

Town of Ayer

**\*\*\*\*[DRAFT]\*\*\*\* Rate Review Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, October 12, 2021, 4:00pm**

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

*Remote Public Participation Meeting Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic in Accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 Pertaining to the Open Meeting Law*

**Attendance:** Jannice Livingston (Select Board Member); Rick Skoczylas; Mark Smith (Fin Com Representative); Robert Pontbriand (Town Manager); Lisa Gabree (Finance Manager); Pam Martin (DPW Business Manager); Mark Wetzel (DPW Special Projects Manager)

**Absent:** Dan Van Schalkwyk (DPW Director)

**Call to Order:** The Rate Review Committee was called to order at 4:00pm using remote public participation (Zoom Meeting) due to the COVID-19 Pandemic in accordance with the provisions of the Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 pertaining to the Open Meeting Law.

R. Pontbriand read the following statement into the record: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law (OML), 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 live on Zoom. The public may participate remotely by joining Zoom (Meeting ID# 854 0032 4335) or by calling 929-205-6099. For additional information about remote participation, please contact Carly Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager at [atm@ayer.ma.us](mailto:atm@ayer.ma.us) or 978-772-8220 ext. 100 prior to the meeting.

**Review/Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:**

The Rate Review Committee reviewed the meeting minutes from the last meeting on May 25, 2021.

**Motion:** A motion was made by M. Smith and seconded by R. Skoczylas to approve the Meeting Minutes from May 25, 2021. **Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote (J. Livingston, Y; M. Smith, Y; R. Skoczylas, Y; P. Martin, Y; M. Wetzel, Y; R. Pontbriand, Y; L. Gabree, Y.)**

**Review/Discussion/Vote Recommendation(s) for the Proposed FY 2023 Solid Waste (Transfer Station) Rates:**

J. Livingston stated that last time the Town did not raise the permit rates but just the bag rates.

M. Wetzel presented his memo/recommendation titled "FY 23 Solid Waste Fees". He advised that bag prices have gone up by 23% and the costs of solid waste disposal and recycling contracts have increased by 10%. At this time and there will be an approximate \$25,000 budget shortfall if no action is taken.

He further recommended per his memo that the Rate Committee recommend to the Select Board that they increase the current Residential Permit from \$95 a year to \$100 a year. All other permit and bag fees would remain the same.

J. Livingston noted that we should present the breakdown of the cost increase which would be approximately \$8.33 a month.

M. Wetzel stated that permit sales are still decreasing and that we are selling more Senior permits than regular permits.

L. Gabree stated that she is in support of the recommendation to increase the permit fees by \$5.00 from \$95 to \$100. The FY 2021 expenses in the Solid Waste Enterprise exceeded revenues by \$1,000 which is too close.

R. Skoczylas asked if the increase was on all permits including Seniors or just regular permits?

M. Wetzel stated that the proposed increase would be on the regular permits and that there would be no increase to the Senior permits.

J. Livingston asked how many permits have been sold at this time?

M. Wetzel stated 182 regular permits; 434 Senior permits; and 120 second permits.

J. Livingston asked about increasing the second permit fee.

M. Wetzel state that an increase from \$30 to \$35 for second permits would only generate about \$600 and might cause people not to buy a second permit.

M. Smith stated that he agreed with the recommendation of increasing the regular permits by \$5.00. He stated that he does have concerns about the sustainability of the rate and of the overall Solid Enterprise Fund. He asked about a proposal that you must buy a sticker to have trash cans on the street. And that trash cans can only be out for 24 hours or there is a fine?

J. Livingston stated that COVID has impacted the use of the Transfer Station. We need to publicly show the value. It seems the closer you live to the Transfer Station; you tend to go to it more.

M. Wetzel stated that it is largely a generational change. Younger people do not want to take their trash to the Transfer Station especially if they have babies in diapers. They would rather have curbside. Many are working during the week and have other obligations on the weekends, the last thing they want to do is drive their trash to the Transfer Station.

J. Livingston stated that she would hop we could get the younger crowd educated and using the Transfer Station.

M. Smith asked if ARPA Funds could be used toward the Transfer Station, perhaps for equipment?

R. Pontbriand said that this would have to be investigated.

R. Pontbriand stated that it would be ideal to have a recommendation to the Select Board by the beginning of November so that any new rate can be implemented. He proposed that the Select

Board meets on November 2, 2021, at 6pm on Zoom and that the public hearing for the rate increase could be part of this meeting. This would also give time to promote the public hearing.

J. Livingston concurred that November 2, 2021, would work.

**Motion:** A motion was made by R. Skoczylas and seconded by M. Smith to recommend to the Select Board that the regular Transfer Station permit fee be raised \$5; from \$95 to \$100. **Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote (J. Livingston, Y; M. Smith, Y; R. Skoczylas, Y; P. Martin, Y; M. Wetzel, Y; R. Pontbriand, Y; L. Gabree, Y.)**

J. Livingston stated that for the presentation slides for November 2, that they clearly breakdown the cost impact per month of the increase.

M. Wetzel stated that he would prepare the presentation slides for November 2 and send to the Committee in advance to review.

**New Business:**

M. Wetzel stated that the ASRSD Field Committee is looking at the costs to water the fields. The cost is approximately \$150,000 for wells to water the fields. One potential option would be for an agreement between the Town for irrigation at a lower cost tier with restrictions.

L. Gabree asked if separate meter?

M. Wetzel stated yes.

M. Smith stated that he would like to see the numbers for such a proposal.

M. Wetzel stated that he would prepare an analysis for the Committee to look at.

L. Gabree brought up the issue of water/sewer liens on bills and lien notifications. Is there a process to notify people before the lien?

P. Martin stated that there is a general Facebook warning/notification, but she will ask I.T. to create an email blast to everyone signed up to receive email notifications from the Town. before the lien appears on the bill.

There was no other New Business.

R. Pontbriand stated that the next meeting of the Rate Review Committee will be on November 23, 2021, at 4pm on Zoom.

**Motion:** A motion was made by R. Skoczylas and seconded by M. Smith to adjourn the Rate Review Committee Meeting. **Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote (J. Livingston, Y; M. Smith, Y; R. Skoczylas, Y; P. Martin, Y; M. Wetzel, Y; R. Pontbriand, Y; L. Gabree, Y.)**

The Rate Review Committee Meeting adjourned at 4:46pm

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

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Rate Review Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager

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## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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Dan Van Schalkwyk, P.E. Director  
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### Memorandum

Date: October 12, 2021  
To: Ayer Rate Review Committee  
From: Mark Wetzel P.E.  
Re: FY23 Solid Waste Fees

I updated the Solid Waste Fee Model using FY22 budget and revenue data. I have also prepared a very preliminary FY23 Solid Waste budget. Note that we have new contracts for solid waste disposal and recycling collection and disposal which result in increased costs of approximately 10%. In addition, the DPW received new bids for the purchase of the PAYT bags, which increase the cost by 23%.

For FY22, PAYT bag fees were increased on July 1, 2021, by \$1.00 per bag for all sizes. Based on the PAYT bag sales trends, this increase should generate an additional revenue of approximately \$24,000 per year.

Based on the ATM Appropriation for FY22, the needed revenue is as follows:

<b>Town Meeting Article</b>	
Budget	\$ 528,382
Tax Levy	\$ 160,000
Retained Earnings	\$ 35,000
Revenue needed	\$ 333,382

I evaluated various rate increase scenarios including increasing permit fee and PAYT bag prices to meet the FY22 revenue requirement. Based on the FY22 budget, permit and PAYT bag revenue needs to generate \$333,382. The current rates are projected to generate sufficient revenue (\$348,330) to meet the FY22 budget.

I also evaluated the estimated revenue requirements for FY23. I projected significant budget increases due to 1) increase in solid waste and recycling disposal contract rates, 2) general cost increases due to inflation, 3) aging transfer station facility and vehicles. This estimate will be further refined in the FY23 Budget process. Based on this analysis, it appears the under the current rates, the budget shortfall would be approximately \$25,000.

My recommendation for the Solid Waste Fee increase is to raise the regular residential permit fee from \$95 to \$100 per calendar year. All other permit and PAYT bag fees should remain at current amounts. The fees should be re-evaluated in the spring of 2022 as more revenue data will be available.

In addition, while the bulk tag rates do not generate a significant amount of revenue. The Rate Review Committee should review the current bulk tag requirements and adjust if required.

**Rate Scenarios**

Current Rates	\$348,330
Permit Increase \$5 -All Permits	\$355,060
Increase Regular Permit Only \$5	\$352,040
Permit Increase \$10 /\$5 /\$0	\$358,370
Permit Increase \$15/\$10/\$5	\$365,100
Bag increase \$0.50	\$354,468
Bag Increase \$1.00	\$360,605
Permit Increase \$5 Bag \$1.00	\$367,335
Permit Increase \$5 , Bag \$0.50	\$361,198
Permit Increase \$10/5 , Bag \$0.50	\$364,508
<b>Sales Revenue Needed FY22 -</b>	<b>\$333,382</b>
<b>Estimated Sales Revenue Needed FY23 -</b>	<b>\$357,980</b>