

OPEN SESSION

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The Board of Assessors met on Wednesday, October 21, 2020, at approximately 6:08 PM. Present were Chairman Steve McCarthy, Clerk Cheryl 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, and he also stated the telephone number and access code needed to join the live teleconference.

The Principal Assessor announced that the Board had an appointment with the Human Resource Director, Linda Torres, as a follow up to the discussion from its last meeting regarding the Principal Assessing Secretary, Marianne Pierce, and the limited amount of hours that she is allowed to work per year due to her retirement status. The Chairman stated that he was surprised to learn about the limited hours only after Ms. Pierce had been hired. He recalls that during her job interview, Ms. Pierce stated that she planned on retiring from her (former) position. Chairman McCarthy stated that he wished this issue had been vetted before Ms. Pierce was hired. The Human Resources Director stated that they did not know there would be a limit on the hours she could work and neither did Ms. Pierce and that Ms. Pierce only found out the day after she began her employment when she was processing paperwork with the Assistant Treasurer, Maureen Adams. The Human Resources Director stated there is a limit of 960 hours a year that Ms. Pierce is allowed to work. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that limitation has been suspended and Ms. Pierce is working the full 25 hours a week while the suspension of this restriction is in effect.

The Human Resource Director also stated that there is pending legislation to increase the hours from 960 hours to 1200 hours but there is no indication if or when it may pass. The Human Resource Director stated that, with the Board's approval, the Town could work with Ms. Pierce once the 960 hour restriction is reactivated. Clerk Smith was surprised that Ms. Pierce was unaware of the limitation of hours. Chairman McCarthy asked why the Town of West Bridgewater did not know about the limitation before hiring Ms. Pierce? The Human Resources Director stated that she was aware of limitations once someone retired from a Municipality but was unfamiliar with restrictions for State employment. The Human Resource Director stated there are a few options if the Board and the Principal Assessor would like to continue her employment. Otherwise, there is still the six-month probation period and a new person could be interviewed for the position. She hoped that Ms. Pierce could be more efficient than former staff members of the office and will do well with the hourly restriction. The Chairman agreed that it is

a very detailed job that requires a lot of training and once you take the time and effort to start training someone you do not want to have to retrain someone else.

The Chairman asked the Principal Assessor if he had any thoughts. The Principal Assessor stated that it is a very difficult decision for him because Ms. Pierce had only been in the position for a month and the reduction in hours is significant as it equates to about two months off in the course of a year. The Chairman stated that if this route is taken, the employees work week should be cut back so it isn't two full months off, and her schedule could be worked around when more office coverage is needed. The Principal Assessor agreed, but stated it is still a two months deficit of time and it's a position that the Board recently advocated should be full time so it's a contradiction to make an accommodation to reduce the hours while a full time position was being sought. The Principal Assessor stated that he thinks the probationary period is the most critical time. He feels the Board is fortunate to have two exceptional individuals in the office and he praised both Principal Assessing Secretary Daniela Nilsson and Principal Assessing Secretary Marianne Pierce for their outstanding work ethic. He also stated that Ms. Pierce appears to be very adept and capable from what he has seen so far. He hopes that Ms. Pierce could be a very efficient employee but he was uncertain if anyone could perform the required duties within a shortened amount of time. The Board agreed to continue her employment and this issue will be revisited nearer the end of her six-month probationary period; when there will hopefully be more information available regarding the proposed legislation.

The Human Resources Director left the meeting at approximately 6:20 P.M.

The Principal Assessor began a discussion on the Notice of Intent to Sell land located in the area of West Street and United Drive, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61A. He stated that he visited the property, reviewed relevant documentation, had discussions with the town administrator and the Town Collector/Treasurer, and consequently recommended that the Board of Assessors advise the Board of Selectmen not to exercise its right of first refusal to purchase the subject property. Chairman McCarthy reviewed the packet of information regarding the subject property. The Chairman asked the Principal Assessor to reach out to the Easton Assessor's Office to gather more information because it ties into Easton land. Chairman McCarthy agreed with the recommendation not to exercise the right of first refusal and Member Bunker agreed that there was no reason to purchase it. The Principal Assessor stated that he would prepare a letter for the Board to sign at the next meeting.

The Principal Assessor presented the minutes from June 3, 2020 and June 17, 2020, which he had previously submitted via email for the Board's review. The Chairman asked if there was any discussion regarding the minutes? Member Bunker asked if the dates had been corrected in the CAI contract referenced in the minutes? The Principal Assessor stated they had indeed been corrected and the contract has been signed. Member Bunker stated she did not remember seeing the corrected contract and asked to see it the next day. The Principal Assessor stated he would provide her with a copy. The Chairman made a **motion** to accept the Open Session meeting minutes for June 3, 2020 and June 17, 2020. It was seconded by Clerk Smith. Approved 3-0-0.

Bills Payable, Chapter Land Applications, Statutory Exemption Applications, Motor Vehicle Abatements, and Monthly Lists were presented for signatures.

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 6:32 P.M.

Next Meeting: November 4, 2020

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Smith', is written over a horizontal line.

Cheryl Smith, Clerk

Prepared by Principal Secretary, Daniela Nilsson

Documents referenced during the meeting:

- *Bills payable, Chapter Land Applications, Statutory Exemption Applications, Motor Vehicle Abatements, Monthly Lists, Open Session minutes for June 3, 2020 and June 17, 2020, Notice of Intent to Sell Property Under Massachusetts Gen. Laws Chapter 61A for Assessors Map 42 001 and 35 002, Part Time Secretary Hours Worksheet, and other administrative documents referenced during the meeting.*