



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, December 20, 2022

Present: Michael Colaneri (chair), Maria McFarland, Lawrence Schubert

Absent: none

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.

Minutes –October 18, 2022, November 1, 2022, November 29, 2022 and December 9, 2022

Mr. Anderson said he'd have these minutes ready at the next meeting.

Abutters Lists

The board voted to certify the abutters lists: McFarland yes, Schubert yes, Colaneri yes

Q3 Preliminary Real Estate and CPA Commitment

- a. RE \$4,529,476.37
- b. CPA \$125,518.38 .01

Mr. Anderson said the agenda had a typo where the CPA ended in 38 cents when it should have ended in one penny and that the actual commitment paperwork was correct.

The board voted to approve the commitment: McFarland yes, Schubert yes, Colaneri yes

Exemptions – plans to contact recipients to explain Q4 credit

Mr. Anderson presented a draft letter to be sent to exemption recipients explaining that exemption credits could not be applied until the fourth quarter actual tax bills were calculated, and that he couldn't guarantee that they would be done by the February 1st bill.

Ms. McFarland said she was a little concerned that Mr. Anderson might not be done by the February 1st bill, saying it was frankly a little scary. Mr. Colaneri asked that they focus on one thing at a time.

Mr. Colaneri asked that the letter be briefer, that it be clear that the exemption amount will not be deducted from the Q3 bill, and provide contact information for questions. Ms. McFarland agreed. Mr.

Anderson suggested he rewrite the letter for Ms. McFarland to review. She agreed. Mr. Schubert agreed with the rest of the Board on how to approach the letter.

Data Collection update

Mr. Anderson said they had 262 building permits to review as of January 1st so that they could document the completeness of each project. He said they'd done 40 so far and were continuing through January with these inspections. He said this was way ahead of last year's pace.

Mr. Anderson said there had been an incident in which Ed Pierce had asked for and received permission from a builder to enter a home under construction that belonged to a police officer. The police officer was unaware permission had been granted, but saw Mr. Pierce enter the home on a security camera. The issue was resolved, but Ms. Nevin had suggested sending post cards to property owners announcing upcoming inspections.

Mr. Colaneri said that this was generally done on interior inspections but not drive-bys. Mr. Anderson said that Mr. Pierce and Ms. Nevin were combining both types of inspections based on specific circumstances.

Mr. Anderson said that Ms. Nevin was running into some anxious property owners and thought a card announcing upcoming visits could help calm them. Mr. Colaneri said he did not support sending cards, and Ms. McFarland agreed.

Ms. McFarland said it was different for interior inspection requests. She also reminded Mr. Anderson to tell Ms. Nevin that if she has any doubt at all, leave. Mr. Anderson said he had emphasized that and would continue to do so.

FY24 Budget review

Mr. Colaneri said he thought it was prudent to keep consulting numbers up in the budget. He noted that there were still lots of inspections to do, that Ms. Nevin was relatively new, and that she should have help.

Mr. Anderson said he had \$7500 set aside for just that as he shared the breakdown of professional and technical services. Ms. McFarland pointed out that the professional and technical line hadn't yet been spent down in this fiscal year since Mr. Pierce had only just come back to work, and said she was comfortable keeping the line at \$10,000.

Ms. McFarland said she didn't want to ask FinCom for more money than necessary given there were fixed expenses that were already increasing. She said the expense budget was up 43%. Mr. Anderson pointed out that they were moving Nearmap into the budget for the first time which accounted for the majority of the increase. Mr. Schubert pointed out that the personnel expenses were showing more modest growth limiting the total budget increase.

Mr. Anderson said the Board hadn't raised the \$24,000 annual warrant article for revaluation in over a decade, and that by moving Nearmap into the budget, they wouldn't have to ask for an increase in the warrant article.

Mr. Colaneri asked why Nearmap wasn't paid for by other departments who used it. Mr. Anderson said the assessors used it far more than other departments. Mr. Colaneri said he didn't really care who paid for it but that it made the "43%" figure meaningless when payments for different departments weren't allocated.

Mr. Colaneri said he didn't want to go back to FinCom asking for more money in the future. Ms. McFarland said items like travel probably wouldn't all be used. Mr. Anderson said he had money for the things he expected to be doing. Mr. Anderson said that Mr. Colaneri was dead on about one thing, and that was the elephant in the room: inspections. Mr. Anderson said he'd covered that in his narrative noting that the Town was behind on inspections and could potentially be required to do a full measure and list, easily costing \$150,000.

Mr. Anderson said they did not have presently have the staff to fully resolve the backlog of inspections and this budget didn't provide funding for that. He said it was a potential warrant article at some point, unless they could catch up over the next couple years.

Ms. McFarland asked why the professional and technical services in FY22 jumped so much. Mr. Anderson pointed out the cost of decoding Patriot sketches for conversion to PK, consulting on ATB cases, and even Mr. Pierce's heavy work schedule that year. Most of these items were one time expenses.

Mr. Anderson also pointed out that they might have the option of asking Town Meeting to transfer excess payroll money into professional and technical for additional consultant inspections.

Mr. Anderson asked to discuss the legal budget. He said he'd left legal at \$20,000 which was what he considered the "FinCom compromise" from the previous year. Ms. McFarland said she didn't want to ask for more. Mr. Colaneri said this was the only source of legal funds. Ms. McFarland said she didn't want to fight with FinCom and if they Board needed the money they could get it from a reserve fund transfer.

Mr. Colaneri said historically the Town hadn't given the Assessors the legal money when asked. Mr. Schubert agreed that they don't always provide it when it is needed. However, he said that given the recent history of annual legal expenses being \$4,000 and \$1,000, he felt \$20,000 seemed reasonable, and if the Board faced a big lawsuit, even \$30,000 wouldn't cover it.

Mr. Colaneri said it had been as high as \$60,000 annually in the past, and it had been cut over the years to \$15,000. He said the Board had been very frugal with the money. Mr. Anderson pointed out that one appeal they were handling at present had the potential to be very expensive.

Ms. McFarland pointed out that the Board was unwilling to attend the FinCom meeting the previous year which would be a problem if they asked for more money. Mr. Colaneri said he'd written extensively to FinCom and that it was one Board member there who objected to it.

The Board voted to approve the budget as drafted by Mr. Anderson: McFarland yes, Schubert yes, Colaneri yes

West Tisbury Land Bank Advisory Board Update

Ms. McFarland described a new Land Bank purchase of 36 Ophelia Way from Mary Robin Ravitch for \$2,020,000. She retains a life estate so it will remain taxable during that time. The Land Bank plans to un-develop (demolish) the home. Ms. McFarland said it concerned her that the Island would lose the housing, although she understood protecting sensitive spots like Ice House Pond.

Mr. Colaneri said the Land Bank had torn down roughly two dozen homes, more than they had even created as affordable housing.

Ms. McFarland asked what direction the Board wanted her to take when confronted with properties being taken off the tax rolls without any form of Payment in Lieu of Taxes. Mr. Schubert encouraged her to bring up PILOT payments. Mr. Colaneri said he'd tried to do that when he was on the Land Bank Advisory Board and encouraged Ms. McFarland to do the same.

Ms. McFarland left the meeting to attend another scheduled meeting.

Mr. Anderson asked if the Board would mind his taking Thursday and Friday off, unpaid, since he had a bit of room for a breather. The remaining Board members agreed.

Mr. Colaneri said after the last Board meeting, he'd tried to find out the criteria for the Senior Work Off, what the process was, to determine if they should encourage more participation, or determine if more review was needed. He said he'd reached out to the Town Administrator for details on the specifics. Mr. Anderson said there were materials on the Town website detailing some rules for the program. Mr. Colaneri said he felt it needed to be reviewed and made a little more formal, so they knew the rules and criteria, who was eligible, and who was responsible for approval.

Mr. Colaneri suggested Mr. Anderson reach out to Ms. Rand for specific materials.

Mr. Schubert said he agreed that these details needed to be clarified.

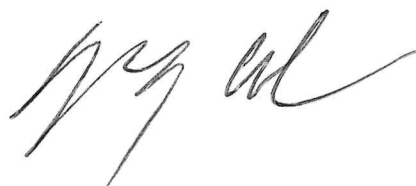
The Board did not enter into executive session.

The open session ended at 5:15pm

MacGregor Anderson, MAA
Principal Assessor

Approved:

1/17/23

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MG Anderson', written in a cursive style.