

LUNENBURG BOARD OF ASSESSORS

August 19, 2024

UPPER LEVEL, RITTER BUILDING
960 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

Present members: Chair Brian Laffond, Clerk John Rabbitt, Principal Assessor Lynda McQuade, Assessing Consultant Rena Swezey

Absent members: Vice Chair Sarah Cammer

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting opened at 7:14 PM.

OPENING COMMENTS

-Board

Brian Laffond states there were technical issues, and Zoom was unable to be utilized.

John Rabbitt questions if anything needs to be done or followed on the state issuing a new IGR for smart growth on July 11th. The Board is unaware of any update or discussion.

-Public

There were no comments from the public.

STATUS REPORT FROM PRINCIPAL ASSESSOR

- Status of Abatement and Exemption Applications. Other items as needed.

The new data collector, Denise McCue, was present. Denise McCue has 20 to 27 years of appraiser history and has run her own real estate company. The only area that she does not have a lot of experience with is commercial real estate. Denise McCue will start her position on August 20, 2024.

Lynda McQuade provided the following updates.

- The remaining real estate abatements that were previously approved were processed.
- In the past month there have been 125 motor vehicle tax abatements received.
- Ongoing: reviewing of 102 building permits from 2022 and 2023 to confirm all new construction and information is in Vision.
- 5 abutters lists have been processed in the past month.
- 5 supplemental bills were sent for FY 24 new construction totaling \$22,508.55
- 130 exemption applications have been sent to residents that includes veterans, elderly, blind.

- There is continuous review of building permits to determine percentage of growth as of June 30.
- The individual who interviewed and was offered the Administrative Assessing Assistant did not accept the offer. The hiring process will restart.

John Rabbitt questions how Munis has been working. Lynda McQuade and Rena Swezey have confirmed that there have been some issues, but Randy Mercier has been providing help.

Brian Laffond and Lynda McQuade spoke to the Town Manager. There was a request to provide the amount of money in the overlay account that could be moved elsewhere and what the amount of excess overlay is.

Rena Swezey provided a document from an attorney who is awaiting a response from the Board regarding property on Leominster Road and Gilbert Street. Brian Laffond makes a motion to withdrawal from chapter 61b, seconded by John Rabbitt. All in favor.

Rena Swezey states an application for a real estate abatement and the letter was received after the deadline. Those residents can file again if Fiscal 25.

CURRENT BUSINESS

- Review and Approve Minutes of June 29, 2024. Minutes of Executive Session of June 29, 2024

John Rabbitt provided a statement regarding the June 10th meeting. John Rabbitt made an incorrect statement and said that executive session minutes would never be released. That is incorrect and there have been Executive Session minutes that have become public. Once the matter discussed under Executive Session has been resolved, the minutes can be released.

There was a motion to approve the June 29th minutes as amended by John Rabbitt, seconded by Brian Laffond.

Rena Swezey confirms she has completed the minutes from the Executive Session from June 29th but didn't have a copy at the meeting.

- Review and Approve Invoices, Expense Vouchers, Payroll, Billing Error, Etc.
 There was a utility appraisal received from Real Estate Research Consultants (RRC) – for the completion of 504s, 505s, and 506s. This bill totaled \$9,000. An invoice was signed from J&S for 250 business cards for Lynda McQuade. The bill totaled \$35.
 There was a bill for the yearly dues for MAAO, Massachusetts Association of Assessors Officers, totaling \$75.
 Motor Vehicle abatements were signed.

John Rabbitt requests tracking of abatement amounts and the approved amounts. Rena Swezey can provide a printout report from Munis with information.

- Update on Neighborhood Review Team Proposal
Sarah Cammer has not been available and will provide an update when she can.
- Brief Status of Roll out of Website-Test Plan, Release Scheduled
John Rabbitt requests a table of contents or site map to be added to the website. Brian Laffond wants the website to be released ASAP and wants to push off a sitemap/table of contents. Modifications can be made after the site has launched. Brian Laffond states this website is already late and started 8 months ago.
- Feedback on Financial Policies Document
John Rabbitt requested an electronic copy of the financial policies document. Brian Laffond states he had previously provided an electronic copy.

John Rabbitt had some questions about the document. Due to the questions not being related to feedback it's suggested that John Rabbitt reach out to the Finance Director.

John Rabbitt wants to know what is happening at the finance meetings and wants to see minutes from the meetings. Lynda McQuade confirms that minutes are not taken for those meetings. It's a meeting between Principal Assessor, the Finance Director, the Tax Collector, and the Town Manager.

POSTPONED TOPICS

- Discuss details and development of assessing calendar
Lynda McQuade confirms that she does have a calendar. Brian Laffond questions the steps that are not listed on the calendar such as creating a budget. There are things on the calendar that have dependency, and he doesn't want those to be forgotten.
- Update status of investigation regarding Exemptions including: 17C, 22, 37, 41C, (and potential 41D)
John Rabbitt has contacted other towns about exemption 41a. He is suggesting that the Board go before the Town and ask them to change the state mandated regulation to an 8% interest rate change. John Rabbitt wants to change the rate to 6%. John Rabbitt will draft a document and review it at the next meeting.

Rena Swezey confirms nothing needs to be completed for Exemption 22 or 37.

John Rabbitt will continue to research and focus on Exemptions 17C, 41C and 41D.

- BOA Policies

Brian Laffond would like Sarah Cammer to be present for the policy discussions.

UPCOMING MEETING/EVENTS SCHEDULE

- September 16, 2024 (Tentative)
- September 30, 2024 (Tentative)

CLOSING COMMENTS

- Public

There were no comments from the public.

- Board

There were no comments from the Board.

ADJOURN

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

The meeting closed at 8:53 PM.