

Freetown Board of Assessors
Minutes of Friday, August 7, 2020
Town Hall – Assonet, Mass.

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FREETOWN TOWN CLERK
2020 AUG 20 AM 9:50
J. Brown

Present: Jeff Field and Sue Parker. Mike Motta joined by telephone after the minutes were accepted.

Call to order: Sue Parker called the meeting to order at 10:21 a.m.

Note: As Mr. Motta participated remotely, all votes taken were by roll call vote.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Field, seconded by Mrs. Parker, to approve the minutes of July 14th. The motion carried 3-0-0. A motion was then made by Mr. Field, seconded by Mrs. Parker, to approve the minutes of the July 14th Executive Session, but not yet release the minutes. The motion carried 3-0-0.

Report of Assistant Assessor

- a. The RFP document for the FY21-23 reval program was in its most likely final form as of August 6th. Right now it's out for review by Mike Motta, Dave DeManche, and Kim Fales, with a goal of having it reviewed and out to the public within the next week. This should put the proposals due in September and have everything in place for the fall.
- b. There were no motor vehicle excise abatement reports for the month of July were received and signed.
- c. Brief discussion was held on the fee charged for abutters lists, which is currently \$10. Mr. Motta noted that fees should cover the cost of service, not be a source of revenue. New Bedford is currently charging \$5 but will be increasing likely to \$10; although other towns are charging \$25 or more, that seems to be too high. Mr. Field agreed that the fee should match the cost of service. Mrs. Parker agreed, and asked what the cost of generating an abutters list is. The clerk responded that in most cases, \$10 is accurate; rarely, it might be higher if the list is quite lengthy. Consensus of the board was to leave the fee at \$10.
- d. As a recent sale of interest, it was noted that the MBTA took the properties at 0 and 11 Campanelli Drive (what used to be Weyerhaeuser) by eminent domain in connection with the South Coast Rail project. So far they have not disclosed the purchase price. The assessment for FY20 for the two parcels combined was \$5,029,700 for a tax of \$105,774.60. The parcels will now be exempt in future years. The Assessors requested that the MBTA be asked again for the purchase price as they have not previously disclosed the price.
- e. It was reported that an article is being put together to revisit budgets that were not supported at the requested amount in the spring. Consensus of the board was to maintain the request for a budget that would support hiring a Directory of Assessing, with the caveat that if that number is not supported a transfer of funds will be needed for consulting services again.

Also under this item, discussion was held on real estate tax exemptions. When homes are placed into a trust, the trustee becomes the owner of the home for exemption purposes, and many residents no longer

qualify if their children or other relatives are the trustees. There is a special exception to this rule for disabled veterans if Clause 22G is accepted at a town meeting. The Assessors discussed this option at length, but ultimately felt the fairest course of action was not to pursue an exception for one class of exemption when the same exception was not available to other classes; in effect, all homes in trust will be treated the same.

Any Other Business Properly Before the Board

Assessors reviewed the revised Freetown-Lakeville Lake District legislation that will be voted on at the August 8th session of the February 15th Special Town Meeting. Several questions were formulated to be asked at the meeting, all revolving around determining who is subject to the tax, assessing the tax, and collecting the tax, including ramifications for failing to pay the tax.

Executive Session

A motion was made by Mr. Field, seconded by Mrs. Parker, to enter into executive session to comply with the provisions of any general or special law; specifically, to discuss Real Estate and Personal Property abatement applications which are not open to public inspection (per M.G.L. Chapter 59, Section 60); and to return to open session afterward. When polled, the members voted as follows: Field – Aye, Parker – Aye, Motta – Aye.

Results of Executive Session

Results of decisions made were announced as follows:

One application for statutory exemption was reviewed and denied due to the home having been placed in a trust and the applicant no longer qualifying as the owner of the home.

Meeting Adjourned

A motion was made by Mr. Field, seconded by Mrs. Parker, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:21 p.m.

This is a True Record by me.

Attest: _____
Assistant Assessor