

Minutes - Board of Assessors Meeting – March 9, 2023

Present: Arthur Tzouros and Barry Pollack were present at the Town Hall.

Absent: None.

Others: Chip Davis, Director of Assessing (retired); Marianne Cooley, Select Board Chair; Melissa Motta, Director of Assessing.

Call to order: Meeting called to order at 9:05 a.m. Due to technical issues, the meeting was not recorded by Zoom. One member of the public attended via Zoom.

All votes taken during this meeting were by roll call.

9:06a.m. **Approval of Minutes**

Motion made by Mr. Pollack seconded by Mr. Tzouros to approve minutes of meetings from 07/14/2022 and 11/30/2022. The motion carried 2-0

9:09a.m. **Discussion regarding elected vs. appointed Board of Assessors**

Chair Tzouros recognized Ms. Marianne Cooley, Select Board Chair who asked to speak on the subject of the Select Board considering a proposal to change the Board of Assessors from an elected Board to appointed.

Ms. Cooley pointed out that there was a recommendation by the League of Women Voters to change to an appointed Board, stated that over the last 10 years most of the Board elections were uncontested, two elections had no candidate, and a current Board member was not on the ballot but was elected as a write-in. Ms. Cooley stated that Brookline, Lexington, and Norwood have either appointed boards or appointed moderators, and that the Needham Commissioners of Trust Funds are currently appointed.

Mr. Pollack asked how the Fincom is different, and Ms. Cooley replied that they serve an advisory function to the Town Moderator.

Ms. Cooley stated that if the Board were to change to appointed, current Board members would be asked if they want to continue as members and if so would be appointed.

Ms. Cooley thanked the Board for the opportunity to discuss the matter at this meeting.

9:25a.m. **Update the Board on Appellate Tax Board Cases, Other Negotiations, and Settlements**

Ms. Motta told the Board that there had been a request to withdraw one Appellate Tax Board Case, and that there were settlement proposals on two other Appellate Tax Board Cases, and that they would be discussed in Executive Session. There was no other discussion on this topic.

9:25a.m. **Review and Vote on Abatement and Exemption Applications**

Ms. Motta informed the Board that there was a list of both abatement and exemption applications, which must be discussed in Executive Session. Ms. Motta suggested that this item be moved to the end of the meeting, so that members of the public in attendance could leave the meeting once Executive Session had started, if they desire. Mr. Tzouros and Mr. Pollack agreed to move this item to the end of the meeting.

9:25a.m. **General Update and Scheduling**

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Ms. Motta informed the Board that one staff member was out on sick leave, and was expected to return within a week or so.

The day and time for the next Board meeting was discussed. The Board agreed to a meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday March 22 at 9am in the Highland Room.

9:29a.m. **Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated Within 48 Hours Prior to the Meeting**

None

9:32a.m. **Motion to Enter Executive Session**

A motion was made by Mr. Pollack, seconded by Mr. Tzorous, to enter into executive session to comply with the provisions of any general or special law;

specifically, to discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the government's litigating position, namely

WHC Needham LLC vs. Board of Assessors of the Town of Needham and
WHC Needham I LP vs. Board of Assessors of the Town of Needham and
NSTAR Gas Company d/b/a Eversource Energy vs. Board of Assessors of the Town of Needham
and
NSTAR Electric Company d/b/a Eversource Energy vs. Board of Assessors of the Town of
Needham

and also, to comply with the provisions of any general or special law;

specifically, to discuss Real Estate and Personal Property exemption and/or abatement applications which are not open to public inspection (per M.G.L. Chapter 59, Section 60);

the results of any decisions made to be announced at the next meeting, provided such announcement is consistent with the applicable statutes;

and not to return to open session afterward.

When polled, the members voted as follows: Mr. Tzorous– Aye, Mr. Pollack– Aye. The motion carried 2-0

11:313a.m. **Meeting Adjourned**

A motion was made by Mr. Pollack and seconded by Mr. Tzouros to adjourn. The motion carried 2-0.