

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

TUESDAY – SEPTEMBER 7, 2004

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

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

NOTE: This meeting was originally scheduled for Monday, September 6, 2004 until they realized that town offices were closed for Labor Day. The meeting was held on the following day at the same location and time.

Acceptance of Minutes

The minutes of the August 17, 2004 meeting were accepted with changes.

Correspondence/Mail

None

Public Comment/Correspondence

No one was in attendance for this portion of the meeting.

Excise

The Assessors signed the August 2004 *Monthly List of Abatements, Motor Vehicle and Trailer Excise*: \$60.63 from the Levy of Fiscal 2003 and \$4,599.67 from the Levy of Fiscal 2004 for a monthly total of \$4,660.30.

Old Business

Building Department Supervision

The Assessors' were informed that subsequent to their meeting with interim town administrator Norman Thidemann and interim finance director Paul Pasterczyk, Norm asked Bob if he had given any more thought to supervising the secretary in the Building Department. That afternoon, Paul showed up to say the three of us were meeting to discuss this very topic. So far no changes have been made towards implementation.

Willie's Island

Bob has yet to look into the issue of taxing the property known as Willie's Island. Once he has additional information he will bring it back to the Board at a future meeting.

Eunice Drive

In the process of getting an opinion from town counsel, it was discovered that the portion of vacant land that is in Longmeadow is no longer owned by the synagogue. It has been sold to a charitable organization. Transfer of ownership will be noted and the owner who took possession in 2001 will be billed. It will be up to this organization to convince the Board they believe they should receive exempt status.

Tax Status of Private Ways

This was discussed at a prior meeting and Bob will bring it back to the Assessors once he has more information for discussion.

Appellate Tax Board (ATB)

Ruth's House (780 Converse Street)

A letter from Dave Martel was given to the Board. Dave has informed the Assessors that since Ruth's House was judged to be taxable, the issue of correct assessment is now their concern. Dave indicated that Mike Crowley has been hired to appraise the property. Dave scheduled a meeting with Mike to go over his methodology in the process.

The Board indicated that they are choosing to have Dave Martel represent the Town in this matter. On the issue of acquiring an appraiser, the Board discussed the possibility of using a fee appraiser from VISION, getting a local appraiser, or of looking for a regional appraiser with experience in valuing assisted living facilities. In the Glenmeadow ATB case of a few years ago, the Board obtained the services of a Boston lawyer (John Lynch), appraiser and "expert" witness.

It was decided that Bob would contact Dave Martel to discuss whether or not we should be looking to hire an appraiser and expert witness at this time, or if we should wait and see (if possible) the result of the appraisal done for Ruth's House. We could find out that the assessment and appraisal are very close or that the appraisal is much higher. At that point Ruth's House could withdraw their appeal. If their appraisal is much lower than the assessed value, it is likely that they will proceed. It is also possible that they will return to discuss a settlement for the years in question.

Measure and List

The Assessors were apprised of recent complaints received in the office that seem to involve one particular data collector working for VISION. Misleading or "excessive" information is being given resulting in the taxpayer feeling as though they have been paying too much in taxes over the years. Bob has left and received voice messages from Dave Arnold about his concerns. The Board feels that VISION should be notified that similar reports about this same individual may result in them asking that she no longer be one of the data collectors working in Longmeadow.

Interim year adjustments

Chairman Fein signed the contract on behalf of the Board authorizing VISION to conduct the Fiscal 2005 Interim Year Adjustment mandated by the Department of Revenue. Bob gave the Assessors copies of the requirements for doing the interim year adjustment. These were e-mailed to prospective bidders. Bob indicated that the Finance Committee's next meeting is scheduled for September 13, 2004 and that the town accountant will present the request at that time.

The Assessors discussed how the usual process for requesting this funding was to have it as an article on the town warrant. Since the process was not followed, a Reserve Fund Request is necessary at this time. Bob has been assured that funding is just a formality, however, the contract was signed with the caveat that it is subject to the approval of financing.

Miscellaneous

Bob discussed meeting with Paul regarding the efficiency of work being done in the office by the Board's secretary.

Adjournment

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

Next Meeting: – Monday, October 4, 2004 8:30 a.m.
Community Room of the Police Station

Respectfully Submitted,

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