

OPEN SESSION

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The Board of Assessors met on Wednesday, March 4, 2020 at approximately 6:02 P.M. Present were Chairman Steve McCarthy, Clerk Cheryl Smith, Member Paula Bunker, Principal Assessor John Donahue, and Principal Secretary Daniela Nilsson. The following member of the public was in attendance: Deborah Cauley.

The Chairman announced that the meeting was being recorded by community access television.

Warrants, Motor Vehicle Excise, Statutory Exemptions Applications and Certificates, and Real/Personal Tax Abatements and Certificates, were presented for approval/signatures.

The Principal Assessor announced that a Special Town Meeting (STM) will be held on Monday, March 30th. The STM Warrant contains two Articles proposing that the town purchase two properties recently withdrawn from MGL CH 61A Land Use Classification by exercising the town's Right of First Refusal under CH 61A. The first parcel, located along Stoney Road, would be used as a parking lot, with a parking kiosk, to provide access to abutting conservation lands (some conservation lands owned by the Town of West Bridgewater and abutting other conservation lands owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts). The second parcel, located along Lincoln Street (aka Russo's Greenhouses), would be used for recreational purposes such as soccer fields and playgrounds.

The Principal Assessor announced there will be a Registry of Motor Vehicles' (RMV) Atlas Training Workshop on Friday, March 20th which he and the office clerks would like to attend. A senior volunteer has offered to cover the office while he and the staff attend the training session. He also announced that a Classification Code 504 Workshop will be held on April 7th and expressed his interest in attending the workshop in order to learn more about the new policies and procedures being implemented by the DOR regarding the valuation of Utility Corporations.

The Principal Assessor reviewed the Board of Assessors' FY21 Proposed Budget with the Board including recent updates, which the Principal Assessor had emailed to the Board members the previous day. Four line items were updated including a correction of the web hosting cost for Assessors' Maps, which stated \$1,000 instead of \$3,000. The Principal Assessor explained that the increase in the Contractual Services line-item was due to the addition of the cost of the annual lease for the Assessors' printer/copier/scanner, which had been excluded from the previous budget draft.

The Principal Assessor stated that an online version of Assessors Maps is prepared to 'go live'. A 'mismatch list', that had been referenced in previous meetings, has been thoroughly vetted and the online program is ready for public access. Member Bunker asked if the program was 'paid for' and the Principal Assessor responded affirmatively. He stated the invoice had been paid as follows: \$3,000 for software development, \$950 as a 'one-time' fee for providing staff access to the software, and \$3,000 for the annual web hosting fee.

The Principal Assessor stated that he previously emailed a draft version of the Board of Assessors' Annual Report and was looking for any feedback and/or approval. The Chairman stated that he approved of the draft he received. Member Bunker asked when the report was due to be submitted? The Principal Assessor responded that the deadline for submission of the report was sometime later this month. (NOTE: The Principal Assessor confirmed the deadline was March 20th after the meeting had been adjourned).

Member Bunker wanted to revisit the Budget. She noticed that the Training line item had been decreased, which seemed like an important aspect of the budget before. The Principal Assessor stated that he decreased it to offset some of the increases in the proposed budget but was not opposed to reinstating it. Member Bunker stated that perhaps the overtime line item for \$2,000 could be adjusted instead, since the Principal Secretary had not asked to be paid out for her overtime. Member Bunker agrees that training is an important element of the budget. Member Bunker was concerned that the 12% increase will be tough to present to the Board of Selectmen. The Chairman stated that the majority of the increase is for the part-time position going to full-time so it is not that large of an increase overall and felt comfortable with the budget.

A **motion** was made by Chairman McCarthy to accept the minutes from the Open Session February 5, 2020 and February 19, 2020 meetings and seconded by Clerk Smith. Voted 2-1-0.

Member Bunker had a question about grievances filed in the Assessors office, like she had inquired about in November. She requested that the Principal Assessor let the Board know if a grievance is filed, not to get involved but just as a heads up. The Principal Assessor stated he didn't believe that was in compliance with the contract but asked what the remaining Board members thought. The Chairman and Clerk Smith were in agreement that the contract has its own way of informing parties depending on what level the grievance was in and didn't want to make any changes to the way things currently are, unless they are told to. Member Bunker contended that she does not want to get involved, she just wants to be informed, since once a grievance is filed it is public record. The Principal Assessor stated that he was concerned that this topic was not on the agenda and was being discussed at the meeting. The Chairman agreed that the discussion needed to end. Member Bunker requested that it be put on the next agenda. The Chairman did not feel it needed to be on the next agenda and to continue the way the contract states unless otherwise notified that the Board needs to do anything differently.

A **motion** was made by Chairman McCarthy, to enter Executive Session to discuss Applications for Abatement/Exemption, relative to Purpose 7 of the Open Meeting Law (OML), in compliance with MGL CH 59, section 60, and also to review and discuss pending Appellate Tax Board litigation, relative to Purpose 3 and 7 of the OML - because to do so in open session could have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Board of Assessors - and to reconvene in open session at the conclusion of the Executive Session. 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 6:24 P.M.

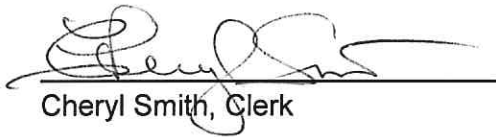
The Board reconvened in Open Session at 6:47 P.M. A motion was made by Chairman McCarthy to approve Application for Abatement #18, along with four requests for authorization to abate taxes in accordance with MGL CH 58, §8 (as approved by the Commissioner of Revenue of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) and to deny Applications for Abatement #'s 21, 23, and 45. The motion was seconded by Clerk Smith. Voted 3-0-0.

A **motion** was made by Chairman McCarthy to adjourn Open Session, seconded by Clerk Smith. Voted unanimously 3-0-0. The Board adjourned Open Session at approximately 6:49 P.M.

Next Meeting: March 18, 2020

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, Motor Vehicle Excise, Statutory Exemptions, Exemption Certificates, and other administrative documents referenced either on the Agenda or during the meeting*