



Town of West Tisbury
BOARD OF ASSESSORS
P. O. Box 278
West Tisbury, MA 02575-0278
508-696-0101
assessors@westtisbury-ma.gov

Open Session Meeting Minutes

Board of Assessors January 16, 2024

Members Present: Michael Colaneri (Chair), Maria McFarland, and Lawrence Schubert

Also Present: MacGregor Anderson (Principal Assessor)

The meeting convened at 4:30 P.M.

All votes were roll call votes due to the remote nature of the meeting.

Abutters Lists

The Board voted to certify the abutters lists: McFaland yes, Schubert yes, Colaneri yes

MV Excise Abatements - \$6,042.05 2023 – \$6,042.05

The Board voted to approve the abatements: McFaland yes, Schubert yes, Colaneri yes

Assessors Town Report

The Board voted to approve the 2023 Assessors contribution to the Town Report: McFaland yes, Schubert yes, Colaneri yes

Assessors 2024 Annual Town Meeting Revaluation Warrant Article

Mr. Anderson said they were able to keep the annual request of \$24,000 steady at this point, noting that while PK was more expensive on interim reporting than the previous consultants, they were less expensive on recertifications. He said the five-year recertification cycle also allowed the board to continue to keep this number steady for a decade plus.

Mr. Anderson said the Board might want to increase this amount to add additional consulting services in the future.

The Board voted to submit the warrant article: McFaland yes, Schubert yes, Colaneri yes

Rainbow Farm Conservation Restriction Request

Mr. Anderson said the Select Board had not scheduled the potential joint meeting to discuss the conservation restriction because the applicant had failed to find a second holder of the restriction. The Board agreed to table discussion and resume if a joint meeting were called in the future.

Overview of PILOTs (Payment in Lieu of taxes), Affordable Rental Exemption (MGL ch 59 sec 5O) and Residential Exemption (MGL ch 59 sec 5C)

Mr. Colaneri said the draft papers Mr. Anderson had provided on the three topics were a good first start. He was concerned they might still be a bit long, however. Mr. Anderson noted that Mr. Schubert had asked for about three pages initially for each and these fit that criteria, but he also agreed that the shorter they were the better, so long as they covered key topics.

Mr. Anderson said the target audience for these papers was the Select Board, and while the material could be overly complex for a portion of the general public, there would be lots of opportunity to educate people further.

Ms. McFarland said she had some corrections in mind, and Mr. Anderson said he would like her editing and proof-reading skills before presenting them to the Select Board. He suggested he and Mr. Schubert continue to fine tune the content based on feedback from this meeting, and that Ms. McFarland could then provide her recommendations for clarity.

Mr. Anderson said that the original plan had been for the Select Board to meet the following night to review these reports, but that their schedule precluded that. The plan now was for meeting with them in February.

Mr. Colaneri suggested that Mr. Anderson work on focusing the materials and shortening them as best he could. He wondered if the affordable rental exemption needed to be included, but Mr. Anderson reminded the Board that Mr. Manter had asked for more information on it during the classification hearing. He reminded the Board that Ms. Miller had requested the separate budget and staffing document. The Board agreed all three overviews and the budget/staffing document should be submitted when ready.

Ms. McFarland said she had several thoughts on the staffing side of a pre-qualification. Mr. Anderson said that during a recent Financial Management Team meeting Jen Rand, Town Administrator, had suggested using the new floating full-time administrative assistant she was hiring for the Board's pre-qualification efforts if we ended up proceeding.

Ms. McFarland felt it would be a risk relying on a floating staff member that was responsible for IT, and supporting all other committees as needed, and acting as clerk to the building department. She reminded the Board that they had an administrative assistant for many years until the job was combined with data collection.

Ms. McFarland said she did not think a warrant article as described in the overview was required, as there was a job description for an administrative assistant already. She said she could provide Mr. Anderson with that job description so he could update it, but that the Board would need to make an adjustment to the budget.

Mr. Colaneri said he felt that Mr. Anderson's experience in Oak Bluffs implementing the residential exemption would be helpful in determining how many hours they would need. Mr. Anderson said that many applications came in as incomplete, which required a lot of follow up. He described the process for approving application; it includes lots of extended conversations, following up on incomplete applications, photo-copying of long documents, and filing in addition to reviewing complete applications.

Mr. Colaneri asked if everyone had to go through the approval process. Mr. Anderson said they did, even if they were well known to the Town. He explained there was an official application form with State mandated documentation required.

Mr. Schubert said he felt the draft documents did a good job explaining these concepts, and wondered if they should be submitted in draft format to the Select Board and Town Administrator before further fine tuning the papers.

Ms. McFarland said she felt they should deliver final versions to the Select Board. Mr. Colaneri agreed.

Mr. Schubert suggested that the Assessors get these documents to the Select Board as soon as was practical. Mr. Anderson suggested he and Mr. Schubert make edits based on the discussion during this meeting and then provide it to Ms. McFarland who would proof for language, spelling, and clarity.

Mr. Anderson agreed, saying the Select Board was his intended initial audience. Mr. Schubert said he'd work to make the documents more concise with Mr. Anderson with the knowledge that additional information would be provided during future discussions.

The Board agreed to this approach and then continued discussion of potential material changes.

Ms. McFarland wondered how much focus should be placed on Boston in the PILOT overview. Mr. Colaneri pointed out that the Boston Globe has been covering a group that feels the Boston PILOT program is not receiving adequate payments for the services the non-profits receive there.

Mr. Anderson said he included Boston as his sample because they are the dominant leader in PILOT programs in the Country. He said the next step in considering a PILOT would include choosing a model for West Tisbury, and evaluating the Boston model could be a good starting point. He added that this was the approach Amherst had taken when embarking on its PILOT program a few years ago.

Mr. Colaneri pointed out that he had successfully pursued PILOTs for all affordable rental housing projects over the years. Mr. Anderson wondered if those were voluntary or expected under law. Mr. Colaneri said he recognized the contributions exempt organization made to the community, but felt that with over \$300 million in assets held in West Tisbury, they should consider paying for the services they receive from the Town.

Mr. Colaneri reiterated that the next step would be for Mr. Anderson to work with Mr. Schubert on making edits based on the discussion from this meeting. Then, Ms. McFarland would complete proofing.

Mr. Colaneri asked if Mr. Anderson could amend the budget to allow for hiring a part time assistant. Ms. McFarland suggested he talk to Town Accountant Bruce Stone to see if this could still be done. Mr. Colaneri agreed.

Mr. Anderson said that based on a recent Financial Management Team meeting it was clear the Town would need a large override in FY25, but said he'd speak with Mr. Stone about the change. He said it was a challenging year to ask for more money.

Ms. McFarland said she'd get a copy of the current administrative assistant job description so that it could be amended if needed. Mr. Colaneri asked about how much the budget increase was likely to be. Mr. Anderson said he thought it would be between \$25,000 to \$30,000. Mr. Colaneri thought that was a reasonable ask.

Ms. McFarland wondered where a new staff member would sit. Mr. Anderson said Treasurer Collector Kathy Logue thought the shared desk that CPC and Affordable Housing might be able to accommodate a part time administrative assistant.

The Board decided to move forward with a budget amendment request, and meet once more to approve an updated budget before submission to FinCom.

Executive Session

Motion to enter into executive session and not to return to open session under Chapter 30 A Section 21 (a) 3, 6 and 7

The Board will enter executive session in order to discuss litigation (3), the valuation of property (6), and applications deemed confidential under MGL CH 59 sec 60 (7)

The Board voted to enter executive session to discuss the topics below and not return to open session:
McFaland yes, Schubert yes, Colaneri yes

- 1) FY24 Exemptions
- 2) FY24 Abatements
- 3) FY25 Chapterland

The meeting adjourned at 5:15pm

MacGregor Anderson, MAA

Principal Assessor

Approved: 2/6/2024