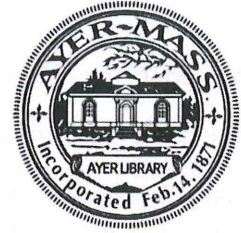


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TOWN OF AYER
TOWN CLERK



Town of Ayer
Joint Meeting of the Ayer Select Board and
Ayer Finance Committee
Ayer Town Hall – 1st Floor Meeting Room
Ayer, MA 01432



Broadcast and Recorded by APAC

Wednesday March 16, 2022
Open Session Meeting Minutes

SB Remotely Present: Shaun C. Copeland, Chair; Scott A. Houde, Vice-Chair

SB Not in Attendance: Jannice L. Livingston, Clerk

Fin Com Remotely Present: Patrick Diamond, Chair; Mark Smith, Vice-Chair

Fin Com Not in Attendance: Lou Conrad

Also Remotely Present: Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager
Carly M. Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager

SB Call to Order: S. Copeland called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. 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 and Channel 8. S. Copeland stated that all votes will be taken by Roll Call.

Fin Com Call to Order: The Finance Committee did not call to order, due to lack of quorum.

Second FY '23 Budget Public Presentation: R. Pontbriand thanked both boards for their attendance and noted that most department heads were in attendance. He also thanked Lisa Gabree, Finance Manager/Town Accountant for her assistance with the budget, noting that this will be her last public budget forum. He thanked Carly Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager for her help with the presentation. He will be presenting DRAFT #3 of the budget, which is on the Town's budget page at ayer.ma.us/budget. R. Pontbriand reviewed the budget process and calendar. He then highlighted the fund balances of the following accounts: 2021 Free Cash Balance at \$2,528,927; the 2021 Stabilization Fund Balance at \$2,684,322; the Capital Stabilization Fund Balance at \$2,787,812. R. Pontbriand stated that he is proposing that the FY '23 Reserve Fund be budgeted at \$300,000, which is the same as last year. He is recommending this due to current economic uncertainty, specifically inflation. He also noted the current increasing costs for fuel and the volatility in commodity costs and supply chain delays. R. Pontbriand presented the percentage increases of the omnibus budget over the past eight fiscal years, noting that the average was 4.77%. As of DRAFT #3 the proposed increase over last year is 4.06%, which includes new personnel; a 2% COLA for non-union staff, compensated elected officials and call firefighters; cost impacts for DPW, Fire and Police Sergeants union contracts and cost impacts for Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Building Commissioner and Facilities Director non-union contracts.

R. Pontbriand then presented recommended uses for the FY '22 Free Cash, which totals \$2.5 million. The Executive Bi-Board discussed the proposed uses and is recommending the following amounts and uses: \$65,000 UDAG replenishment; \$181,000 GASB-45 OPEB fund; \$300,000 forward funding of pension assessment; \$63,837 compensated absences reserve fund; \$1.5 million in Capital Stabilization and \$400,000 in stabilization. R. Pontbriand presented all FY '23 Capital Budget items which will be borrowed for in the amount of \$998,000 and items that will be purchased from Capital Stabilization totaling \$350,000. He also presented information on a needed Debt Exclusion for the purchase of a fire engine pumper truck.

There were no questions from the Select Board nor the Finance Committee.

Pauline Conley, 40 Cambridge Street, asked if the Town Social Worker was available to residents or just Town employees and what the cost would be. R. Pontbriand stated that the intent is to provide services to any resident with a social service issue. He stated that he is not envisioning a fee structure at this time. P. Conley asked if Free Cash could be earmarked for certain items or expenses? L. Gabree stated that yes it can, but there hasn't been the need to do that recently. P. Conley asked if the Finance Committee has met independently to review the budget and prepare their report for Town Meeting? P. Diamond stated no but that when a quorum was available, they would do so in a public session. She stated that the Finance Committee is required to provide a report at Town Meeting. P. Diamond said that there is information after each warrant article with the Finance Committee's recommendation.

Dennis Curran, 51 Pleasant Street asked what the rationale of the federal government was in providing funds from the SAFER grant for 4 additional firefighters per shift in the first 3 years of the grant program. Chief Johnston stated that the 3 years is what the federal government can provide for funding. The Town has an increase in calls, with a decrease of Call firefighters responding. The Town would be responsible for funding in year 4. D. Curran asked if the Town is anticipating an increase in calls for service that would warrant the additional staffing. Deputy Chief Jeremy Januskiewicz stated that fire department manning hasn't been adjusted since 1998 when the Town went from 2 firefighters per shift to 3. Since that time, call volume has doubled at 1,600 medical calls per year. The increased staffing meets National Fire Protection Agency standards. D. Curran then stated that his understanding is that the Town Social Worker wouldn't be providing individual clinical work but more referring clients to other available services.

Sara Withee, 11 Groton Shirley Road asked what the department structure of the DPW will look like after the junior engineer is hired. DPW Director Dan Van Schalkwyk stated that the Junior Engineer would be under the Town Engineer.

P. Conley asked D. Van Schalkwyk asked about the civil engineer vs. the Town engineer. D. Van Schalkwyk stated that the Town would be adding one new position of junior civil engineer. The Town Engineer position that is already funded in the budget is currently vacant.

SB Adjournment: A motion was made by S. Houde and seconded by S. Copeland to adjourn at 7:00 PM. **By Roll Call Vote:** S. Copeland, aye; S. Houde, aye. **Motion passed 2-0.**

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

Date Minutes Approved by SB: 5/16/22

Signature Indicating Approval: 