

**LUNENBURG BOARD OF ASSESSORS**  
APRIL 1, 2024  
BILOTTA ROOM, LUNENBURG TOWN HALL  
17 MAIN STREET

Present Members: Chair Brian Laffond, Vice Chair Sarah Cammer, Principal Assessor Lynda McQuade, Interim Principal Assessor Rena Swezey. Via Zoom – Clerk John Rabbitt.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting opened at 6:30 PM.

OPENING COMMENTS

- Board            There were no comments from the Board.
- Public           There were no public comments.

STATUS REPORTS FROM INTERIM PRINCIPAL ASSESSOR and NEW PRINCIPAL ASSESSOR.

The new Principal Assessor, Lynda McQuade, started on Monday. Rena Swezey and Lynda McQuade have both been working on motor vehicle excise and the tax bills on MUNIS.

Over the past 4 months Rena Swezey has not been able to go out and do inspections since she was the only employee in the office. Lynda McQuade and Rena Swezey will start reviewing building permits next week to catch up on the backlog.

Rena Swezey is going to start training Lynda McQuade with Vision. Heather Lemieux mentioned there is training for Vision that she will look into.

Brian Laffond has previously requested a designated email for the Assessor's office. At the time we did not have enough licenses.

John Rabbitt questions how many motor vehicle abatements were processed this year. Rena Swezey doesn't have an exact number because they all haven't been entered into MUNIS. Brian Laffond states once they are all entered a report can run.

John Rabbitt questioned if we could gain access to Sheila's email information to start digging through that pile and see if there is anything critical. Rena Swezey states she did have Sheila's password and did try to keep up with incoming emails.

Sarah Cammer asked if there has been any interest in filling the position while Sheila is out. It didn't work out. Are we looking for a potential volunteer for the senior tax work-off plan?

Rena Swezey spoke to Julie Belliveau states this is a conflict due to personnel and financial information being confidential. There were a few people interested but the main question people had is if this is going to turn into a permanent full-time position. Brian Laffond states that due to the family medical leave act we no longer have to hold this position for her, but we do have to have a position offer available if she were able to come back.

Rena Swezey has confirmed with Heather Lemieux that she will stay on until the end of May.

## CURRENT BUSINESS

- Review and Approve Invoices, Expense Vouchers, Payroll, Billing Errors, etc.

The quarterly bill from Multiple Listing Service (MLS) service for the amount of \$126 was signed.

The real estate commitment is \$2,177,837,450 and personal property commitment is \$64,914,630 totaling \$2,242,752,080. Both documents were signed.

Last year CJ did all the roll back taxes that were all paid but never released the liens on the property because he left. The Committee signed the release of a lien on rollback taxes for some lots on Holman Street.

### Potential Revision to Warrant Article about Clause 41C

Some research had to be done to find out the last time we acted on Article 41C. It appears the last time it was acted on was back in 2006. The elderly exemption income limits for a single person were \$24,000 and married couple were \$30,000. The abatement was raised from \$600 to \$750.

Brian Laffond spoke to the Department of Revenue who said they believe we can indeed bring this article back up in November and it could still affect 2025. There are 2 options available. The Board can get enough information to present it to the town in May or we can take it off and re-do it with a thorough investigation for November.

John Rabbitt wants to move forward with \$750 to \$1,000 and change the age limit to be consistent with what all other communities are doing.

Brian Laffond believes more information about income requirements is needed.

Brian Laffond states as far as we could tell there was never an adoption of COLA by town meeting, but we have been accepting the COLA amounts at some point over the years just not consistently. More research needs to be done.

Sarah Cammer believes there needs to be a vote from the community legislative body subject to the charter to accept a vote. There needs to be a formal vote.

Rena Swezey suggests going to the Town Council to get more information.

- Status of Community Outreach

- 1. Review of Assessor Conference – March 25, 2024.

John Rabbitt attended the conference and states there were 29 participants in the room. Zoom was also an option but was a disappointment because there was no audio. All in all, the conference was well received.

John Rabbitt shared Sarah Cammer's "How to Read Your Property Card" brochure.

Brian Laffond questions if this conference will be held annually. John Rabbit believes it would be a good opportunity especially since the targeted audience don't have computers or aren't computer savvy.

The Lunenburg Ledger was present and is going to be writing an article.

- 2. Roll out of Website Improvements

John Rabbitt anticipates the website going live in mid to late April.

Brian Laffond suggests making a section on the webpage specifically about exemptions.

- Use of Responses to "Extensive Citizen Questions".as FAQs. - Guest: Carl Luck

Carl Luck, 50 Sunset Lane, sorted through many of the questions that could be answered and pulled out the still relevant questions. There were several pages worth of questions that were provided to the Board. The pages were further broken down into 2 sections. 1 section was questions to be answered by contractors and a section for the Board or Town Manager to address. Carl suggested it would be good to make the "How to Read You Vision Card" so it is easier to find.

- Status of 5-Year Revaluation / Tax Bills

There were some technical problems between MUNIS and Vision. Currently most of the information is being transferred and the information is being sent to a printing company. Once printed they will be returned for a final review and a final package will be sent. They are expected to be sent out in the next 2 weeks and the tax bill will be due in mid-May.

Rena Swezey confirms that there is a 3 month period for exemptions to be filed after the date the tax bills are sent. An abatement needs to be applied for within 30 days of the bill being received.

- DOR Directives – Establish committee to Review / Recommend new Neighborhood (Site Code) assignments.

Brian Laffond wants to put together a neighborhood reevaluation team including a member of the Board, a member of the Assessor's Office, someone on a lake, someone not on a lake, and a consultant.

Sarah Cammer states she was surprised with the layouts and there is some work that can be done to make improvements.

Rena Swezey states when going through a revaluation the DOR looks at what has been done over the year then you get a percentage. If it's not up to the level that the DOR wants, then it will show up on the certification.

- Approve Minutes of: Jan. 8, 2024, Jan. 22, 2024, Jan. 29, 2024, ~~Jan. 31, 2024 canceled~~, Feb. 5, 2024, Feb. 12, 2024, March 04, 2024, March 12, 2024, March 18, 2024  
Brian Laffond suggests going over the minutes when the Board members are all physically in the room. This topic was postponed to the next meeting.

#### FUTURE TOPICS

- 'Work Breakdown Structure'  
This topic will be kept on as a future agenda topic.
- BOA Policies  
There was no discussion, and this topic is always on the agenda as a placeholder when needed.

#### UPCOMING MEETING/EVENTS SCHEDULE

- April 22, 2024, ~~April 29, 2024 canceled~~, May 6, 2024, May 20, 2024  
The Board agrees to have the next meeting on April 22, 2024.  
Brian Laffond will find and reserve a location.

#### CLOSING COMMENTS

- Public  
Dave MacDonald, 155 Island Road, is still disappointed with last year's bills being mailed out late. He requests an update to citizens be added to the Facebook page or website stating exactly what's happening and the deadlines. Dave MacDonald has submitted a letter to the Town Manager relating to this issue. He welcomes the new assessor and thanks everyone for stepping up and doing a great job. Brian Laffond confirms something can be added to the new website giving an update. Additionally, the Town Manager will be giving an update at the Select Board's meeting tomorrow.
- Board  
Sarah Cammer proposes submitting to the Town Manager the information about adding a data collector to our budget and inquiring additional information about what happens if it's accepted at the Annual Town Meeting. Brian Laffond confirms if it is accepted, they won't be hired until after July 1<sup>st</sup>. There will be 2 people in the office until the end of May. Rena Swezey is aware that this position is at the top of the Town Manager's hiring list.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was a motion to suspend open meeting and enter into executive session not to return to open session after executive session by Sarah Cammer, seconded by John Rabbitt. Roll call vote. John Rabbitt aye, Sarah Cammer aye, Brian Laffond aye.

The meeting closed at 8:30 PM.

ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION – Suspend open meeting and enter into Executive Session, not to return to Open Session after exiting Executive Session. Motion to enter executive session under Purpose 7: "To comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements".