

**BOARD OF ASSESSORS' MINUTES
COMMUNITY ROOM – POLICE STATION**

WEDNESDAY – OCTOBER 17, 2007

Assessors Present: Chairman Jonathan L. Fein, Dennis Kennedy and Kevin Lonergan
Also Present: Assistant Assessor Robert P. Leclair, Secretary Carolyn R. Reed

Chairman Fein called the meeting to order at about 8:30 a.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

Minutes of the April 24, 2007 meeting were accepted with changes.

Correspondence, etc.

- The June, July/August and September editions of the Department of Revenue's publication, *City and Town* as well as the July and August MAAO newsletters were handed out to the members of the Board.
- A complimentary edition of the IAAO magazine, Fair & Equitable was distributed to the members of the Board.

Old Business

- Board member Lonergan was brought up to speed on a number of issues covered at the last meeting in April. One issue was the taxpayer at 23 Hawthorn Street (Occhiuti's) who spoke during the public speak portion of the meeting.
- Dave Martel sent a response dated October 1, 2007 regarding discussion on exempt status of Jewish Nursing Home. Town Counsel advised that more research is required prior to rendering a decision. This was also a topic of discussion at the April meeting. (Copy of letter to be distributed to Board Members.)

Appellate Tax Board (ATB)

- Board held discussion of ATB cases from FY2005 & FY2006.
 - *170 Dwight Road* - As indicated in a letter dated 5/17/07 from Town Counsel, the Taxpayer has requested "findings of fact and report" which may be basis for an appeal. The overall decision of the ATB was favorable to the town with FY2005 value remaining the same and the FY2006 and FY2007 values being adjusted to the fiscal 2005 amount. An adjustment (correction) to the total land area was done for fiscal 2008.
 - *780 Converse Street* – Resolved disputed assessment of Ruth's House for three years prior to May 16, 2007 ATB hearing.
- Board held discussion of pending cases for ATB for FY2007. Most cases are continuations from FY2006 and disputing on basis of disproportionate assessed value. Values were checked for reasonableness and any data errors discovered at the time of Bob's inspection were corrected. (Not all applicants wanted or allowed an inspection.)

Misc. / New Business

- New Board member Kevin Lonergan was introduced. Board member Jonathan Fein agreed to continue to serve as Chairman. Hearing no objections and no other nominations, a vote was taken. Kennedy – yes, Lonergan – yes.
- MAAO membership cards were distributed. These are to be used to credit members' course work for assessing designations within the organization.
- Discussion on abatement application for 41 Burns Meadow. The application was received after the deadline. Chapter 58 section 8 that allows discretion in some instances was reviewed to bring assessor Lonergan up to speed.
- The vacancy in the Assessors' Office was filled by Carolyn Reed. She attended and passed course 101 in August. August 6, 2007 was her start date which was also the first day of the U/Mass Assessing School.
- The Board was informed that Ann Hubbard is retiring as of January 4, 2008 and copies of her resignation letter were distributed. The finance director informed Bob that the Ann's position as excise clerk is not funded beyond January 2008. Bob has discussed several options regarding office reorganization with the finance director in order to fill the vacancy after Ann's departure. However, the current plan to not fill the position for six months will adversely impact the ability of the office to function.
- The Assessors' Office received applications to continue as Chapter 61B recreational land/golf course from Twin Hills Country Club and Longmeadow Country Club. The Board voted to accept both applications to remain as golf courses under the provisions of this chapter. The result is a 75% discount on the value of the open land.
- The new Webster Bank on Longmeadow Street invited the Board to a ribbon cutting ceremony on Friday, October 19, 2007 at 11:30 a.m.
- A communication from Bell Atlantic Mobile dba Verizon Wireless was distributed to Board members for review. Verizon Wireless is requesting to negotiate their personal property assessment since they believe the value assigned by the DOR is excessive. The ATB case that indicates wireless companies should be assessed locally is being appealed and the DOR continues to provide a value. Verizon submitted a Form of List that is below the amount they suggested as a settlement figure. No Board members want to settle at this time as the case is currently pending litigation.
- An interim update of real and personal property values was completed for fiscal 2008. Single family assessments will remain the same provided there were no structural changes (building permits, corrections, etc.). The only increase was in the assessed value for Glenmeadow Condos. Sale prices for these units were above assessed values and an adjustment was warranted. Units at Converse Street sold at or slightly under assessed values. Bob provided Board members with a statistical summary of sales in relation to assessed value by the various state codes (101, 102, 104, etc).
- The Board reviewed a letter from new owner Marie Stebbins. She suggested various options regarding owner name on property tax bills as bills are mailed (by law) to the "owner of record" (owner as of 1/1). Bob will send a memo with an overview of the issue to the finance director. Bob had suggested a solution to the mailing issue 10 years ago that was never implemented. Bob already responded to taxpayer Stebbins concerns. Confusion on the part of the taxpayer led to interest charges being applied to the bill by the Collector.
- The Board reviewed a letter from NY consulting firm requesting various data by county, etc. The Assessors' Office does not have the information in the format being requested.

- The Board was advised that some vacant parcels were sold by the town. Bob did some research and found that the statute prescribes how this property is to be assessed once it becomes taxable. (First fiscal year assessed value is the sale price.)
- Bob asked for the Board members' signatures to get a stamp made for the Assessors' Office.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:30 a.m.

Next Meeting:

- Bob requested that the Board meet on regular basis as this is a busy time of the year for classification, setting the tax rate, etc. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 30, 2007.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert P. Leclair". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'R' and 'L'.

Robert P. Leclair, CMA, RMA, MAA
Assistant Assessor