

TOWN OF LUNENBURG
BOARD OF ASSESSORS
P.O. BOX 135
LUNENBURG, MA 01462

October 11, 2023 - Minutes

Present Members: Vice Chair Sarah Cammer, Chair Brian Laffond, Clerk John Rabbitt, Interim Principal Assessor Rena Swezey.

1. Call to Order

The meeting opened at 6:45 PM.

2. Opening Public Comment

- Board: No board comments.
- Public: No public comments.

3. Old Business

- Approve Minutes
 - Motion by Sarah Cammer, seconded by John Rabbitt to approve the following meeting minutes: April 25, May 4, May 16, May 23, June 29, and July 18.
- The below meetings were amended for each listed reason.
 - May 25, June 8, and June 13: Removal of Christine Higdon from the members present list.
 - May 30 and June 15: Addition of John Rabbitt to the present members list.
 - June 6: Removal of Christine Higdon and addition of John Rabbitt to members present list.
 - August 1: Correction under board member comment section relating to who was nominated, voted for, and position.
 - Motion by Sarah Cammer, seconded by John Rabbitt to approve the minutes above with the amendments.
- Review and Approve Expense Vouchers and Payroll
 - Timesheets and expense vouchers from 9/12 to 10/4 regarding mileage by the Interim Assessor approved. All in favor.

Table Interim Principal Assessor's report until Rena arrives.

4. New Business

- Regular Meeting Schedule and Next Meeting Dates
 - Meetings will be held on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month until the end of December. Upcoming meetings are as listed: November 6, November 20, December 4, and December 18.
- Community Meeting to update public on Q3 & Q4 Property Tax Bills

The Q3 tax bills will be estimated and the Q4 tax bills will be actual. Rena Swezey to confirm the dates exact dates.

 - Insert from the Treasurer to be included in Q3 Property Tax Bills

- The board will follow up with the town manager regarding the contents of the insert. The board votes that all members sign this insert. John Rabbitt votes to have Chair Brian Laffond be the point of contact person to work with the town manager regarding the insert, seconded by Sarah Cammer.
 - Outreach
 - John Rabbitt wants to work with Rena Swezey regarding outreach programs. Sarah Cammer inquired about how much time should be allotted to work on this project. The board agrees for John Rabbitt and Rena Swezey to spend an hour per week on this project. Rena Swezey states that all exemptions need to be submitted between January 1 and April 1.
 - Seniors:
 - Ms. Cammer states that while she is not opposed to increasing the amount of exclusion value for Seniors, it is not practical for this year, as it will require working through Town Meeting. She suggests working with current values.
 - Veterans:
 - Must have a service-connected disability to qualify for this program. John Rabbit suggests bringing in the veteran admissions officer to gain additional information.
 - Lake Group(s)
 - Tabled until a future meeting. A discussion can be had once preliminary evaluations are reviewed so that residents are aware of what to expect.

Resume Old Business

- Status Report from Interim Principal Assessor
 - Rena Swezey has emailed the board members inspection reports of the new construction that has been entered into the computer system. Sketches of the houses are not yet completed, and lot splits have not yet been added to the computer system.
 - Currently awaiting P&S for 2 parcels. Motion by Brian Laffond, seconded by Sarah Cammer to table discussion until those are received.
 - Reopen discussion about Interim Principal Assessor Report of 9/27/2023
 - John Rabbitt wants more involvement in activities of outsourced product. Brian Laffond stated that if JR is making a motion to insert the BOA into regular working sessions, he would not second it as we must allow our hired agents to do their work.
 - JohnRabbitt suggested that the Interim Principal Assessor should attend the monthly Finance Meeting with the Town Manager. Brian Laffond will investigate if that is necessary.

- John Rabbitt asked if the Town is providing all the contracted requirements for the Vision contract. Rena Swezey stated yes to all requirements.
- John Rabbitt stated that Vision Property Cards and CAI Property Cards are out of date and don't match. Rena Swezey stated that while the Vision cards are being updated and are done through the year, the CAI cards are AS OF January 1st each year, so they will not match for anything that changed throughout the year.
- John Rabbitt stated that there is a lot of information in the Vision Property Cards, but asked if we can add fields as we need for more detailed capability. Rena Swezey stated that we cannot add fields that do not already exist in Vision, but that Vision has many factors that Lunenburg is not currently using. We can work with Vision on most additional fields we choose to use.
- We returned to some additional (RRC) bills that were overlooked earlier in the meeting.
 - There seemed to be some confusion on the dates on the bills and potential duplication. The bills were not signed and will be returned to the office for clarification.
- Building Value Policy.
 - Discussion – Add Seasonal Use Cottage
 - Off-ground construction, no central heat, etc.
 - Rena Swezey will draft a proposal for next meeting.

5. Future Agenda Topics

- Review and Approve Senior / Veterans Exemptions
- Review and Approve Chapter Land Exemptions
- Software – Xembly discussion
- Policy Establishment / Review
 - Land Value Policies / Propose Criteria. (i.e.:
 - Topography
 - Waterfront Quality
 - Rights of way, Roadway, etc.
 - Other)
- Building Value Policies / Propose Criteria. (i.e.: New Categories)
- Data Storage. (i.e. Reason for previous approval of abatement)
- Brian Laffond asked how we can see copies of Contracts and Service Proposals from our agents. Rena Swezey stated that those documents are not in the BOA office and we would need to ask the Town Manager.
 - Sarah Cammer made a motion to ask for copies of existing Contracts and Service agreements. JR Second. Unanimously approved.
 - John Rabbitt suggested that we ask for future involvement in development of RFPs and/or Contract deliverables and Verification of Performance.
 - Sarah Cammer stated we could review current data for existing deliverables and timelines.
 - Brian Laffond cautioned that we need to make sure not to overstep the procurement process
 - Brian Laffond took action item to follow up with Town Manager

- John Rabbitt also wants the BOA to have more say in personnel-related decisions
 - Brian stated that while BOA has ratification authority, we can invite the Town Manager to discuss having a larger role in writing job descriptions for future openings
- Document Control
 - Discussion about dates and stamping documents to create a record.
 - John Rabbitt pointed out that he has discovered three different job descriptions for the Principal Assessor. Brian Laffond will investigate with Lunenburg's HR person.

6. Closing Public Comment

- Public Comment
 - Carl Luck suggests that all communication be added to the website and a notification is sent out when something new is posted. Carl Luck questions why the vision cards aren't updated to reflect the abatements and new assessments. There is expressed concern by Carl Luck that the taxes will rise again.
- Board Comment
 - John Rabbitt expresses that the board should be involved in preliminary meetings for new hires. John Rabbitt suggests having Julie Belliveau come to a future meeting to discuss job descriptions.
 - Brian Laffond suggests having Nate Cramer come to the next meeting in November. There are some questions regarding what services Nate provides.
 - John Rabbitt inquiries about a discussion that will take place during the executive session.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION – Motion to Adjourn, enter into Executive.

Motion by Sarah Cammer to adjourn and enter into executive session at 9:14 PM, seconded by John Rabbitt.

Motion to adjourn to enter into executive session and not to return to open session after the executive session and were entering executive session under purpose 7 to comply with or act under the authority of any general or special law or federal grant aid requirements quote applications for abatement or exemption under this chapter shall accept in proceedings before the County Commissions the appellant tax board or court of the Commonwealth be open only to the inspection of the assessors the commissioner, the deputies, clerks, and assistance of either the assessors or the commissioner and such other officials or designated private auditor of the Commonwealth which is chapter 59 section 60 of MGL and that's the law being cited.