

Freetown Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 12, 2022 – 6:00pm
Police Station Community Room
15 Memorial Drive, East Freetown, MA

Call to Order

Selectmen Trevor Matthews called to order the Freetown Board of Selectmen Meeting at 6pm. This meeting will be recorded and be available on the Town's YouTube page. In attendance are Selectmen Jared Zager, Selectmen Carlos Lopes, Interim Town Administrator Deb Pettey and Executive Assistant Lu-Ann Souza.

Public Hearing 6:00pm (continued from 12/5/22)

1. In conjunction with the Board of Assessors, relative to selection of the residential factor to determine the percentage of the tax burden to be borne by each class of property.

Selectmen Matthews read the Public Hearing Notice and Opened the Public Hearing.

Jeff Field called the Board of Assessors meeting to order today 12/12/22 at 6pm. In attendance are Mike McCue, Paul Sadeck, and Michael Motta. Mr. McCue stated the Board has to choose the residential factor that determines how much of the tax burden is borne by residential property and how much is borne by commercial property. Last year maximum shift was 1.50, this year the Department of Revenue says the shift 1.75. Last year the Board of Selectmen went with 1.47. The tax rate right now is \$12.06. If you were to stay in the 1.47 the tax rate would drop to \$11.14. The commercial industrial and personal property rate which is \$20.56 would drop to \$18.78. In the current year the average residential tax bill is about \$4,800.00. At that same shift it would increase to \$5,200.00. It would go up about \$450.00. The commercial bills average this year was \$12,216.00 in and in the coming year it would drop to \$11,780.00. The commercial bills would drop to \$435.00 a year. There is a couple of scenarios where the commercial bills drop while the residential bills increase. When you get to a shift of 1.525 is the first time you see an increase in commercial bills. The commercial bill would go up to \$3.37, all the residential bills would go up on average \$360.00. As the shift gets higher and you get closer to that 1.75 the commercial bills go up and the residential bills come down. Mike Motta stated the tax bills that go out to residents are not set by the Board of Assessors and have no control over them. Nor does the Board of Selectmen do. The bills are a result of the budget itself. Every year we start from scratch on January 1st and we recalculate all the assessments of all the properties in town and we come up with their total assessments which are the numbers we have here. While we are doing that, the towns Finance Department comes up with a budget and calculates what that's going to be and then takes those two numbers and divide them out and end up with a tax rate. When the assessments go up, the tax rate would go down for as given amount of money with respect. When bills go up because the spending goes up, not because the assessment goes up. The three pieces of this is the, assessment, the budget and the Board of Selectmen's decision tonight. Shifting the burden from residential on to more commercial businesses. Mr. McCue stated they just finished the five-year recertification. The Department of Revenue takes a fine-tooth comb

through everything. One of the results of our normal revaluation work was that the residential values in town went up on average 18%, the commercial values went up 6%. Market activity plays into that we have had a lot of very high home sales. We have not had a lot of commercial sale activity. The residential activity is outpacing the commercial activity. We typically run 18 months behind the market. For the 2023 rates we use the 2021 sales because we need to use a complete calendar year. Mr. Motta reiterated that the value of the property is not directly applied to the tax bill. The tax bill is a reflection of what the budget is. Mr. Sadeck stated with the annual economy, the finance committee and the Board puts together a budget for the year and at the annual town meeting votes for what they want to spend and residents don't realize what they are voting for is a tax increase every year. Most valuable commercial property we have is a race between Stop & Shop, Amazon, and Copart.

- Motion to close the input session of the public hearing made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

- Motion to set the fiscal year 2023 residential factor at 0.8383 made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

- Motion to close the public hearing made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

- Motion to go to recess made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

Board of Selectmen

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

2. Discussion, and vote whether to approve the open session meeting minutes from 11/21/22.
 - Motion to approve the open session meeting minutes from 11/21/22 was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
 - Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

3. Discussion, and vote on whether to call the next Annual Local Town Election on April 3, 2023.
 - Motion to call the next Annual Local Town Election on April 3, 2023, made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes

- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote
- 4. Discussion, and vote whether to utilize the new ImageCast Precinct Tabulator at the April 3, 2023, Annual Local Town Election, and thereafter in all future local, State and Federal preliminaries, primaries and general elections held in the Town of Freetown, and with that, discontinue the use of the Accuvote Optical Scan Tabulators.

Town Clerk Cheryl Estrella stated this is a formality that the new Tabulators have been ordered and we are waiting for them to come in and start training the election workers in February. The Town Moderator may be interested in the Optical Scan Tabulators in the future for town meetings.

- Motion to utilize the new ImageCast Precinct Tabulator at the April 3, 2023, Annual Local Town Election, and thereafter in all future local, State and Federal preliminaries, primaries and general elections held in the Town of Freetown, and with that, discontinue the use of the Accuvote Optical Scan Tabulators made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote
- 5. Deliberate, and vote on ballot question to be added to the local annual town election scheduled for April 3, 2023, Election – Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School District Debt Exclusion.

Ballot Question

Shall the Town of Freetown be allowed to exempt from the provisions of proposition two and one-half, so-called, the amounts required to pay for the Town's allocable share of the bond issued by the Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School District for the purpose of paying costs of designing, engineering, constructing and equipping a new District High School to be located at 207 Hart Street, Taunton, Massachusetts, including the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto?

YES

NO

Selectmen Matthews stated this is related to us joining BP. If this does not pass than our town budget will be in serious trouble because we already voted to join. This is how we are going to pay for that and without a debt exclusion we will be in some trouble. Ms. Petty stated the latest update is that after town meeting Freetown voted to join BP, however it required all the existing community members to also approve Freetown coming in. One of them did not do that, Rehoboth has not done it as of yet. We will not be a member this year coming up. She expects they will vote for us to join this spring and we will actually become a member in the school year 2025. It is important to get this ballot question out there. If it should pass, great, but if it should fail, we will have another meeting or another election to ask yet again and make sure we educate

people on what this is all about. Cheryl Estrella stated we would not be able to put the explanation on the ballot itself but you can do informational sessions, YouTube videos anything really to get the word out and showing both sides. Also, she would need the form of the question voted on in my office delivered to me by February 27, 2023 in order to appear on the spring local election ballot.

- Motion to approve the ballot question to be added to the local annual town election scheduled for April 3, 2023, Election – Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School District Debt Exclusion made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

6. Discussion, and vote on whether to provide notary services to the public and if so whether to acquire insurance to cover this service, and what offices would offer this service.

Town Clerk Cheryl Estrella stated notary services is an additional service we provide to town residents. There was a question that was raised a year in a half ago due to the influx of notary services being required, if something should happen providing those services, as employees we would not be covered. Ms. Estrella is leaning towards discontinuing this service to the general public effect January 1st 2023. The liabilities are not being covered, it is not something that we should take lightly or personally. There are several other businesses in town that have notary services available. The Credit Union down the road has it. As government officials we do have certain exclusions, so not everything can be notarized by us. Such as Wills, Power of Attorney, any real estate leases and transactions we have been excluded from them. This is through our office only. There are several employees who have received their notary commissions. The state does not provide any type of training, she had to purchase the book from the state library and figure it out on her own as to what we can and cannot do, such as procedures, acknowledgments and oaths we have to provide, it is a very convoluted thing where there are some risks and liabilities that shouldn't be taken lightly. At this point in time, she is not comfortable in her position in office. Ms. Estrella stated she feels bad for the elderly pensions who come in and just need us to notarize that they are still living. Ms. Pettey state this came up during an insurance meeting, that we do not have insurance, if there is a liability issue. Apparently from the insurance providers meeting this comes up a lot. They suggest we look at this and have a policy in place. Which we do not. It will cost \$1,000.00 for a year to insure 2 staff members. Ms. Estrella is not comfortable because if there is a liability it falls on her personally, this will cover her so that if something gets litigated, she will have coverage from the town in her compacity as a town employee. This is just for the public. She will still be able to notarize town documents. Ms. Souza asked who else in town hall notarizes beside her for the Board of Selectmen and Victoria D'Antoni for Conservation and Planning Board? Ms. Estrella said Timm MacIntosh in her office and the Assistant Tax Collector and but no one has been authorized to notarize documents on behalf of the town for outside residents.

- Motion to pause providing notary services January 1, 2023 until we have insurance and policies in place in 2023 made by Selectmen Zager and Selectmen Lopes
 - Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote
7. Discussion, and vote whether to add a streetlight at corner of Friend St & N. Main Street.
- Ms. Pettey stated residents have reached out to Highway Surveyor Chuck Macomber about the corner being dark and dangerous. He concurred and has requested to put one on the pole there.
- Motion to add a streetlight at corner of Friend St & N. Main Street made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
 - Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote
8. Discuss, and vote on the policy for Ambulance Abatements and Write Offs.

Deputy Fire Chief Harrie Ashley stated we changed ambulance billing companies in July. Every month we gave you a write-off document, and it came to light we were not getting those figures in. There was a meeting with all departments involved. After insurances have paid their share, the new company will send out 6 bills to our residents. Our previous company sent bills for 3 months and then we write-off the balance. If our residents can't pay in 3 months, how will they pay in 6 months? Most of our residents are elderly. Ms. Pettey stated the new company said they bill for 6 months and then send to collections. We have never done that. Deputy Chief said Rt. 24 motor vehicle insurances we do well on.

- Motion that the policy on sending ambulance bills is stopped after 3 months and it is considered uncollected funds and the Board of Selectmen will vote on abatements monthly
 - Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote
9. Discussion, and vote on whether to approve the following license renewals:
- a. Class Two Motor Vehicle Licenses:
 - i. Robert H. Alderson d/b/a Bob's Motor Works
 - ii. Craig J. Cabral d/b/a Evolution Auto Sales, Inc.
 - iii. Michael J. Byrnes & John F. Mello d/b/a J.M. Auto Sales
 - iv. San-Man Corp. d/b/a San-Man Auto Sales
 - v. Christopher J. Cabral d/b/a C.J. Auto Sales
 - vi. Armand R. Clermont d/b/a Clermont's Auto Sales
 - vii. Choppahead Industries, Inc. d/b/a Choppahead Kustom Cycles
 - viii. Basic Equipment, Inc. Basic Used Cars, Trucks & Equipment
 - ix. Roger L. Deneault d/b/a Boehler's Garage
 - x. P. J's Tire, Inc.
 - xi. Mark H. Bullock d/b/a Chipaway Auto Sales

- Motion to approve i thru xi Class Two Motor Vehicle Licenses was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

b. Class Three Motor Vehicle License:

- i. Jeffrey Reposa d/b/a East Freetown Auto Salvage, LLC
- ii. Joseph F. Costa, III d/b/a J & T Auto Salvage
- iii. Daniel Crispim d/b/a Home Town Automotive
- iv. John Broden d/b/a C.S.A. Auto Parts
- v. Big Wheel Truck Sales, Inc.
- vi. Milton S. Westgate, Jr. & Milton S. Westgate, III d/b/a Westgate Auto
- vii. Millis Industries, Inc. d/b/a Pick-n-Pull
- viii. DB Fabrication, Inc. d/b/a Bug Stevens' Freetown Auto
- ix. Donald F. Mendoza, Jr. d/b/a D.M. Auto Enterprises
- x. Pettey Auto Salvage, LLC

- Motion to approve i thru x Class Three Motor Vehicle Licenses was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

c. Auctioneer License

- i. Joseph F. Costa, III d/b/a J & T Auto Salvage

- Motion to approve i Auctioneer License was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

d. Motor Vehicle Graveyard License:

- i. Millis Industries, Inc. d/b/a Pick-n-Pull

- Motion to approve i Motor Vehicle Graveyard License was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

10. Presentation on Complete Street Prioritization Plan.

Planning Technician Victoria D'Antoni working with Environmental Partners Consulting to provide safe and accessible options for all travel modes for people of all ages and abilities. Working with Environmental Partners, Ms. Pettey, Police, Fire and the Highway Department on important projects throughout the town. We also posted a link on the website for the public to input their comments as well. Most of the comments were from the Assonet side of town. Once reviewed they met again to talk about the projects and feedback.

Project 1 - Gurney Rd and Chace Road Improvements
Project 2 - Washburn Rd Sidewalk
Project 3 - North & South Main St. Crossing Improvements
Project 4 - S. Main St Sidewalk Connection
Project 5 - Mill St. Sidewalk
Project 6 - Walnut St. Sidewalk
Project 7 - Elm St. Sidewalk
Project 8 - Pleasant St. Sidewalk
Project 9 - Hathaway Park Sidewalk Connection
Project 10 - ADA Pedestrian Curb Ramp Upgrades – Town-wide
Project 11 - Poor Sidewalk Reconstruction – Town-wide
Project 12 - “Four Corners” Intersection Improvements
Project 13 - Narrows Rd Sidewalk
Project 14 - Memorial Dr. & Chace Rd Shared Use Path
Project 15 - High St. Sidewalk
Project 16 - Bullock Rd shared Use Path – Chace Rd to Memorial Drive
Project 17 - Slab Bridge Rd Shared Use Path

Ms. Pettey stated this is so valuable to have as grants may come through, we have a beginning plan in place. This was all funded by another grant Victoria had worked on. Everyone thanked Victoria for a job well done.

Personnel Board

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

11. Discussion on doing a wage and personnel classification study.

This is the next phase of what we started last year with the Collins Study. We had them look at our operations and this next step would be to have a wage and personal classification study. Selectmen Matthews asked about the cost and that it is a good exercise to go thru. Selectmen Zager said it would be good to have this before the contract negotiations come up again. Selectmen Lopes agreed. Ms. Pettey stated it might make sense to reorganize the talent as well. Such as the Building Inspector is also the Zoning Enforcement Officer is also the facilities maintenance person. Ms. Pettey will get costs for a future agenda.

12. Discussion, and vote whether to fill the second alternate space that is currently vacant due to declining of appointment for the COA/Library Community Building Committee.

Selectmen Lopes stated Ms. Fourier declined her appointment. Do we want to pick from the original list or not appoint anyone and leave it open for now? Selectmen Matthews agreed to leave it as is and we can add someone later on.

- Motion to not fill the second alternate space that is currently vacant due to declining of appointment for the COA/Library Community Building Committee made by Selectmen Matthews and seconded by Selectmen Zager
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

13. Discussion, and vote to amend the appointment of Shane Kelley from Detective to Patrolman Full-Time effective 7/1/22.

- Motion to amend the appointment of Shane Kelley from Detective to Patrolman Full-Time effective 7/1/22.
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

14. Discussion, and vote to select one Selectmen to represent the Board on the School District Safety Committee.

- Motion to select Selectmen Carlos A. Lopes to represent the Board of Selectmen for Freetown on the School District Safety Committee was made by Selectmen Matthews and seconded by Selectmen Zager
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

Board of Parks Commission

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

- No topics for discussion

Town Administrator's Report

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

Old Business:

Potential discussion on pending items – action will not be taken at this meeting:

- Town Buildings

Board of Health

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

7pm Hearing pursuant to 105 CM:410.850

The Freetown Board of Health will hold a hearing pursuant to 105 CM:410.850 in response to a request from Mr. Barry Marvel of 41 Locust Street, Assonet. The hearing will take place on December 12, 2022, at 7pm in the Freetown Police Station Community Room located at 15 Memorial Drive, East Freetown. The hearing will address the concerns of the petitioner relative to the results of a Housing Inspection that was conducted on October 12, 2022, and subsequent Correction Order issued October 20, 2022.

Mr. Barry Marvel a training specialist on chemical Reactors for a local Chemical Company. He rented a home at 41 Locust St, Assonet on January 2017, with his son and his mother. Issues with the rental have been ongoing since then. The Board of Health and the Landlord, Charles Cromwell are aware of the issues at this location.

- Motion made to close the hearing by Selectmen Matthews and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

Public Input ARPA

The Board signed various documents related to tonight's meeting

- Motion to adjourn at 8:28pm made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

Respectfully submitted:



Lola Furtado
Administrative Assistant

List of Exhibits/Documents utilized by the board during this meeting:

- Meeting Agenda
- Freetown Board of Assessors Tax Rate Shift Highlights
- Mass DOR Scenario Worksheet
- Meeting Minutes for 11/21/22

- Memo - Cheryl Estrella -2023 Annual Town Election – Public Notice
- ImageCast Precinct Tabulator
- Memo - Ballot Question
- Memo - Notary Services to the Public
- Memo - Streetlight at Friend St and N. Main St.
- Ambulance Billing and Collection Process Outline
- Class II Licenses
- Class III Licenses
- Mass DOT - Complete Streets Funding Program, Project Prioritization Plan
- Memo - Vacant Space on COA /Library Community Building Committee
- Memo - Change of Status Form Shane Kelley
- Board of Health Hearing Documents