

**Freetown Board of Assessors**  
Minutes of Wednesday, December 18, 2019  
Map Room – Town Hall – Assonet, Mass

RECEIVED  
FREETOWN TOWN CLERK  
2020 JAN -9 PM 12:15  
*JA Brown*

**Present:** Mike Motta, Jeff Field, and Sue Parker.

**Call to order:** Mike Motta called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

**Appointments with Guests – Part I**

Board members met with Town Administrator Dave DeManche, Human Resources Director Ali Golz, and Personnel Board chairman Lisa Pacheco regarding the current and future staffing needs of the office. Mr. DeManche stressed looking at equalized valuation (EQV) to help determine what the town should pay for a salary for a non-union position, rather than at population. Mrs. Pacheco added that the decision is not just what the position is worth, but what the position is worth and what the town can pay. Mrs. Parker asked about the possibility of a salary range.

Mrs. Golz provided a sort of flowchart for how to go about filling the position under various scenarios. She noted that creating a non-union position would require bargaining with the union; likewise, any change in the Assistant Assessor position to being less than 40 hours per week would require bargaining with the union. It was noted that Karen Mello had still been working 40 hours even though most other positions had changed over to a 36-hour week during the recession.

The Assessors agreed to discuss their options later in the meeting. Mr. DeManche, Mrs. Golz, and Mrs. Pacheco then departed.

**Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Mr. Field, seconded by Mr. Motta, to approve the minutes of December 4, 2019. The motion carried 2-0-1 with Mrs. Parker abstaining. A motion was made by Mr. Field, seconded by Mr. Motta, to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2019 executive session. The motion carried 2-0-1 with Mrs. Parker abstaining.

**Appointments with Guests – Part II**

Scott Alfonse, Executive Director, and Atty. Matt Thomas, counsel, appeared on behalf of the Greater New Bedford Regional Refuse Management District (hereinafter referred to as "the District"). Atty. Thomas recounted previous discussions and correspondence held between Mrs. Mello and the District regarding the status of four properties in the Chapter 61 or Chapter 61A programs, and the District's desire to negotiate a payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) agreement. The four properties in question were three forestland properties (Map/Lot 254/1, 254/11, and 256/1) and one agricultural (254/3). The properties did not receive a Chapter 61 or Chapter 61A discount in FY19, nor to date in FY20. The District believes the valuations are improper, that the properties should be put back into Chapter status, and that the town should negotiate a PILOT agreement.

Mention was made that many of the properties were bought as buffer. The clerk noted the option of donating some of the parcels to the Conservation Commission.

Board members, Mr. Alfonse, and Atty. Thomas held a general discussion on information provided to the Assessors by the District. It was agreed the Assessors would take the information under advisement and discuss it further at a January meeting. Atty. Thomas gave verbal notice that the District would likely apply for abatements on all four properties for FY20 to preserve their standing.

Mr. Alfonse and Atty. Thomas departed the meeting. Board member will review files at the next meeting.

### **Report of Clerk**

The following items were discussed under this heading:

- The FY21 budget was discussed. The clerk stated the expense portion of the budget would increase slightly for postage, otherwise it would remain the same. The clerk also stated that two items usually funded through warrant articles would now be funded as budget lines since they are annual recurring expenses related to revaluation. Board members discussed staffing requirements for the office, as well as a draft job description for the new non-union position. A motion was made by Mrs. Parker, seconded by Mr. Field, to support a 20-hour Assistant Assessor at union rate and a full-time Director of Assessing at a starting pay of \$73,000. The motion carried unanimously.
- The clerk discussed the possibility of seeking Town Meeting approval to alter the income and asset limits for Chapter 41C exemptions. As people are retiring with higher incomes, pensions, etc., and costs of cars and other basic assets are increasing, more people are either not qualifying or losing their eligibility for this exemption. Mrs. Parker asked how many are currently receiving the exemption, and the clerk stated 44 to date in FY20. Mr. Field asked the exemption amount, and the clerk replied \$1,000. Mr. Motta asked that this be taken under advisement and discussed in January.
- The clerk addressed Farm Animal Excise. It does not appear to have been assessed since 1983, but no record has been found to date that it was properly abolished. A motion was made by Mrs. Parker, seconded by Mr. Field, to request the Selectmen take steps to formally abolish the Farm Animal Excise if no record can be found. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Any Other Business Properly Before the Board**

A note from Ellen Blanchard was reviewed, relative to a homeowner requesting that the year of construction on her field card be changed. The card currently states the home was built in 1965; the homeowner states the foundation is from 1965, but the home was razed and entirely replaced with a custom-built home in 1990. Mr. Motta believed this adjustment would require an on-site inspection for verification. The clerk was asked to forward a letter stating the Assessors would need to inspect the home before changing the information.

Effective years as displayed on field cards was then reviewed. An example of a home near Assonet Four Corners was used, where the majority of the home is recorded as built in 1812 and a modern addition is recorded as 1988; the effective year built as displayed on the field card is calculated as 1893.

#### **Executive Session**

No executive session was held as no new information was available.

#### **Meeting Adjourned**

A motion was made by Mrs. Parker, seconded by Mr. Field, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

This is a True Record by me.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Senior Clerk

