

Flooded Room for the Ayer Water Update

By Bryce Valliere

While the main topic of the meeting was the update regarding water in Ayer, there were a few other important things first. First of all, Fire Chief Robert L. Pedrazzi came to the meeting to discuss the need for a new fire engine. Fire Engine 2 has had two major repairs this year, one of them at the same time as Fire Engine 4 being down. While parts can be found to replace the engines, they are both very old and parts are hard to come by, causing serious delays. The new engine will cause a tax raise, but it will be a one time tax raise and that is it. The other engine will need replacing in the next few years, as will the ladder truck, but for now, there is a great need for one new engine.

There will be ground breaking on the project on Prospect and Oak Street in May. This project will include rebuilding entire street sidewalk to sidewalk, adding a new sewer, and new water mains, creating new crosswalks, adding new courthouse parking and a sally port. This will also make it a one way street, which has already been voted on a few weeks ago.

Additionally, the Ayer transfer station will now be available for Devens residents. The price for Devens residents will have to be higher than Ayer residents because the permit for the transfer station is subsidized in the taxes, and Devens residents do not pay Town of Ayer taxes. The current recommendation is for a \$175 fee for Devens residents, which is \$85 more than the \$90 fee for Ayer residents. There is no recommendation for senior permit fees, and it is not recommended that Devens residents become registered voters in Ayer. There is no expectation for this to have a big boost, but there is no cost for offering it, so the entire thing is for profit.

Superintendent Mark Wetzel and many Ayer residents came mostly for the Ayer water update. First and foremost, Superintendent Wetzel would like to make it clear that from many many tests, as far as he is aware, Ayer's water is safe. He reminds everyone that the sensitive population, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and children, should not drink the water as a precaution, but there seems to be nothing wrong with the water. If anyone still has concerns, call Mr. Wetzel at the DPW, email him, or check the town website.

As for things residents can do now, update the DPW if there is significant water issues. Residents can get a carbon filter for their sink to filter the tap water, or buy bottled water. However, be careful with bottled water. Poland Springs and Aquafina are both tested for PFAS, the chemical the town of Ayer is in the process of removing. Storebrand water is not necessarily tested for PFAS, and therefore is unreliable. Keep in mind, the Ayer drinking water has not proven to cause any bodily harm, but if you are still concerned these are some things you can do.

Additionally, the Ayer DPW is in the process of getting a full scale treatment plan in place. Part of the contaminant has come from the military base in Devens, and the military has verbally agreed to pay for part of the treatment plan, specifically including the installation of a filtration system. For the meantime, residents can have Nashoba Analytical come and test the water to confirm the safety of the water.

Finally, for anyone who saw an article in the Boston Globe about the water quality in Ayer, the article has been removed. Quotes were taken completely out of context, making a more interesting article, but it was false. Fox 25 recorded a clip addressing the article, but to summarize that, the article contained a bias. There is no need to worry about Ayer's drinking water, but if you want to stay on the side of caution, remember there are many things you can do.