

02/21/2024 Workgroup Meeting Notes by Dan Van Schalkwyk

Attendees from Workgroup: Robert Pontbriand (Town Manager), Jonathan Kranz (Planning Board/Resident/Workgroup), Dan Van Schalkwyk (Ayer DPW), Matt Hernon (Ayer DPW), Beth Suedmeyer (Resident), Jannice Livingston (Selectwoman/Resident), Heather Hampson (Conservation Agent), Emily Scerbo (Tighe and Bond), Natalie Koncki (Tighe and Bond)

Town Counsel Updates (Legality of cap, Procedure for Town Meeting Approval, Discounts for Certain Groups)

- Robert provided a brief update and indicated he will have information to the Workgroup in writing from Town Counsel subsequent to the meeting.
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Public Outreach Discussion

- Items Completed Since Last Meeting
 - Dan summarized the items completed which included providing informational presentations to the Community Preservation Committee, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and Finance Committee
- Review of Timeline for Changes
 - Change the Select Board meeting update from March 5th to March 6th
 - Move Business Informational Outreach to after Draft Rate structure and Policies are prepared (move to May 1st for now)
 - Prepare a one-page summary of the Stormwater Utility Evaluation to distribute to businesses and large impervious properties in order to make them aware this effort is happening.
 - Begin Monthly social media information. The first message will be related to the upcoming Stormwater and Resiliency presentation by Stefanie Covino. Subsequent messaging to reference recordings of various board/committee presentations, focus on importance of stormwater, impervious cover and why it matters, what the physical infrastructure is and maintenance, and rate structure and policies.
- Steps to Implement Upcoming Timeline Items
 - See "Assignments" section at the end of this document
- Review Updated FAQ document
 - The Group discussed additional comments related to the FAQ document, several comments were provided by Beth Suedmeyer. The FAQ document will be revised per the Group's discussion and posted on the website.
- Other Outreach Updates
 - The Group discussed the upcoming presentation "*When the Rain Comes: Stormwater & Climate Resiliency in Ayer*" by Stefanie Covino.

Rate or Credit Policy Review

- The Group had its initial discussion around credit policy with some of the items to consider. In order to move forward orderly, the Group decided to compile credit policies from existing communities to understand some of the options that are currently implemented.
- The Group briefly discussed concern with the current rate structure and fees compared to other communities. The Group decided Tighe and Bond will complete calculation of the current rate structure with outstanding financing work. Tighe and Bond and DPW will also evaluate if the current stormwater fee is “front loaded” (i.e., high cost projects in the first 10+ years followed by lower costs in subsequent years). Tighe and Bond will also work with DPW to develop an alternative rate structure that lowers the fee in turn for lower level of service.

Assignments

Assignment 1 – Town Counsel:

Robert will provide Town Counsel’s opinions in writing

Assignment 2 - Outreach:

DPW will revise the Workgroup timeline as discussed above.

Heather, Jonathan, and DPW will prepare and distribute the one-page information summary to businesses and large impervious properties.

Matt, Heather, and Dan will be primary members responsible for implementing social media messaging.

DPW will revise the Draft FAQ document and post it on the Town’s website.

Assignment 3 – Rates/Credit Policy:

Tighe and Bond will provide credit policies from other communities.

Tighe and Bond will finalize the existing rate structure financial calculations.

Tighe and Bond and DPW will review the existing rate structure to determine if the future costs are “front loaded” and recommend any changes

Tighe and Bond and DPW will prepare and alternative rate structure based on lower level of service.