

Aquinnah Board of Assessors

Minutes

May 29, 2019

Present: Elise Lebovit, Adam A. Wilson and Angela A. Cywinski (Assessor/Appraiser)

Guest: Lucas Thors

Meeting started at 4:39PM

1. Minutes and Bills:

Minutes approved by board: 11/19/18, 12/7/18, 3/11/19, 4/9/19, 4/22/19* and 4/24/19 public session.

Minutes approved by board: 4-6-19, 4-9-19, and 4-24-19 for executive session.

*Adam wanted to verify the public meeting posting; after reviewing the post he affirm the vote.

2. Public Speak Time:

None

3. Real Estate:

- April 2019 Monthly List of Abatements signed by board.

4. Personal Property:

- April 2019 Monthly List of Abatements signed by board.

5. Exemptions:

Applications: none

6. Motor Vehicle:

- Abatements granted by board: 2018 – Bill #209; 2019 – Bill #417
- April 2018 and 2019 Monthly List of Abatements signed by board.

7. Abutters List signed by board:

MBLU 6-25.1; MBLU 12-35.1; MBLU 6-106; MBLU 6-43; MBLU 8-115, 116, 117; MBLU 5-2

8. New Business – All Statutory Administrative Duties which may or may not be listed:

Board received Marsha Shufrin letter of resignation, effective 5-8-2019.

Board received Adam A. Wilson letter of resignation, effective 6-30-2019.

Ad for vacancy placed in the local papers; no applicants as of yet.

Outsourcing – Impact on office plus plan for restructuring:

Discussion produced these points:

In the process of finishing and archiving FY 2019; Make current assessors and employee inactive on Gateway; per Ch 41, Sec. 25A - The BOA appoints a person(s) to handle the valuation, however: the current assistant assessor stays on until either party comes to an agreement; per Ch 41, Sec 29 – the board members take an oath which makes them accountable for its' community; if the board doesn't hire a person(s) then the board members are responsible to complete the mandated tasks; outsourcing companies (revaluation

companies) are not required to take an oath, by hiring an employee; they take the same oath as the board members. An outsourcing company doesn't have skin in the game since they are not required to take an oath. The assistant assessor is responsible to defend the values and methodology used in determining the community's valuation. An outsourcing company only assists the board, ultimately the responsible falls to the board.

There two separate legislations: one for Selectmen and one for Assessors. Currently, there are two remaining board members whom are both certified. The start of FY 2020 which begins on July 1st, the office will not have any certified board members nor an assistant assessor. The top priority is to have two board members successfully pass Course 101 by November. If not then the FY 2020 tax rate will be delayed, thus causing the treasurer to borrow.

- The Department of Revenue is waiting for this board to make a decision on how they are going handle the department. The April 24, 2019 BOA executive session resulted in a decision that the board does not endorse the BOS decision to outsource. The letter was received by the BOS on May 1, 2019, no response received from the BOS.
- The Finance and Advisory Committee accepted the board's budget as presented along with the Treasurer, Tax Collector and Accountant on 2-4-19. At the 4-12-19 FinCom meeting, Jeffrey asked to eliminate the assessor line do to outsourcing. The members stated that the figures should be realistic for the projected expenses of the department. On 4-19-19 the Fincom voted to remove the employee wage and increased the expense line to \$40,000 with no credible proof at the request of the BOS. This was last FinCom meeting for the FY 2020 budget; hence, the BOA was not given an opportunity to discuss the change to their budget.
- Other citizens plus businesses expressed dismay that depend on this office are extremely alarmed in this change. What will be the impact it will have on the day to day operations and service?
- The outsourcing company does not have experience in resort area with oceanfront plus the logistics of being on an island. The process has been rushed and the needs of the taxpayers/citizens are not being considered in fiscally responsible manner. There are too many what if's and no back plan. Angela stated she has empathy for the taxpayers; the town doesn't have services, it's not fair to them. Adam, concurred and wished someone at ATM got up and spoke to that.

Additional expenses not budgeted:

- Will the town need to purchase a second user license at an additional cost of \$2,000?
- A contract assessor does not read deeds nor handle mapping. The additional cost not budgeted is \$3,200 which was done in-house.
- The current Vision software is out-of-date and will require an upgrade at a cost of \$12,000.
- In the 2-15-19 FinCom minutes, Jeffrey Madison stated that there would an administrative position in the assessing department for the public. There is no employee wage budgeted for FY 2020 for a position.

The Board of Assessors voted unanimously to not accept the bid from Regional Resources Group, Inc for the following reasons:

- The decision to outsource by the Board of Selectmen came with no input from the Board of Assessors;
- The bid for your company's basic assessing services came in at the threshold amount the town has approved for the assessing department's budget in FY 2020, however;

- The bid has other services that seem essential for the town's needs that are priced beyond the new fiscal year budget. Should the Selectmen choose to add the amenities you carry, they may have to seek additional funding through reserve accounts whose appropriation can only to be obtained by town vote;
- The bid was the only one submitted;
- The Board of Assessors appears to be responsible for mandated tasks that the outsourcing company are not contracted to perform. We do not have a concise delineation of the obligations for this volunteer board will have to undertake without a paid assistant assessor or even a clerk to work with;
- The Assessors were present at the opening of the bid and requested a copy of the proposal for review. The Board of Selectmen did not forward the proposal to the Board of Assessors.

9. Other Business – Reserved for topics the chair did not reasonably anticipate:

10. Adjournment

At 5:43 PM

Respectfully submitted by,

Angela A. Cywinski