

Town of Needham
Board of Assessors
MEETING MINUTES

Date: **September 16, 2024** Time: **9:15 AM** Location: **Town Hall Great Plain Room**

Board Members Attendance:		
Present:	John Bulian, Chair; Michael Niden, Vice Chair; Michael Diener, Secretary	
Absent:		
Other Attendees:	David Davison	Deputy Town Manager/Director of Finance
	Amy Haelsen	Director of Communications and Community Engagement
	Nancy Martin	Assistant Director of Assessing
	Cecilia Simchak	Assistant Director of Finance
	Peter O'Neil	Needham Observer
Notes prepared by:	David Davison	Deputy Town Manager/Director of Finance

This meeting was posted on the Town web site as a hybrid meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89304174378>

Chair John Bulian called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

Chair Bulian announced that in accordance with the Open Meeting Law at the beginning of the meeting, I must disclose to attendees whether the meeting is being recorded. This meeting is being broadcast via Zoom, and is being recorded for publication, later viewing, and administrative purposes. Also, after notifying the chair, any person may make a video or audio recording of the meeting or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to reasonable requirements of the chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. Please let me know now so that I can make that announcement as well. Mr. Peter O'Neil of the Needham Observer indicated that he was recording the meeting.

Public Comment Period: There were no comments.

The Chair asked whether there is a **motion** to accept the minutes of the July 30, 2024 meeting, which was moved by Mr. Michael Niden and seconded by Mr. Michael Diener and passed unanimously by 3-0.

New Business:

Taxpayer Appointments: Mr. Ben Ravelson, Scott Ravelson, and Mr. Cory Ravelson owners of 19 Wexford Street met with the Board to discuss their FY2024 property assessment. They presented their case as to why they believe the property was incorrectly assessed. The intent of the meeting was to see if a settlement could be reached so not to argue before the Appellate Tax Board. The Board members asked questions about the structure of the purchase of the property. Members indicated they would review the information and would get back to them. The Ravelsons thank the Board for meeting with them.

Recertification Process: Mr. David Davison updated the Board on the recertification process with the Department of Revenue for FY2025. He indicated that the Town is hiring a consultant to assist the Town in the review of the work of Tyler Technologies, which is doing the commercial and residential updates, and RRC which is doing the personal property tax updates. Mr. Davison noted the consultant's prior experience includes working for DOR and is an assessor in another community and has been through the recertification in different capacities. Mr. Davison also informed the Board that a supplemental appropriation of \$90,600 will be requested to cover the expense of the re-certification work because the cost of the consultants came in higher than what was budgeted for the work. The work is required, and it is not optional.

In response to Mr. Diener question of where we stand with a contract with Tyler Technologies, Ms. Cecilia Simchak said the contract was sent out via DocuSign and we were waiting on their legal team to sign off. Mr. Davison noted that the team from Tyler has already begun the work and that issue with the delay in signing the contract was with the legal team and not the service team. Ms. Nancy Martin confirmed that work has begun and that she has had a conversation with DOR about progress the Town has made to meet its deadlines.

Mr. Davison also reminded the Board that land values are going to increase significantly. He also stated that he has mentioned this fact publicly with the Select Board at its meeting in the past. He reminded the Board of Assessors that recertification in itself cannot and does not generate more or less tax revenue, but individual tax assessments can be affected greatly.

Town Website: Mr. Davison introduced Amy Haelsen, Director of Communications and Community Engagement, to whom he asked to attend the meeting to talk with the Board about the Town's website in response to the queries that he has received from board members. Mr. Diener noted that he had inquired previously about making the webpage easier to navigate and providing information that might reduce inquiries to the assessing office. Can we provide information about common reasons why an abatement is granted or is not granted. Mr. Diener said he would assist with the process. Ms. Haelsen asked the board members what they would like to see on the website. She would take a fresh look at the assessors' pages, see how we can improve the site and ask for information to be provided. She would also look at the websites of assessors in other communities for ideas. The Chair wants to see the site to be made easier for people who are older and may not be familiar with how to access information from the web site. Ms. Haelsen agreed and mentioned that we could have a single page with all the forms that one may need to file for an abatement rather than having to go to separate pages. The Chair said he thinks it would be fine for Mr. Diener to work with Amy Haelsen.

Executive Session: The Chair asked for a **motion** to enter into executive session and to return to open session prior to adjournment to comply with the provisions of any general or special law [exception 7]; 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); to comply with the provisions of any general or special law; specifically, to discuss Returns of Property Held for Charitable Purposes which are not open to public inspection (per M.G.L. Chapter 59, Section 32); and to discuss strategy with respect to litigation [exception 3] if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the government's litigating position which was moved by Mr. Niden, seconded by Mr. Diener and passed unanimously (3-0) on a roll call vote.

Mr. Niden	Yes
Mr. Diener	Yes
Chair Bulian	Yes

The Board moved to executive session at 10:21 a.m.

The Board **returned to open session** at 11:02 a.m. The Chair announced that there were no votes on the application for 19 Wexford Street and that the Board requires more information.

The Chair announced that the next meeting of the Board will be 9:15 a.m. October 9, 2024.

Mr. Niden moved that the Board adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Diener which was passed unanimously by 3-0 vote at 11:04 a.m.

Minutes Approved 04/24/2025