

OPEN SESSION

The Board of Assessors met on Wednesday, January 6, 2021, at approximately 6:05 PM. Present were Chairman Steve McCarthy, Clerk Chery Smith, Member Paula Bunker, Principal Assessor John Donahue, and Principal Secretary Daniela Nilsson. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the meeting was closed to the public. However, the public was allowed to listen to the meeting via teleconference and to watch a recording of the meeting via community access television.

The Chairman announced that the meeting was being recorded by community access television. The Principal Assessor read aloud the Board of Assessors' State of Emergency Public Access Notice from the publicly posted Agenda stating that, due to the increasing concerns surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic, the meeting would be open to the public through remote participation only. The remote access information was also read aloud.

The Principal Assessor stated that the CARES Act had been extended for another year. He also stated the Fiscal Year 2021 tax bills had been mailed and that applications for abatement are due Monday, February 1, 2021 by 4:00 P.M. Since Town Hall is currently closed to the public, the Assessor's Office staff will check the outside drop box at 4:00 P.M. on February 1st to ensure all applications are received in a timely manner. He also stated that the annual rollover of the database was executed on January 4th.

The Principal Assessor stated that as of December 24th, Town Hall had been closed to the public and is open by appointment only for matters that require an in person visit.

The Principal Assessor stated that the annual operating budget is due January 27th and the Board of Assessors has an appointment with the Board of Selectmen on February 17 at 7:30 P.M. and with the Finance Committee on February 18th at 7:25 P.M. He stated that he had prepared a draft budget and will be using a 2% increase for clerical staff salary as an estimate since the clerical staff contract had not been finalized. He believes the budget is level funded and noted he expected an increase in Patriot Properties License and Support fees. The Chairman noted that the town had a good deal with the last contract signed with Patriot Properties that locked their rates in for a few years and asked the Principal Assessor research what the difference would be to have the actual Property Record Cards online, rather than the current minimal online cards.

Member Bunker asked if the Budget could be sent to the Board before the January 20, 2021 meeting. The Principal Assessor stated he could send a draft version.

The Principal Assessor stated the Annual Assessors Report is due on March 19th and that he had sent a draft to the Board for their review. He also stated the Senior Work Off Program is on the agenda tonight so the Board can vote on releasing the funds needed to support this program. The Chairman stated it was a wonderful program and inquired if all the money has been used in past years. The Principal Assessor stated that for the most part it had. He stated

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the amount is slightly higher this year because the minimum wage went up to \$13.50/hour and the hours worked this year will be 74 hours for each participant so they anticipate a \$1,000 abatement per person. This amount would allow for 41 participants, if they fit the criteria to be a participant. The Chairman made a **motion** to take \$41,000 out of the Assessor's Overlay account for the FY 2021 Senior Work Off program. Seconded by Clerk Smith. Voted unanimously 3-0-0.

Exemptions applications, exemption certificates, bills payable, and monthly lists were presented for signatures.

Member Bunker asked about her request at the last meeting for specific dates the Principal Assessor had taken vacation. The Principal Assessor stated this was not on the agenda, so he wasn't sure if the Board wanted to discuss it, but that he had emailed Member Bunker in response to this request. He also stated that payroll records are sent to Member Bunker when they are submitted to Payroll. Member Bunker stated that she did not have all the emails and that she assumed the Principal Assessor would keep a list of his days off. The Principal Assessor asked the Board if they wanted to direct him to make a list. The Chairman stated that he was confused by what was happening. Member Bunker clarified that she just wanted a list of dates that he took. The Principal Assessor stated that he has sent the payroll records, which state all of that information for himself and the clerical staff, and he doesn't feel it's his responsibility to go through all the records to make a list for Member Bunker. Member Bunker stated she does not have all the records and would like the Principal Assessor to provide a list. The Principal Assessor stated that in addition to sending the payroll records, Member Bunker was also asked to let the staff know what records she was missing so they could be forwarded to her.

Member Bunker also stated that the Board is not always notified when the Principal Assessor is taking vacation time. The Chairman stated he thought they were notified and asked the Principal Assessor if that is true. The Principal Assessor stated he does notify them but not always on email, sometimes at meetings. He also stated that the vacation rollover had already been approved so he didn't understand this request from Member Bunker. The Chairman stated that he didn't see the problem if the payroll records are being sent and tracked. He also stated that he had been notified in regards to vacation time that was scheduled. He stated that he trusted the information supplied to him. He also stated that these issues continue to come up and he feels everything has been resolved. Member Bunker stated that when this came up before it went back and forth for months and there were issues with the documents she received so she would like a list this time as well. The Principal Assessor repeated that the payroll records and documentation from the Treasurer/Collector's office verify his request. Member Bunker stated that the dates taken are not listed.

Draft meeting minutes for December 2, 2020 were presented to the Board. The Principal Assessor read the sixth paragraph that recapped the vacation rollover conversation and ended by stating:

“The Chairman asked if Clerk Smith signed the request. Clerk Smith stated she did. Member Bunker stated that the request did have two (2) signatures, and therefore can be moved forward, but she was not comfortable signing it. The Chairman stated that there are payroll records available for review and he felt comfortable signing it.”

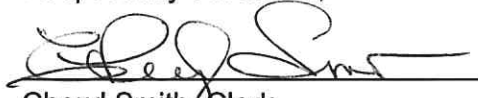
The Chairman stated that if Member Bunker wanted this to be discussed further, it could be put on the agenda for a future meeting. The Principal Assessor stated that all records were public records and that it was the Treasurer/Collectors who track the time. Member Bunker agreed but stated that last time part of the issue was the carryover of vacation time that wasn't always tracked correctly. Member Bunker and the Principal Assessor agreed that that had all been resolved. Member Bunker would like to go through the dates to put this issue at rest. The Chairman stated this has been going on for too long. He also stated that if Member Bunker has specific questions it can be put on the next agenda and asked that Member Bunker come with specific questions.

A **motion** was made by Chairman McCarthy to adjourn the Open Session and to enter into Executive Session in order to Review Applications for Abatement/Exemption/Classification, relative to Purpose 7, MGL CH 59, section 60, and to review and discuss strategy of pending Appellate Tax Board Cases, relative to Purpose 3 and 7, MGL CH 59, section 60, and not to reconvene in Open Session at the conclusion of the Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Clerk Smith. A **roll call vote** was taken as follows: Chairman McCarthy = affirmative, Clerk Smith = affirmative, Member Bunker = affirmative. The Board adjourned Open Session and entered Executive Session at approximately 6:40 P.M.

Next Meeting: January 20, 2021

I certify that the minutes of this meeting are true and accurate to the best of my recollection.

Respectfully submitted,



Cheryl Smith, Clerk

Prepared by Principal Secretary, Daniela Nilsson

Documents referenced during the meeting:

- *Bills payable, Statutory Exemption Applications, Senior Workoff Program Authorization Letter, Overlay Authorization Letter, Rollover Letters, and other administrative documents referenced during the meeting*