



Town of Ayer

RATE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes from March 15, 2021

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

Also in Attendance: Carly Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager; Dan Van Schalkwyk, Town Engineer

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 4:00pm on the Town's remote Zoom meeting platform by J. Livingston.

J. Livingston read the following 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, and on Zoom. The public may participate remotely by following the call-in information on the bottom of the live broadcast screen.) For the Zoom meeting information relating to remote participation, please contact Carly Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager, at cantonellis@ayer.ma.us or 978-772-8220 prior to the meeting.*

Review and Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes (February 23, 2021):

The Committee reviewed the DRAFT meeting minutes from the February 23, 2021 meeting.

Motion: A motion was made by M. Smith and seconded by R. Skoczylas to approve the February 23, 2021 meeting minutes. **Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote** (J. Livingston, Y; M. Smith, Y; P. Martin, Y; R. Skoczylas, Y; M. Wetzel, Y.; L. Gabree, Y.; R. Pontbriand, Y.)

Review/Discussion/Vote Recommendation(s) for the Proposed FY 2022 Solid Waste (Transfer Station) Rates:

L. Gabree presented an overview of the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund and budget process. She advised that there will be a shortfall in the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund unless the Town raises the rates (revenue) in some fashion.

J. Livingston stated that back in October we decided not to raise the rates due to COVID-19 and that we would revisit in the Spring.

L. Gabree advised that there will be an approximate \$42,000 shortfall. She further advised that stickers are not selling but bags are. The Town is already using some retained earnings and we need to raise revenues.

M. Wetzel stated that the demographics are changing in terms of the use of the Transfer Station. In FY 2020 there were 1,418 stickers sold and in FY 2021 there were only 1,120 stickers sold or a 300-sticker shortfall. He also advised that the Town would need to go out for new recycling and hauling contracts at the end of this fiscal year and those contract costs are expected to increase.

M. Wetzel further advised that he ran a rate model using ten different potential combinations between raising sticker prices and bag prices. His model analysis indicates that increasing bag prices is more stable and it also encourages recycling and reuse.

J. Livingston agreed that if we have to have an increase, the increase on the bag costs is more controllable.

M. Wetzel stated that per his model, an increase of \$1.00 on all three bag sizes (small, medium, and large) would generate the \$300,000 needed to meet the FY 2022 Budget.

The Rate Review Committee further discussed the proposal of increasing the bag costs by \$1.00 for each bag size to be effective on July 1.

Motion: A Motion was made by M. Smith and seconded by R. Skoczylas to recommend that the Select Board increase the costs per bag for all three sizes (small, medium, and large) by \$1.00 effective July 1, 2021. **Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote** (J. Livingston, Y; M. Smith, Y; P. Martin, Y; R. Skoczylas, Y; M. Wetzel, Y.; L. Gabree, Y.; R. Pontbriand, Y.)

Review/Discussion of the Public Presentation for the FY 2022 Water/Sewer/Solid Waste Rate(s) Recommendation(s) to the Select Board on March 16, 2021 at 6pm:

M. Wetzel provided an overview of the proposed public presentation for the March 16, 2021 Select Board Meeting.

J. Livingston stated to add today's Solid Waste recommendation to the presentation.

L. Gabree suggested adding a summary of the previous \$6 million in wastewater treatment plant upgrades to the presentation.

J. Livingston also recommended that the two new positions in the Water and Sewer Enterprise funds be clearly indicated.

New Business:

M. Wetzel raised the issue of an outdoor water ban for this year. At this time, it appears the same type of restrictive ban as previous years will not be necessary unless mandated by the State.

J. Livingston state that the Transfer Station is not closing. We need to look at a different way of handling the Transfer Station in terms of outreach and usage. Should we have a series of public hearings about the Transfer Station explaining all that it has to offer? It would be best to do this in the future in person when conditions permit. We need to communicate to people in a different way about the Transfer Station. August of 2014 was the last time we had the conversation.

Scheduling of Next Meeting:

The Committee scheduled the next meeting for Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 4pm on Zoom.

Adjournment:

Motion: A motion was made by R. Skoczylas and seconded by M. Smith to adjourn the meeting.

Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote (J. Livingston, Y; M. Smith, Y; P. Martin, Y; R. Skoczylas, Y; M. Wetzel, Y.; L. Gabree, Y.; R. Pontbriand, Y.)

The meeting adjourned at 5:14pm.

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

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Rate Review Committee on May 25, 2021

Signed:  5/25/2021

Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager