

LUNENBURG BOARD OF ASSESSORS
MARCH 18, 2024
BILOTTA ROOM, LUNENBURG TOWN HALL
17 MAIN STREET

Present members: Chair Brian Laffond, Clerk John Rabbitt, Interim Principal Assessor Rena Swezey

Absent: Vice Chair Sarah Cammer

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting opened at 6:43PM.

OPENING COMMENTS

- Board

There were no comments from the Board.

- Public

Carl Luck, 50 Sunset Lane, thanks the Board for their efforts. He is happy the Board of Assessors is actively working on getting the residents' questions answered. Carl Luck questions why we must wait for a meeting to get our questions answered. Some questions are simple questions.

Brian Laffond states that some of the questions have been answered but doesn't think that Carl Luck was comfortable with the answer. In some other situations we haven't been able to pull the time or the resources to put all the questions together and give a cohesive meaningful answer. John Rabbitt confirms that the website is also going to answer most of the questions asked.

STATUS REPORT FROM INTERIM PRINCIPAL ASSESSOR

Brian Laffond states that Rena Swezey has been working on a lot of excise tax abatements over the last several weeks. This was very time-consuming and additionally Rena Swezey finished the 5-year reevaluation.

Rena Swezey has received some help from the tax collector's office regarding excise tax abatements. There is a lot of information to take in and then it needs to be processed through Munis. Today she sent over 75 certifications and there are at least another 50 or more. Tax bills are also being printed and sent out. The new assessor is starting next Monday.

CURRENT BUSINESS

- Approve Minutes of: Jan. 8, 2024, Jan. 22, 2024, Jan. 29, 2024, ~~Jan. 31, 2024 - cancelled~~, Feb. 5, 2024, Feb. 12, 2024, Mar 4, 2024

This topic was pushed until Sarah Cammer is present. Brian Laffond hasn't received everyone's input. There was a motion to accept the minutes from executive session of 3/4/24 by John Rabbitt, seconded by Brian Laffond.

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

There was a bill from CAI maintenance totaling \$3,200. The Board signed and were all in favor.

The Board signed an Invoice from Vision.

There was a batch of Motor Vehicle Abatements signed totaling \$6,295.23.

There was a motion to accept commitment number 7 totaling \$13,791.50 by Brian Laffond, seconded by John Rabbitt. Commitment number 7 of 23 was signed which included 35 bills.

There was a commitment to collect all real estate and personal property bills. This information came out of Vision. The expected real estate is totaling \$2,112,857,320 and personal property is totaling \$64,913,630. There was a motion to approve calculations by Brian Laffond, seconded by John Rabbitt. All in favor.

- Status of 5-Year Revaluation

Rena Swezey states the neighborhoods were reviewed today. The options are to keep what we currently have, or we could start making modifications.

Rena Swezey received a copy of the report on the assessment services provided and evaluation updates for the 2025 reevaluation from Vision. 3 copies were received as part of the contract. Brain Laffond suggests keeping a copy in the office and in the library. John Rabbitt questions if this can be added to the website being created. The Board has asked to receive an electronic copy of the documents and is currently awaiting a response.

- DOR Directives – Ad-Hoc Citizen Committee plus?

Brian Laffond suggests the Board put together a citizens committee to talk about what the neighborhoods are or what they should be. Ideally, the committee would have someone with a history of assessing.

Brian Laffond wants to write down specifics, but he doesn't want to wait too long and hold up establishing a committee. A clear charter needs to be written with a limited scope.

Rena Swezey states everything that would be worked on won't be reflected until fiscal 26.

The Board will come up with more specifics for the next meeting.

- Status of Community Outreach

- Status of Website Improvements

Kara McCarthy has created the website, and the sandbox was made available on Thursday to the Board. Sandbox allows you to see the layout

and design prior to it being publicized and accessible to anyone unless they have the code.

John Rabbitt confirms 90-95% of the webpage may be completed by Monday. Nate Kramer's presentation and terminology are being added. Brian has viewed the sandbox and submitted comments to John Rabbitt.

- Finalize Agenda for Senior Center Orientation- March 25, 2024.

The Lunenburg Ledger will be present and reporting.

The lineup is as follows Rena Swezey is up first, second is Representative Margaret Scarsdale, third is Lou franco, and Tom Alonzo may or may not do a presentation. Lastly, will be a question-and-answer session.

- Discuss and Decide on 41C Exemptions increase "option" for FY 25

At the Select Board meeting there were 3 members who would support option 3.

The Board moved to approve option 3 which is basically two elements being changed by John Rabbitt, seconded by Brian Laffond. All in favor.

There are a few questions that need to be addressed. One question was decreasing the requirement age from 70 to 65 years of age. There is also the matter of the reimbursement to the citizen moving from \$750 to \$1,000.

John Rabbitt read that there is guidance from the Department of Revenue that says that all exemptions must move together. Currently, John Rabbitt is following up to confirm or deny if this is the case.

John Rabbitt has some confusion about where the contributions come back from the state. Brian Laffond says the exemptions are approved by the Board, then the state returns and states how much will be coming back through the cherry sheet. The funds don't go back into overlay. Rena Swezey confirms that the state will only reimburse 20 exemptions. Rena Swezey will provide a document to the Board that gives all state reimbursements.

All exemptions for fiscal 25 need to be in the office by April 1, 2025. The Board then has until April 30th to submit to the DOR.

- Future Zoom Session for Public Q&A with Nate Cramer / Mike Tarello – Update

Brian Laffond has reached out to Mike Tarello to inquire if he could come in and do some questions and answers with the public. Rena Swezey states this is Mike Tarello's busy season and he has very limited time and may not be able to come to answer questions. The Board will submit some questions to him.

There is a suggestion about adding this to the agenda for the next meeting and review questions that have already been received to try and consolidate.

NEW BUSINESS

- Establish ad-hoc committee(s) to aid board members
 - Use of Responses to “extensive citizen questions” as FAQs.
Brian Laffond is going to take this off the agenda for new business and add it to current business.

FUTURE TOPICS

- “Work Breakdown Structure”
Rena Swezey found a notebook in the office that seems to have come down through the ranks. Sheila Craigen may have additional input.
- BOA Policies
Some policies have been discussed but haven’t formally been written down. This is necessary to document history.

UPCOMING MEETING/EVENTS SCHEDULE

- April 1, 2024
- April 22, 2024 – Tentatively scheduled.
- April 29, 2024- Tentatively scheduled.

CLOSING COMMENTS

- Public
There were no public comments.
- Board
John Rabbitt states the Board may need to start a formal process to get the word out for a replacement for Sarah Cammer.

Rena Swezey will bring copies of 41C-related brochures to the meeting on Monday including income requirements and age.

ADJOURN

There was a motion to adjourn by John Rabbitt, seconded by Brian Laffond. All in favor.

The meeting closed at 8:19 PM.