

**BOARD OF ASSESSORS' MINUTES
COMMUNITY ROOM – POLICE STATION
TUESDAY – JANUARY 13, 2004**

Assessors Present: James J. O'Connell and Jonathan L. Fein
Also Present: Assistant Assessor Robert P. Leclair
Absent: Scott C. Bush

Assessors' Chairman O'Connell called the meeting to order at about 8:35 a.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

The minutes of the December 16, 2003 meeting were accepted as presented.

Public Comment/Correspondence

None

Excise

The Assessors signed the December 2003 *Monthly List of Abatements, Motor Vehicle and Trailer Excise*: \$854.80 from the Levy of 2002 and \$1,886.66 from the Levy of 2003 for a monthly total of \$2,741.46.

Appellate Tax Board (ATB) & Or Abatement Applications

Notice was received that the ATB decided for the town in the recent appeals of 120 Greenacre Avenue and 124 Barrington Road. No decision has been made regarding the 206 Colony Road case.

Budget Instructions, etc. FY2005

The annual meeting with the Appropriations' Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, February 4, 2004 at 7:05 p.m. It will be held in the Fire Station Community Room.

The Assessors discussed the difference between a level services budget and a level funded budget. A level services budget was submitted to Appropriations. Bob informed the Board that the reason for submitting a level services budget is that there will be additional demands made on the clerical staff and supplies next year. This is due to the scheduled "measure and list" taking place during FY04-FY05. At is unlikely that the Assessors Office will be able to handle the additional work associated with the measure and list if budget cuts results in a reduction in staff hours. It is anticipated that there will also be additional expenses for paper, toner and other miscellaneous office supplies as a result of the measure and list.

Copies of the final FY2005 Budget sent to the town Accountant were distributed to Board members for review. Included in the notes to Appropriations is the \$90,000 for the second half of the measure and list and \$65,000 for the fiscal 2006 DOR mandated update of property values. Funds for the FY2006 update must be available in the FY2005 budget in order to go out to bid. Both sums will be separate warrant articles. Notice is given the Appropriations Committee as a courtesy, since these are not "budget" items.

Measure and List Program/RFP

A copy of the RFP for services in connection with the measure and list sent to the town Accountant was distributed. Bob asked the Assessors if they would like to incur a cost of \$2,150 in postage and \$325 for envelopes in order to send individual notices to about 5,800 residents informing them that interior inspections will be done on all improved properties.

The Assessors voted to not do individual mailings. Notices will be placed in newspapers of general circulation, on the Town of Longmeadow web site, town hall bulletin board, etc.

Town Report

Copies of the annual town report were distributed to the Assessors for their review and comments. Bob indicated he would like to add information on the workings of proposition 2½ as it impacts taxes as well as updating last year's report.

Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)

A copy of Susan Wright's memo to the Selectmen regarding a PILOT program for Bay Path College was distributed. It is anticipated that the Assessors and Selectmen will meet to discuss this topic.

Misc.

- ?? One Clause 41C application was denied due to not meeting the income requirement of \$13,000.
- ?? Bob informed the Assessors that the Board of Selectmen agreed, at their 1/5/2004 meeting to increase the Assistant Assessors' travel allowance from \$2,100 to \$2,400. It is now in line with the building inspector, as was the practice in the past. As part of allowing an increase in the stipend the Selectmen asked that both department heads keep track of mileage. However, as Bob indicated in his letter to the Selectmen, it is not the distance i.e. mileage, it's the continuous starting and stopping that puts the strain on the vehicle and causes the wear and tear. In addition to the harsh driving conditions is the crease in insurance costs, repair, depreciation and all other costs associated with maintaining a vehicle. Jim suggested that the Selectmen be informed that it is not the mileage per se that results in expenses being incurred due to the Assistant Assessor having to use his personal vehicle.
- ?? The Board agreed that the cost of maintaining multiple listing information through the Realtor Association of Pioneer Valley should not have to be born by the Assistant Assessor and that it should come out of the expense budget. This is an invaluable means of keeping track of changes in the market, being able to compare assessments with current listings and getting an insight into current market conditions.
- ?? A notice of a Winter Symposium sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of Assessing Officers was distributed to the Board. The topic of "Effectively Dealing with an Angry Public will be held in Randolph January 22, 2004.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

**Next Meeting: – Wednesday, February 4, 2004 7:05 p.m.
Community Room of the Fire Station
(This is a joint meeting with Appropriations.)**

Respectfully Submitted,

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