

Town of Ayer

Rate Review Committee

Meeting Minutes from December 12, 2023



Attendance: Jannice Livingston, Chair; Dan Van Schalkwyk, DPW Director; Kimberly Abraham, Water & Sewer Superintendent; Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager; Kurt Fraczkowski (Representing Fin Com)

Absent: Andy Loven

Call to Order: The December 12, 2023 meeting of the Rate Review Committee was called to order at 4:00pm on December, 12 2023 by J. Livingston. (Note: This was an in-person meeting only.)

Review and Approval of the Meeting Minutes from October 10, 2023:

The Committee reviewed the DRAFT Meeting Minutes from October 10, 2023 and there were no edits.

Motion: A motion was made by K. Fraczkowski and seconded by B. Tierney to approve the meeting minutes from October 10, 2023. **Motion Passed (4-1)** (K. Abraham abstained).

Update/Review/Discussion on Proposals for Consultant to Review the Operations and Finances of the Transfer Station:

D. Van Schalkwyk provided an overview of the three proposals the Town received from consultants to review the operations and finances of the Transfer Station. The Town received three proposals from the following consulting firms: Arcadis; Weston and Sampson; and Tighe and Bond.

D. Van Schalkwyk stated that the Arcadis proposal in his opinion was the least advantageous to the Town in that it was heavy on financial analysis but light on operational analysis. Additionally, the firm is not based in Massachusetts but based in Florida where they have a county form of government and are not as familiar with the Massachusetts municipal system.

D. Van Schalkwyk stated that the Weston and Sampson proposal and Tighe and Bond proposal were similar. However, the Weston and Sampson proposal was not as clear on the financial analysis part of the proposed study. Additionally, the Tighe and Bond proposal offers a proposed rate model as part of their analysis which would be a useful tool. He further stated that Tighe and Bond seem to put in some detailed efforts specific to the Ayer Transfer Station. In his opinion, the Tighe and Bond proposal was the most advantageous to the Town.

J. Livingston asked the other Committee Members for their input.

B. Tierney stated that she concurred with D. Van Schalkwyk that the Tighe and Bond proposal seemed the most advantageous of what we are looking for and also provides a rate model.

K. Fraczkowski concurred with D. Van Schalkwyk, and he did not feel that Arcadis or Weston and Sampson had a clear plan for the operational analysis.

R. Pontbriand stated that the Tighe and Bond proposal was the most responsive and specific to the Ayer Transfer Station and not only will provide the operational and financial analysis but will provide a rate model.

K. Abraham stated that she liked Tighe and Bond the best. They have their boots already on the ground and have put the initial effort in with their proposal.

J. Livingston asked if the Committee was comfortable today with making a recommendation or if they needed or wanted more time to review.

There was consensus by the Committee to proceed with a recommendation.

Motion: A motion was made by K. Fraczkowski and seconded by K. Abraham that the Rate Review Committee recommend that the Select Board select Tighe and Bond to perform the operational and financial analysis/study of the Transfer Station. **Motion passed (5-0).**

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by K. Fraczkowski to recommend that the Select Board authorize up to \$20,000 from ARPA Funds to pay for the operational and financial analysis/study of the Transfer Station to be performed by Tighe and Bond. **Motion passed (5-0).**

Initial/Preliminary Discussion on the Review and the Proposed FY 2025 Water and Sewer Rates:

R. Pontbriand advised that the Town has received its certified free cash from the DOR which includes the certified free cash for the Water and Sewer Enterprise Funds. The Capital Planning Committee has been meeting regarding its capital recommendations which impact the water and sewer rates.

B. Tierney advised that she and K. Abraham have just started to look at updating the rate model for water and sewer rates.

R. Pontbriand stated that it is still early in the rate development process for water and sewer rates, but the Committee could begin to discuss at the next meeting.

Scheduling of the Next Meeting:

The Committee scheduled the next meeting for Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 1:00pm.


Adjournment:

Motion: A motion was made by B. Tierney and seconded by K. Abraham to adjourn the meeting at 4:30pm. **Motion Passed (5-0)**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by R. Pontbriand, Town Manager

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Rate Review Committee on January 9, 2024.

Signed: , Robert A. Pontbriand, Town Manager