the study and take the time to do it right.

D. Van Schalkwyk stated that it would take approximately four to five weeks to complete the study.

K. Fraczkowski asked if we have any examples of the work product from the consultant?

D. Van Schalkwyk stated that is a good point and he will see what he can find.

K. Abraham stated that she supports the concept of the study because it is good to have an objective look.

Andy Loven stated that it makes sense to get more than one quote and as a resident he supports the concept of a study.

R. Pontbriand stated that he supports the concept of the study and agrees with soliciting more quotes and trying to get the price down. He also stated that in terms of funding sources for the Study, two potential funding sources that the Select Board could consider would be either ARPA Funds or UDAG Funds.

Pauline Conley (Resident) asked for clarification if the study would make recommendations for consideration.

J. Livingston said yes.

Discussion and Vote on Recommendations of the Rate Review Committee to the Select Board:

The Committee discussed its recommendation to the Select Board for Calendar Year 2024 with respect to the Solid Waste Rates.

J. Livingston stated that based on the discussions at previous meetings and a review of the information, it looks like we do not have to raise rates this year.

D. Van Schalkwyk stated that it looks like we do not need to raise permit rates or bag rates for this year, and we should recommend the third-party professional study.

R. Pontbriand concurred.

J. Livingston raised the issue of the timing of selling the new permits being well in advance of January 1.

D. Van Schalkwyk stated that traditionally we have sold them early as that is the expectation of the public and they start purchasing in November.

J. Livingston asked why such a rush if the new sticker is not effective until January 1?

D. Van Schalkwyk stated that traditionally we have started selling them on November 1 and people use that sticker for the year ahead.

J. Livingston said she never realized that, and this was the first time she had heard this. She always puts her new sticker on, on January 1. She stated that it appears that people are getting a couple of months for free?

D. Van Schalkwyk explained that traditionally those who purchased early in November would use the new sticker, so it appears that they are getting an extra month or so?

J. Livingston stated that she never knew this, and this would explain why there is such an urgency to get your sticker early. We need to get everyone on the same page and look at this issue further.

K. Fraczkowski stated that we should not raise the rates on stickers or bags. We should consider having signage and public information in "black and white" clearly explaining the rules for the use of the permit. There appears to be a "gap" between November 1 to December 31 in which people who purchase early have added time. We just need to clarify the rules. Also, the key is that the revenue all falls in the Fiscal Year for budgeting/operational purposes.

R. Pontbriand summarized the recommendations of the Committee for the Select Board as follows: 1.) No increase to the permit or bag rates for Calendar Year 2024 and 2.) The Committee recommends a third party professional financial and operational analysis of the Transfer Station

The Committee concurred.

Motion: A motion was made by D. Van Schalkwyk and seconded by K. Abraham to recommend to the Select Board that there is no increase to the permit or bag rates for Calendar Year 2024 and that the Select Board authorize a third party professional financial and operational analysis of the Transfer Station. **Motion Passed 6-0.**

Discussion on Scheduling of Public Hearing with Select Board Regarding the Rate Review Committee's Recommendations for Calendar Year 2024:

The Committee discussed the date for the Public Hearing which will be part of the Select Board's meeting. The Committee agreed to recommend that the Public Hearing be held on Tuesday, October 17, 2023 at 6pm as part of the Select Board Meeting and to publicly advertise such.

Scheduling of the Next Meeting:

The Committee scheduled the next meeting for Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at 4:00pm.

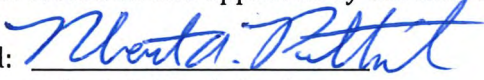
Adjournment:

Motion: A motion was made by K. Abraham and seconded by D. Van Schalkwyk to adjourn the meeting at 4:50pm. **Motion Passed (6-0)**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by R. Pontbriand, Town Manager

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Rate Review Committee on October 10, 2023.

Signed: 
Robert A. Pontbriand
Town Manager