



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



Broadcast and Recorded by APAC

Tuesday January 19, 2021
Open Session Meeting Minutes

SB Present: Shaun C. Copeland, Chair; Scott A. Houde, Vice-Chair; Jannice L. Livingston, Clerk
All Via Remote Participation

Also Present: Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager
Carly M. Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager
Both Via Remote Participation

Call to Order: S. Copeland called the meeting to order at 6:00 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.

Pledge of Allegiance: Select Board members and meeting attendees stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements: S. Copeland announced that the First FY '22 Budget Presentation to the SB and Finance Committee will be held remotely on Wednesday January 27, 2021 at 6:00 PM. Finance Forums

Approval of Meeting Agenda:

Motion: A motion was made by S. Houde and seconded by J. Livingston to approve the meeting agenda. **Roll Call:** S. Copeland, aye; S. Houde, aye; J. Livingston, aye. **Motion passed by Roll Call Vote 3-0.**

Public Input: D. Bodurtha, 28 Coolidge Road asked if there was a traffic study done by the Town of Ayer relating to an upcoming project at the Indian Music Hall in Groton. R. Pontbriand reported that he would look into the issue further.

Recognition of Assessors Office for Data Conversion: S. Copeland read the following letter into the record from Board of Assessors Chair John Kilcommins:

On behalf of the entire Board of Assessors, I would like to express our sincere admiration for the amazing efforts put in by Assessing Administrator Tom Hogan and Assessing Department Assistant Jacquelyn Guthrie on their successful conversion of Ayer's entire real estate database. The Assessing Department's internal audit of the conversion to Tyler Technologies' iasWorld Appraisal Solution has received final approval from the Bureau of Local Assessment. Out of the 40 Massachusetts communities participating in this process Ayer is one of the few to have received this approval. This conversion, lasting over 18 months, involved a considerable amount of work. In FY20 both the legacy system, CSC, and iasWorld Appraisal Solution were run in parallel. For FY21 the town has moved to iasWorld Appraisals while all ongoing Assessing Department functions continued without interruption. Thank you to Tom and Jacquelyn for all of their hard work and diligence.

Superintendent Mark Wetzel, DPW: *Street Opening and Driveway/Accessway Permit Regulations* – The SB received a presentation from the DPW Superintendent on the proposed Street Opening and

Driveway/Accessway Permit Regulations. These regulations will be available on the Town's website at www.ayer.ma.us for public review and input. The public should direct any questions/input to the DPW Superintendent at mwetzal@ayer.ma.us or at 978-772-8240. The SB will vote to adopt at a future meeting after the public input period.

Beth Suedmeyer, Committee Member, Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Committee: *Update on Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Committee* – B. Suedmeyer gave a brief update to the SB. She stated since its formation, the Stewardship Council has organized itself through adoption of Bylaws and supplemental Policies and Procedures; designated the NRWA as its fiscal agent; and adopted a budget and work plan. The Council is working on a variety of projects including some of the following: Canoe Access Assessments, Shoreline Surveys, and Riparian Land Management Educational Brochures.

Town Clerk Susan Copeland: *Approval of Annual Town Election Warrant* – The SB was joined by Town Clerk Susan Copeland. to officially call the 2021 Annual Town Election to be held on May 11, 2021 from 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM in the Auditorium of the Ayer Town Hall.

Motion: A motion was made by S. Copeland and seconded by J. Livingston to Call the Annual Town Election for Tuesday, May 11, 2021 to be held at the Ayer Town Hall, 2nd Floor Great Hall from 7am – 8pm. Warrant with the following open positions: *Assessor (1) 3 year term, (1) 2 year term; Board of Health (1) 3 year term; Commissioner of Trust Funds (1) 3 year term; Constable (1) 3 year term; Housing Authority (1) 5 year term; Library Trustee (3) 3 year term; Park Commissioner (2) 3 year term; Planning Board (2) 3 year term; Regional School District Committee (1) 3 year term; Select Board (1) 3 year term; Moderator (1) 1 year term.* The last day to request nomination papers is Friday, March 19th, 2021, at 12:00 PM. The last day to submit nomination papers is Monday, March 22nd, 2021, at 4:00 PM. **Roll Call:** S. Copeland, aye; S. Houde, aye; J. Livingston, aye. **Motion passed by Roll Call Vote 3-0.**

Annual Election Update – Town Clerk Susan Copeland then gave the SB an overview of the nomination paper process and obtaining signatures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Town Manager's Report: *Administrative Update/Review of Town Warrant(s)* - R. Pontbriand provided the Select Board with an update on the various activities, initiatives, and projects of the Administration since the Select Board last met. He also provided a list of signed Town Warrants in the meeting packet. He stated that the main focus of the Administration is preparing for next week's budget forum. He also stated that various Town Departments are focusing on the implementation of the recently awarded Massworks grant.

COVID-19 Update – R. Pontbriand reported that things are mainly status quo and the Town of Ayer is listed as red on the State's COVID-19 map. He stated that the Town continues to follow best practices and is looking forward to more information relating to the vaccine. He reported that Fire Department personnel are doing testing for Town employees and that the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health will be holding a vaccine clinic for first responders.

FY '22 Budget Update – R. Pontbriand reported that the Finance Committee and the SB have the first version of the FY '22 budget. He stated that he will be giving a very high-level introduction to the budget at the 1/27/21 forum. He and the Finance Manager continue to review the budget to look for additional efficiencies. He noted that the Nashoba Tech Assessment will be available Feb. 5, 2021 and the Ayer Shirley Regional School District assessment will be available Feb. 9, 2021.

Request to Increase Reserve Fund for FY '22 – R. Pontbriand, Finance Manager Lisa Gabree, and the SB discussed increasing the Town's reserve fund in FY '22 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will allow the Town to address the unforeseen impacts of COVID-19 if they arise. S. Houde noted that this would allow the Town to rely less on the UDAG account and noted that it is a good policy to be proactive.

Extension of Family First Corona Relief Act – R. Pontbriand was joined by Benefits and Payroll Director Kevin Johnston. K. Johnston stated that The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) mandate to provide Emergency Paid Sick Leave for employees with a COVID-19 diagnosis or exposure and Expanded Family and Medical Leave to employees with dependent children whose school or place of day care is closed due to COVID-19 expired on December 31, 2020. The federal Consolidated Appropriations Act (CCA) approved in December 2020 includes a provision for the employer to voluntarily extend both the EPSL and EFML benefits through March 31, 2021. He noted there is no increase in the EPSL or the EMFL benefits; the voluntary extension provides an additional three months of the time to use these benefits. He is recommending the SB extend the FFCRA until March 31, 2021.

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Houde to extend the FFCRA through March 31, 2021. **Roll Call:** S. Copeland, aye; S. Houde, aye; J. Livingston, aye. **Motion passed by Roll Call Vote 3-0.**

Opening of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant – R. Pontbriand stated that the Annual Town Meeting will be held on Monday April 26, 2021. He is requesting that the SB open the ATM warrant and have it close on Friday April 2, 2020 at 12:00 PM (both for warrant articles and Citizen's Petitions).

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Houde to open the April 26, 2021 Annual Town Meeting Warrant until 12:00 PM on Friday April 2, 2021. **Roll Call:** S. Copeland, aye; S. Houde, aye; J. Livingston, aye. **Motion passed by Roll Call Vote 3-0.**

New Business/Selectmen's Questions: None

Approval of Meeting Minutes: A motion was made by S. Houde and seconded by J. Livingston to approve the Meeting Minutes from December 21, 2020. **Roll Call:** S. Copeland, aye; S. Houde, aye; J. Livingston, aye. **Motion passed by Roll Call Vote 3-0.**

Adjournment:

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Houde to adjourn at 7:24 PM. **Roll Call:** S. Copeland, aye; S. Houde, aye; J. Livingston, aye. **Motion passed by Roll Call Vote 3-0.**

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

Date Minutes Approved by BOS: 2 Feb 2021

Signature Indicating Approval: James Rea