

**Town of Chelsea
Board of Assessors Meeting Minutes
January 30, 2013**

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Ben Smith called the meeting to order at 5:34 PM.

Assessors present were Michael Pushard, Linda Leotsakos and Benjamin Smith. Also present was the Town Manager, Scott Tilton. There was 1 resident present at the start of the meeting with 2 more joining later.

2. Scheduled Items

A. Assessors Agent Letters of Interest

Ben Smith told the Assessors that 5 parties had submitted letter of interest in providing the town Assessor Agent Services. Ben provided the members a brief summary of the 5 proposals which including various information on proposed hours/days of coverage and costs. The following is a brief summary:

- 1) John O'Donnell – 5 to 6 hours a week, 37 days a year and one day of office presence per month but included no specific \$ amount.
- 2) Thomas Hayes – 1 or 2 days a week or more based on special projects, \$28 an hour which would be \$11,648 for 1 day a week.
- 3) Jacki Robbins – Biweekly to weekly with a cost of \$11,000 to \$18,000.
- 4) Carroll Weeks – 2 days a month with a cost of \$13,500.
- 5) Nancy Pinette - \$14,800 plus mileage, at a rate of \$25 an hour it could be \$10,400 for 1 day a week.

The Assessors discussed how to proceed. After the current revaluation is completed, it is important to have an experienced Assessors Agent because this will help maintain the consistency of property valuations for future years to decrease the frequency of future revaluations. They recognized they needed more information from these parties in order to select one and to prepare a budget item for an Assessors Agent in the Annual Budget based on that provider's proposal. The Assessors were looking at a possible range of \$10,000 /\$12,000 to \$15,000 depending on work hours and scheduling for appropriate coverage and functions including data entry. They realize interviewing these parties to gather more information from each of them on these proposals should be the next step. They want to gather enough information so they can prepare an adequate budget item with sufficient information for discussion at the Annual Town meeting. Scott will work with the Assessors and the interested parties to schedule a time for those meetings.

B. Assessors Agent Contract

Scott Tilton had an example of a contract from the town of Windsor. The Assessors agreed to hold this over for future discussion.

C. Tax Abatement Request(s)

Ben Smith explained there are two pending actions (Oak Ridge Rd. and Nelson Rd) but these were not ready and will be on a future agenda.

D. Tax Map/Account Issues

Scott Tilton asked to have this on the agenda because he had several items he wanted the Assessors to know.

1) Julia Wilcox of Volunteers of America would like a letter from the town exempting the property of the proposed housing project from property taxes. After some discussion, the Assessors agreed they needed more information before they make any decision on this request. Ben agreed he would research this more and see what is taxable or nontaxable, particularly with regard to non-profits, and would gather examples from other communities with similar projects.

2) Scott asked about the past practice of taxing private roads because there does not seem to be a consistent approach. Are the roads exempt or taxed and if so, who is taxed and how? Several examples were discussed. They all agreed there needs to be a more consistent approach. The Assessors agreed O'Donnell should address this as a part of the town's revaluation with a recommendation as to how to address these roads.

3) Map 6, Lot 106

This was a foreclosure and a tax acquired property but there is some question on ownership at this time. Scott is still examining this issue. He just wanted the Assessors to know.

4) Linda Leotsakos identified an issue for the Assessors concerning nonconforming lots. As she explained the Board needs to develop a system to identify on the tax maps any non-conforming lot so that there is a flag to identify such lots for the Code Enforcement Officer. These flags will help the CEO during the permitting process so the CEO does not approve inappropriate development on non-conforming lots. They agree they need further discussion of this issue with Gary Quintal, the town's Code Enforcement Officer.

E. Assessing Budget for FY 2013-14

The Assessors discussed the line items of the Assessing Budget that included:

- \$15,000 for Assessors stipend, which is a catch-up item to bring them into the appropriate fiscal year.
- \$6,000 for 2013-14 year stipends for Assessors (\$2,000 each)
- \$2,855 for 4 hr. a week for data entry by town clerk
- \$200 for supplies
- \$1,200 for assessing and website software
- \$15,000 for Assessing Agent
- \$1,600 Tax Map Updates
- \$45,000 Woodlot Account payback from town revaluation

The Assessors wondered whether the Woodlot payback should be a separate warrant item this year the same way it was in the past Annual budget to be consistent.

The Assessors were very concerned about the overall amount of the Assessing Budget as well as the overall total town budget and discussed several options to reduce this part of the budget including postponing or dividing the catch-up amount, the amount of the Assessors' stipend for this year and future years, avoiding duplication of data entry when evaluating and awarding an Assessing Agent contract. Again they discussed the importance of having an experienced Assessing Agent to maintain the revaluation consistently into the future years. They also discussed the number of hearings anticipated due to the revaluation this year as well as the role of the Assessors and an Assessing Agent in future abatement hearings.

They agreed they needed further discussion on this proposed budget so no action was taken.

3. Other Business

None

4 Adjournment

Linda Leotsakos moved the meeting adjourn Mike Pushard seconded the motion. Ben Smith called the meeting adjourned at 6:42 PM.

Benjamin Smith, Chair

Linda Leotsakos

Michael Pushard

