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*Ayer Recycling Committee
Meeting Minutes for
Thursday August 12, 2021
6pm – 8pm
Great Hall, 2nd Floor of Ayer Town Hall*

Attending: Committee members Shawna Graham (via phone), Becky Jones and Dan DeMille (in person), and Ayer resident Laurie Sabol.

1. Becky agreed to assume the role of committee chair that was recently vacated with the retirement & resignation of Laurie Sabol from the committee. Dan moved the nomination, Shawna seconded, and a vote was taken. DD – Y, SG – Y, BJ – Abstaining.
2. Minutes from the June 3rd meeting were reviewed and unanimously approved.
3. RYR2021: A meeting was held on June 30th by Central MA Municipal Assistance Coordinator Irene Congdon to discuss RYR for 2021. Participants included members of the Ayer Recycling Committee (ARC), the Littleton Sustainability Committee, the Townsend Recycling Committee, and MassToss. The ARC has hosted RYR annually for 13 years. However, committee resignations, vendor issues, cost increases, and Covid-19 all have created significant challenges and mean that Ayer will need more support from other towns & organizations to hold RYR2021. With Irene's guidance and assistance, Groton, Townsend, Littleton, Lunenburg, and Shirley have pledged their support for a scaled-down RYR 2021 on October 23rd at ASRMS.

The committee members provided updates on Ayer's RYR tasks & responsibilities, and discussed updates from Irene and Brian Balukonis of Littleton, who is coordinating vendors this year. ARC's responsibilities are volunteer recruiting & coordination; publicity; securing a site; providing site supplies and utilizing resources from Ayer DPW; and updating/maintaining the RYR website.

4. Compost Bin & Kitchen Scrap Bucket Sales: In May, outgoing chair Laurie Sabol placed an order of 20 home compost bins from our vendor via DPW. It was her intent to continue managing the program for sales of bins & buckets after her resignation, eventually turning it over to community organization like the scouts, Masons, etc. However, as this program impacts Ayer's RDP grant funding, and the bins & buckets are purchased with town funds, the program must remain with the town (ARC & DPW).

Becky will assume responsibility for the program for now. Laurie's order was recently delivered, and Becky has been fulfilling orders. Becky is securing table space at the Downtown Hearth of Ayer Festival on October 2nd to promote the ARC with outreach & education about recycling, composting and the Ayer Transfer Station & Devens HHW, and will sell scrap buckets and take orders for compost bins at the table, too.

5. MA H878, Reduction of Packaging of Consumer Goods: Laurie Sabol, former committee member, addressed the meeting with an update about MA House Bill H878, similar to a recent

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bill in Maine, to implement measures requiring product manufacturers to reduce use of excessive or unnecessary packaging materials, particularly those that are non-recyclable or difficult to recycle in the state, and shifts the burden of responsibility for collecting & recycling such materials to the manufacturer from consumers & municipalities.

6. Library of Things: Laurie also spoke to us regarding a proposal to create a lending library of "things", possibly in conjunction with the Ayer Library or Friends of the Library, with possible funding using Ayer's RDP grant money. The library groups currently have low interest in this proposal, but Laurie believes that support & commitment from the ARC might increase the Library's willingness to pursue this as a project, as well as DPW's willingness to release RDP funding for it. RDP eligibility is uncertain. The committee asked questions about concerns re: physical space, liability, maintenance and repair/replacement/return of items, and the costs to acquire & maintain whatever "things" are to be included in the library, but as this is a very early, high-level idea, no information was available on these issues.

At the present time, the ARC has neither the funds, manpower or physical space to pursue such a project, even in partnership with the Library. However, the committee agreed to revisit the idea in the future, if the Library wished to pursue this as a project or new service, and could provide a proposal that addressed our concerns.

7. ARC page on Town of Ayer website: Several town website links & documents direct to Laurie's defunct town email address, and provide her personal phone number for contact information. Becky met with the Town IT Administrator to review all the town web site links & sub-site pages to identify & correct this issue, as initiated updates to the listing of current ARC committee members, and to reflect the committee's new email address AyerRecycles@Ayer.MA.US in all contact links.
8. Future Meetings: Due to the ongoing pandemic, it is likely that state or town health policies may require future meetings to be held remotely vs. in-person. With limited town staff and resources, this makes scheduling difficult, as the Town IT Administrator must be available to facilitate & record all meetings in order to maintain town compliance with MA Open Meeting & Public Records laws. It would be best to consider having a recurring, regular meeting schedule for 2022 determined in advance. This would enable us to conduct business as needed, since holding remote meetings make it difficult, if not impossible, to hold meetings on short notice, as they can only occur when the Town IT Administrator is available, and cannot occur simultaneously with meetings of any other town board, committee, etc..

9. Adjourn

Approved by PD, SJ, BJ

December 13, 2021

Rebecca R. M. Jones

Chair, Ayer Recycling Committee

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