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TOWN OF AYER

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Town of Ayer
Ayer Select Board
Ayer Town Hall – 1st Floor Meeting Room
Ayer, MA 01432



Broadcast and Recorded by APAC

Tuesday February 9, 2021
Open Session Meeting Minutes

SB Present: Shaun C. Copeland, Chair; Scott A. Houde, Vice-Chair
Both Via Remote Participation

SB Absent: Jannice L. Livingston, Clerk

Fin Com Present: Patrick Diamond, Chair; Mark Smith, Vice-Chair; Matthew Selby; Lou Conrad
All Via Remote Participation

Fin Com Absent: Terry Harvell

Also Present: Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager
Carly M. Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager
Dr. Mary Malone, Superintendent of Schools, Ayer Shirley Regional School District
Mr. William Plunkett, Business Manager, Ayer Shirley Regional School District
All Via Remote Participation

Select Board Call to Order: S. Copeland called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM.

Remote Access: S. Copeland stated that pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, MGL Chapter 30A, Section 18 and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Ayer Board of Selectmen is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort has been made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided in the Order. All votes will be taken by Roll Call.

Finance Committee Call to Order: P. Diamond called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM.

Dr. Malone was joined by two members of the Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee for her FY '22 budget presentation, Mrs. Joyce Reischutz, Chair and Mr. Jonathan Deforge, Secretary. Dr. Malone reported that from FY '20 – FY '21 the District is down about 80 students, which is largely contributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Choice Out enrollment has increased by 11 students and the Choice In enrollment is down 12. Dr. Malone stated that the Special Education Enrollment is 21.5% of the total enrollment or 317 students. She stated that the Special Education Out of District Costs range from \$36,000 to \$312,000 per placement.

Mr. Plunkett presented the budget drivers for FY '22, he stated that health insurance, employee salaries, and Out of District tuition costs are several of the major drivers. He stated that overall revenue is down about \$135,000 compared to last year. He reported that the overall district assessment would increase by 2.2%, which is an increase of about \$430,000 dollars. The Ayer assessment, without debt service would be, \$11,769,808, an increase of \$243,995 or 2.1%. The Ayer assessment, with debt service would be, \$12,680,749, an increase of \$12,680,749 or 1.8%.

P. Diamond asked how Ayer and Shirley costs compared to the state average. B. Plunkett stated the Town is a little under the state average with the state on per pupil expenditures.

S. Copeland asked about special education students in cost sharing districts. Dr. Malone explained that when a Special Education student moves into a new district mid-year, the costs are shared between the two communities.

L. Conrad asked if the state puts a cap on Special Education costs. Dr. Malone stated that there is no state cap. B. Plunkett stated that some costs are offset the next year by the Special Education Circuit Breaker. He then noted that the health insurance for FY '22 was at a 5% increase and was wondering if the District had received specific information or whether that was a projection. B. Plunkett stated that it was a projection based on information from the underwriter. L. Conrad asked whether the Computer Science position was filled at the high school. Dr. Malone stated that the position was not filled, due to the pandemic, but is looking to fill it for the next school year.

R. Pontbriand thanked Dr. Malone and B. Plunkett and members of the School Committee for their budget presentation. S. Copeland asked for any public input; there was none.

L. Conrad thanked Dr. Malone for her years of service. He asked Dr. Malone, if there were no confines of a budget, what item would she be advocating for. Dr. Malone stated the high school fields need to be updated because they are in dire shape and not usable.

Dr. Malone then presented the District's 3 Year Capital Plan, which includes new boilers at Page Hilltop School, the addition/replacement of air filters due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

S. Houde asked about the field project and asked if Shirley had set a date for the vote. Dr. Malone stated that the field project funding question would be placed on the Annual Town Election Ballot.

S. Houde then asked about the status of Page Hilltop School and that about 2 years ago the Select Board asked the School Committee, with the support of the Finance Committee to considering replacing Page Hilltop and starting the MSBA process. Dr. Malone stated that right now the focus is getting the field replaced. Shirley Member J. Reischutz stated that the MSBA had done an evaluation stating that the Page Hilltop School classrooms were too big and was scaling back projects. She stated that she would be interested in submitted a letter from the District, once the MSBA offers more large-scale funding. S. Houde stated that both elementary schools are in need of repair and hopes that the School Committee continues to evaluate options and that he would help in that process.

Select Board Adjournment:

Motion: A motion was made by S. Copeland and seconded by S. Houde to adjourn at 7:14 PM. **By Roll Call:** S. Copeland, aye; S. Houde, aye. **Motion passed by Roll Call Vote 2-0.**

Fin Com Adjournment:

Motion: A motion was made by M. Smith and seconded by M. Selby to adjourn at 7:15 PM. **By Roll Call:** P. Diamond, aye; M. Selby, aye; M. Smith, aye; L. Conrad, aye. **Motion passed by Roll Call Vote 4-0.**

Minutes Recorded and Submitted by Carly M. Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager

Date Minutes Approved by BOS: 2/9/21

Signature Indicating Approval: [Signature]