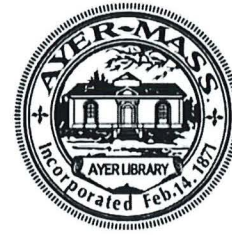


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TOWN OF AYER
TOWN CLERK



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

Broadcast and Recorded by APAC

February 6, 2024
Open Session Meeting Minutes

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

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

Call to Order: S. Houde called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. S. Houde further stated that this meeting/hearing of the Ayer Select Board (SB) will be held in-person at the location provided on this notice. Members of the public are welcome to attend this in-person meeting. Please note that while an option for remote attendance and/or participation via Zoom is being provided as a courtesy to the public, the meeting/hearing will not be suspended or terminated if technological problems interrupt the virtual broadcast, unless otherwise required by law. Members of the public with particular interest in a specific item on this agenda should make plans for in-person vs. virtual attendance accordingly. This meeting will be live on Zoom and Channel 8. The public may access the proceedings by joining Zoom (Meeting ID# 897 9080 0793) or by calling (929-205-6099).

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

Approval of Meeting Agenda:

Motion: A motion was made by S. Copeland and seconded by J. Livingston to approve the meeting agenda. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Announcements: None

Public Input: None

Joint Meeting with Ayer Finance Committee - Presentation of Ayer Shirley Regional School District FY '25 Budget - Dr. Adam Renda and Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee:

Finance Committee Call to Order – K. Fraczkowski, Chair called the Finance Committee to order at 6:02 PM. Members present were Kurt Fraczkowski, Jin Hong, Eric Sechman and Andrew Sealey (Via Remote Participation).

Dr. Renda was joined by Bill Plunkett, Business Manager, and Charlie Caliri, Assistant Superintendent and gave a presentation on the FY '25 budget.

Dr. Renda stated that there would be a public hearing on the budget on February 14, 2024. Dr. Renda reported that District Enrollment is up 51 students from the previous year. The Choice Out enrollment is 96 students and the Choice In enrollment is 96. There are 3 fewer students from Ayer attending the Charter School and there are 9 fewer students attending Nashoba Tech. Dr. Renda stated that the Special Education Enrollment is 20.5% of the total enrollment. He stated that the Special Education Out of District Costs in FY'25 are expected to range from \$43,000 to \$350,000 per placement, which is 9.1%

of the total budget.

Mr. Plunkett presented the budget revenues and budget drivers for FY '25. He stated that health insurance, employee salaries, and transportation are the major budget drivers. He mentioned the reduction in ESSR grants from the federal government will have an impact of the local budget. The Ayer assessment, without debt service would be, \$13,698,020, an increase of 9.0%. The Ayer assessment, with debt service would be, \$14,690,730, an increase of 8.4%. He said that they are working on the budget to bring the assessments down. Dr. Renda agreed and noted that he wanted to show the Board the cost of doing business, but realizes the figure needs to come down. There are 12 positions that are vital that the District will fund through various methods, including the Excess and Deficiency account.

E. Sechman asked where the 12 positions were. Dr. Renda said two to three per building and they are school adjustment counselors, reading specialists, a social worker for the high school and a grants coordinator, as well as other paraprofessional positions.

R. Pontbriand asked what the approximate figure was for the E&D account. W. Plunkett stated \$1.1 million. R. Pontbriand then asked about 24% increase in the central office. W. Plunkett stated that number was for all salary.

There was additional discussion. Dr. Renda stated that the District is working with the School Committee to get the assessment figures down. R. Pontbriand asked if there was a figure that the District is looking to reduce the overall budget by. Dr. Renda stated that he is looking for about \$300,000 in reduced costs.

Adjournment of Finance Committee -

Motion: A motion was made by J. Hong and seconded by E. Sechman to adjourn at 6:44 PM. **Motion passed 4-0.**

Affordable Housing/Zoning Bylaw Working Group Update - Janet Providakes: J. Providakes stated that she was appearing before the Board as the Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee. She has convened a working group whose goal is to create more affordable housing in Ayer, consisting of 4 volunteers and 3 Town Hall employees. The working group is looking for a better way to track and diversify the affordable housing inventory. The working group has forwarded suggestions to the Planning Board for consideration of being added to the Zoning Bylaw. J. Livingston stated that she is hopeful that the work of the working group will feed into the update of the Master Plan.

Dan Van Schalkwyk, Director, Department of Public Works - Execution of Contract for Spec. Pond Water Treatment Plant Filter Media Project: D. Van Schalkwyk presented a contract for execution for replacement of the Greensand filter media at the Spectacle Pond Water Treatment Facility. The Board awarded the Contract, including authorization of supplemental ARPA funds, at the January 16th meeting. Winston Builders Corporation has provided the required insurance, bonds, and contract requested in the award.

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Copeland to execute the contract for the Spectacle Pond Water Treatment Plant Filter Media Replacement Project in the amount of \$408,889.00 for signature by the Chair. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Curley Circle Street Acceptance – D. Van Schalkwyk stated that the street acceptance of Curley Circle was voted favorably at the Fall 2023 Town Meeting, authorizing acquisition by the Select Board. The final step of street acceptance is for the Select Board to acquire the street and required easements. He is recommending that the Board accept the Easement Deed to acquire the street and easements.

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Copeland to accept the easement deed and acquire the street and easements for Curley Circle. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Proposal for Acquisition of 71 Sandy Pond Road: R. Pontbriand was joined by D. Van Schalkwyk to discuss the potential of the Town of Ayer purchasing 71 Sandy Pond Road which was recently acquired by a private developer at auction. The 2.86 acre property is located diagonally across the street from Sandy Pond Beach. The Town was approached about an opportunity of purchasing the land due to its proximity to the Town Beach. If the Town were to acquire the land, the Town could make further enhancements to the property. The Select Board met in several Executive Session meetings to discuss which ultimately culminated in the Purchase and Sales agreement. The private developer has plans to construct two residential duplexes on the property but is willing to sell the property to the Town of Ayer for \$700,000 with the contingencies of demolishing and removing all structures on the property and leveling the property to grade; and subject to approval by the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) on April 22, 2024. R. Pontbriand presented some conceptual renderings prepared by the DPW and stated that it is important to note that this is an opportunity for the Town to acquire this property that is also in the project zone for the Sandy Pond Road Complete Streets Project and Safer Streets initiative. The Town could further develop the Town's parks and recreation assets to include potentially some parking; a park; a playground; a pavilion; some parks storage; and endless other potential public ideas for the benefit of the Town. He stressed that there is no definitive plan for this property at this time and the future of the property, if acquired, would be the result of a specific public process. Additionally, this property would not be used as a future site for the Senior Center as the property does not meet the requirements for that project. S. Houde stated that the beach area could be reconfigured and expanded with additional parking across the street. R. Pontbriand spoke about the funding for the \$700,000 purchase. He said that there is the possibility of CPC funding in the amount of \$350,000 and the remainder could be paid out of ARPA, UDAG or some combination. J. Livingston made note that the property owner has been proceeding down two tracks, meaning talking with the Town and pursuing permitting for development in the event that the Town Meeting votes the proposal down.

Pauline Conley, 40 Cambridge Street stated that she hopes Town Meeting will approve the proposal. She also asked about releasing the Executive Session meeting minutes. R. Pontbriand stated they would be released at the next meeting. She also stated that she hopes this project can be funded totally through the CPC.

Kurt Fraczkowski, 39 Groton Harvard Road stated that he is glad to see that a large amount of construction equipment has been removed. He also stated that he was glad to see that any potential environmental concerns were addressed in the Purchase and Sales.

Ken Diskin, 180 Washington Street asked what the Parks Commission thought about the proposal. R. Pontbriand stated that the Chair and the Parks Director are aware and that he'll be going in front of the Parks Commission in the next week.

Town Manager's Report - Administrative Update/Review of Warrants: R. Pontbriand presented an administrative update on the various activities, initiatives, and projects of the Town since the Select Board last met. He reported that the Senior Center Site Selection/Building Committee will be meeting Thursday February 8, 2024. He stated that the Rate Review Committee has recommended that the Select Board hold the FY '25 Water and Sewer Rate Public Hearing on Tuesday March 19, 2024. He noted that the Assessing Administrator will be leaving at the end of March; that Jeff Thomas, Parks & Recreation Director has announced his retirement effective April 4, 2024; he said that he is also advertising for the Assistant Town Accountant position.

FY 2025 Budget Process Update – R. Pontbriand stated he will present DRAFT #2 of the budget at the February 20, 2024 meeting. The Finance Committee will be meeting with the Fire Department, Police Department and Nashoba Valley Tech in the coming weeks.

March 2024 Meeting Schedule - R. Pontbriand stated that the Board will need to reschedule the March 5, 2024 meeting due to the Presidential Primary. Board members agreed to meet on Wednesday March 6, 2024 at 5:30 PM.

KENO Monitor Request – The Vineyard, 63 Park Street – R. Pontbriand reported that the Vineyard is looking to add a KENO monitor at their establishment. They currently can process KENO tickets, but there is no monitor.

Motion: A motion was made by S. Copeland and seconded by J. Livingston to approve the request for the KENO monitor at the Vineyard. **Motion passed 3-0.**

2024 Seasonal Population Estimate – Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission – R. Pontbriand presented the seasonal population estimate for the Town of Ayer. As is customary, there is not estimated seasonal population increase anticipated.

Motion: A motion was made by S. Copeland and seconded by J. Livingston to approve the 2024 Seasonal Population Estimate for the ABCC. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Update on Status of Nashoba Valley Medical Center – R. Pontbriand gave a brief update on the status of Nashoba Valley Medical Center due to recent reports in the media that the facility would be closing. He has spoken with Dr. Salvatore Perla, President of Nashoba Valley Medical Center and he has said that there are no immediate plans to close or sell the Nashoba Valley Medical Center. He is recommending that the Select Board may want to authorize a letter to Steward Medical expressing the vital importance of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center to the Town of Ayer and the Nashoba Valley Region, in terms of access to health care, as well as the importance of emergency services and outpatient services to many who do not have transportation to travel significant distances for care. Additionally, Nashoba Valley Medical Center is the Town's second largest employer and after quality health care, the economic importance of the hospital is significant for Ayer and the Region.

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Copeland to authorize the Town Manager to write a letter to Steward Medical. **Motion passed 3-0.**

New Business/Select Board Member Questions: None

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Copeland to approve the meeting minutes of January 16, 2024. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Adjournment: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by S. Copeland to adjourn at 7:35 PM. **Motion passed 3-0.**

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

Date Minutes Approved by SB: 2/20/24

Signature Indicating Approval: 