

MEETING MINUTES  
BOARD OF ASSESSORS  
February 8, 2010

Attending: John Prentiss, Chairman, Vincent Ritchie, Diane Lanney

Approved December 28, 2009 meeting minutes.

Reviewed Recap documents to ensure proper signature on three copies.

Mr. Ritchie joined the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Solar Farm

1) Discussed where the Town currently stands on the Solar Farm proposal for Pitcherville Road. Agree the DA to research real estate valuation highest and best use as residential or commercial as Solar Farm, and once special permit specs of equipment is available from Planning Board, estimate a total value. In addition, DA to research payment in lieu of taxes for "utility" production.

2) Mr. Ritchie stated we need an appraisal. DA states the equipment value is no different regardless of the State/Town/City where it resides. At issue is the real estate value, where current property owner is in negotiation of lease wanting an estimate of assessed value of the land only to determine that their land lease will cover their taxation. Value will need to be Market, Cost and Income. Questions still remain on what improvements are personal property or real estate. Appraiser (Steve Traub) will recommend not only what equipment would be real estate, but what would be personal property.

3) DA requested special permit site plan application, with special equipment list to begin research.

4) Mr. Ritchie on Thursday will contact Ms. Roussel to arrange for up to \$15,000 for appraisal in to a 503G account from A & H Site, property owner.

5) Discussion regarding valuation and payment in lieu of taxes.

Review of Selectboard meeting minutes where their review of DOR Financial Management Report, specifically Assessors not certified and Assessors should be appointed. Mr. Ritchie reiterated conversation he had with the Town Administrator and Selectman, Matt Castriotta. Specifically, that Mr. Ritchie purposely is not seeking certification due to the fact that Mr. Prentiss will leave his current Assessor position. This is over 30 years of Assessor experience lost. That the Selectboard would be hard-pressed to find someone to appoint to BOA. Over the past eight years, only one person (besides the current three) pulled papers to run as an Assessor but never turned them in to the Town Clerk.

It is the norm for BOA's to have an elected Board with full time appointed Principal/ Deputy Assessor with clerical staff.

Mr. Ritchie briefed the BOA on his conversation with Selectman Matt Castriotta relative to the lack of appreciation of the job the BOA is doing – especially where \$1.5M of Revenue has been added to the Town coffers solely via the efforts of the BOA. The Town's revenue has tripled over the past five years, however, there has been an incremental decline in local and state revenues. The BOA's efforts are not adverse to the Town; the Selectboard needs to show their support.

\*DA to forward emails with DOR regarding recommendations listed in DOR Financial Report with a cover letter to the Selectboard.

- Cost analysis is done every budget that includes at least five years
- Recap Schedule is/has been used for at least six years
- All sale properties are inspected via field review and sales verifications are sent

DA, now that work back log caused from the FY09 hour cuts has been brought up to date, the office, although most often has been open Thursday 9:00 a.m. to noon at least, will now be posted as open hours. Mr. Prentiss stated besides Monday's, the office should be open to the public only when Assessors' Clerk is working, knowing full well that the DA could easily fall behind once more with interruptions, especially during certain times of year (i.e.; abatements) and the fact that the DA has several must do "projects" (i.e.; gravel pits, solar farm; Town of Fitchburg PILOT).

DA presented letter from Secretary of State in favor of the BOA's decision per a complaint filed by property owner Ed Blanchard regarding the BOA's redaction of information under Exemption Clause (d) relating to the legal strategy on an invoice for legal services for his 2007 ATB filing.

DA presented City & Town Newsletter November, 2009 where DOR patted their own backs in significantly reducing SOL value throughout the State, and the emails sent by DA to Senator Brewer and State Representative Lew Evangelidis.

DA presented the results of SOL ATB; restoration of over \$348,000 in DEM/DFW valuation (cherry sheet) and over \$1.5M in DCR valuation at a cost of \$5,300. \*DA to send letter to Selectboard, copy to Fin Comm Chair, outlining and including estimate of reimbursement and revenue over next four years (until next reconciliation).

Discussion regarding zero-based FY11 Budget. DA stated this is no change to BOA, as our budget has been zero-based for at least seven years, and will continue to be. It's in the best interest of the BOA, the Town, and allows total transparency of the Assessors' office.

Request by property owner Ed Blanchard to reconsider changing his street number. Reference vote of October 26, 2009 upholding street #23.

Motion: To change property currently known as #23 East Comet Pond Road per current BOA street number procedures in April 2005 to #1 East Comet Pond Road.

Ms. Lanney                    2<sup>nd</sup> Mr. Prentiss  
2 Against  
1 Abstain (Mr. Ritchie)

Motion: To reconsider preceeding vote to change #23 East Comet Pond Road to #1.  
Ms. Lanney, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mr. Ritchie  
3 Against

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Entered into Executive Session to discuss legal opinion of property and approve meeting minutes with intent to return to open session to adjourn.  
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Meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Next meeting scheduled for Monday, March 8, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.