

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

**MONDAY – MAY 15, 2006**

**Assessors Present:** Chairman Jonathan L. Fein, Dennis Kennedy and Peter Graczykowski  
**Also Present:** Assistant Assessor Robert P. Leclair

Assessors' Chairman Fein called the meeting to order at about 6:40 p.m.

**Public Comment**

Joseph Occhiuti of 23 Hawthorn Street asked to speak to the Board. Mr. Occhiuti had a number of questions relative to the Assessors' functions, duties, responsibilities, etc. He also had questions about the qualifications of the staff that conducted the update and measure and list, and how new assessed values were determined. The Board and the assistant assessor answered Mr. Occhiuti's questions and referred him to various sources of additional information, including the town's and VISION Appraisal Technology's web sites.

**Acceptance of Minutes**

Minutes of the April 19, 2006 meeting were accepted with changes.

**Correspondence, etc.**

- Letter from owner of 46 Village Drive was reviewed. Owner's application for abatement was denied and the letter was a rebuttal to the Board's decision.
- Letter from owner of 240 Shaker Road questioning land value. Commented that "form" letter did not provide any information about the reason for denial.

It is the Board's opinion that explanations of their decisions cannot be communicated individually to each applicant. It is the responsibility of the property owner to call or visit the office if they would like to discuss their application or obtain information about assessing and/or appraisal methodology.

**ATB (Appellate Tax Board) FY2005 Cases**

**170 Dwight Road**

This case is scheduled for June 7, 2006. Dave Martel had asked the Board if they would like him to be present at a meeting with the owner. Because the Board has already met with the owner and the owner did not provide any additional financial information, it was decided that any further meetings would not bring the parties closer to resolving the issue.

The Board reviewed Dave Martel's letter outlining the fees for himself and for the expert witness (appraiser) to defend this case at the ATB. Dave estimates that the appraiser's fee will be about \$3,000 and his fee will be about \$5,000. These estimates are considered "maximum" amounts if the case is heard at the ATB and there is a need for post-trial pleadings. These fees will be paid out in stages as the work is done. If there is a settlement at any time, no further payments are necessary. Bob has spoken to the town accountant and will submit a reserve fund request.

## Misc./New Business

### **May 2, 2006 Board of Assessors Meeting**

- This was posted as a morning meeting and was subsequently cancelled because the Board met on April 19, 2006.
  - A complaint was received by the town manager that a taxpayer could not make this meeting and that the Board should not schedule any morning meetings. It was explained that there had not been a morning meeting since November 21, 2005 as the newest member of the Board could not arrange his schedule for meetings during the workday. All subsequent meetings have been in the evening at various times, no earlier than 5:00 p.m.

### **Meeting Schedule**

- Town Manager has asked that the Assessors meet on a regular schedule and that the meetings be exclusively in the evening. This was discussed by the Board. Two of the members that are self employed and sporadically out of town said that they are unable to commit to a specific schedule of every other Monday, or third Tuesday, etc. Additionally, all of the members feel that they want the flexibility of having more or fewer meetings as the work load warrant, around certain events such as when abatements are being filed, or personal exemptions are being reviewed.

### **Public Relations**

- The Board discussed ways of making taxpayers more aware of the process of updating values, assessment to sale ratios and/or explaining the tax rate setting process. A public forum, LCTV, etc. were discussed and it was decided to stay with the “public access” portion of the Boards meeting where taxpayers can come in and ask specific questions. There are already numerous opportunities available for residents to become informed on the various warrant articles dealing with spending, budget hearings, etc. The Board felt that the concern of most property owners was related to the amount of tax they had to pay each year and how much it increased from the prior year. The method of arriving at the value was of less interest.

### **Candidate for Governor**

- Bob brought in a print screen of the Christy Mihos for governor web page in order to show that there is talk at the state level to change how towns generate revenue. As taxes increase there are more questions about alternative measures of raising money. Mr. Mihos is proposing what he calls Proposition 1. This is similar to Proposition 13 in California where the assessed value is the most recent sale price. And, the tax is based on the sale price of the property until it is sold. The Assessors did not believe that this is a viable option and is not likely to be adopted.

## Personal Exemptions

Two Chapter 58, Section 8 letters requesting permission to grant personal exemptions not filed timely were reviewed by the Board. Bob will send these letters to the DOR. If the Board receives permission, these two personal exemptions will be processed.

- Clause 37 for Okun
- Clause 22 for Doyle

**FY2006 Property Abatements Applications**

Bob Leclair distributed two lists that show the results of the abatement process. One lists applications in street order, and the other by decision. As of today's meeting, about 36% were granted. This does not include five applications that were deemed denied and are scheduled for review at this evening's meeting.

The Assessors reviewed and commented on a "release" letter that Bob wrote for the applications that are deemed denied, and subsequently reviewed. According to Chapter 59, Section 64, granting an abatement after it has been deemed denied requires that any adjustment be a "final settlement". It is hoped that getting the property owner to sign off will preclude appeal to the ATB. Bob will revise the letter and send out for signatures.

**Executive Session**

The Assessors voted unanimously (Fein – yes, Kennedy – yes, Graczykowski – yes) to enter into executive session to discuss abatement applications and personal exemptions and to return to open session to announce their decisions on the cases reviewed.

**Granted**

- 16 Cross Street
- 891 Longmeadow Street
- 106 Longview Drive

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned around 7:45 p.m.

**Next Meeting:           Monday, July 17, 2006 at 7:00 p.m.  
                                  Community Room of the Fire Station**

Respectfully Submitted,

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