

Freetown Board of Assessors
Minutes of Wednesday, February 19, 2020
Map Room – Town Hall – Assonet, Mass.

Present: Jeff Field, Mike Motta, and Sue Parker (arrived at 5:35).

Call to order: Mike Motta called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2020 FEB 25 P 2:18
Ja Brown

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Field, seconded by Mr. Motta, to accept the minutes of February 12, 2020. The motion carried 2-0. Mrs. Parker arrived following this item.

Appointments with Guests

Kim Fales, Town Accountant, was present to discuss the Assessors' FY21 budget request. She attempted to reach the Town Administrator, David DeManche, by telephone, but was unable. This item was held until Mr. DeManche could be reached.

David Rosa was present to discuss his properties at 80 A & B South Main Street, and also the vacant land at Weetamoe Heights. Mrs. Parker reminded Mr. Rosa that the abatement period has passed, so while the properties could be discussed, the abatement applications could not be accepted.

Mr. Rosa described 80-A South Main Street as gutted, with no town water. He began describing an issue with the third floor of 80-B, but Mr. Motta stopped him to ask if the work in-progress would be completed by January 2021. Mr. Rosa stated he hoped to be finished and possibly have units for rent by that time. Mr. Motta then reviewed the field cards for the two houses. Mrs. Parker asked if Mr. Rosa was disputing the overall value of the property, which he confirmed. Mr. Motta discussed the depreciation already assigned to the houses, and stated his belief that the assessment reflects the various incomplete stages of the houses. The depreciation table on the field card was discussed further. Mr. Rosa stated he understood the methodology used, and appreciated learning more about the assessment process. It was agreed that the permit section of the field card would be used to ensure a new inspection in the fall.

Mr. Rosa then addressed the land at Weetamoe Heights, being land that was originally laid out for the subdivision and never developed. These were lots off Matawa Drive and Jacob's Mountain Road, and the never-developed Pokonoket Place. All of these lots were at one time or another in Tax Title. Mr. Rosa described a payment plan worked out between Joseph Nacaula and former Treasurer Jeff Cannon. Mr. Rosa stated one lot was omitted from the payment plan, and that as he paid down the tax debt the payments were applied across all lots except for this omitted lot. Mr. Rosa was of the belief that the interest and charges accumulating for this lot were not appropriate and should not apply since it was his belief the payments were covering all the lots. Mrs. Parker stated she would like to see the payment plan. Messrs. Motta and Field were also interested in seeing the plan. Mr. Motta stated this was not an issue for the Assessors, and not anything the Assessors could help with even if they wanted to, but that seeing the payment plan would be educational.

Mr. Rosa then addressed the town by-law that allows the Building Inspector to withhold permits when taxes remain unpaid, and his discussions on this subject with Mr. DeManche and Building Inspector Jeff Chandler. The Assessors again were sympathetic, but felt this was an issue outside their purview.

Mr. Rosa thanked the board for listening and for providing information, and then departed.

At this time, Keven Desmarais informed the board that he would not be able to attend the meeting.

Ms. Fales returned. She was still unable to reach Mr. DeManche, but proceeded to have the budget discussion without him. In general, the Assessors' proposed budget appears appropriate, but the allocation of funds to different line items appears haphazard. Consensus of all present was that Karen Mello had known why she allocated funds the way she had, but that without knowing her reasons, it appeared the money could be shifted around to more accurately reflect what was being spent. Ms. Fales and the clerk will work this out before March 4th.

Report of Clerk

- a. Discussion on Town Meeting Warrant articles was passed over.
- b. The job description for Director of Assessing was reviewed. Minor technical corrections were made, after which a motion was made by Mr. Field, seconded by Mrs. Parker, to adopt the job description as corrected. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Motta will punch up the document and circulate the final copy.
- c. The job description for Assistant Assessor was also reviewed. Again, minor technical corrections were made, after which a motion was made by Mr. Field, seconded by Mrs. Parker, to adopt the job description as corrected. The motion carried unanimously.
- d. The clerk presented a form used in several towns that treats the in-law apartment discount as an exemption rather than an abatement. The pros and cons of each method were discussed. A motion was then made by Mrs. Parker, seconded by Mr. Field, to convert this to an exemption beginning with FY21. The motion carried unanimously.
- e. The Treasurer's request to abate certain charges and interest for the property at 121-B Braley Road was discussed. A motion was made by Mrs. Parker, seconded by Mr. Field, to submit the request after a final draft of the submission could be reviewed. The motion carried unanimously.
- f. A motion was made by Mrs. Parker, seconded by Mr. Field, to approve the annual mapping contract with Cartographic Associates. The motion carried unanimously.

Real Estate or Personal Property Abatement Applications

The final number of abatements was noted as thirty. Where two were for in-law apartments, there are twenty-eight applications left to review.

Any Other Business Properly Before the Board

Brief discussion was held on the February 15th Special Town Meeting.

Executive Session

A motion was made by Mrs. Parker, seconded by Mr. Field, to enter into executive session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the government's litigating position; specifically, *Marie's Way Solar 1, LLC vs. Board of Assessors of the Town of Freetown*; and *Braley Road Solar 4, LLC vs. Board of Assessors of the Town of Freetown*, and to return to open session afterward. When polled, the members voted as follows: Motta – Aye, Parker – Aye, Field – Aye.

Meeting Adjourned

The Assessors exited Executive Session with no information to report. A motion was made by Mr. Field, seconded by Mrs. Parker, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

This is a True Record by me.

Attest: _____
Senior Clerk