

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF ASSESSORS

May 13, 2011

The meeting was called to order at 2 p.m. Present at the meeting were Anne Dunn, Nancy Shea, and Andrew MacInniss of the Board, and Assistant Assessor James Judge.

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting of May 5, 2011.

The Board reviewed office bills. One of those bills was for the cost of Anne Dunn's attendance at the upcoming Massachusetts Association of Assessors summer conference, including conference and hotel stay (copy of bill attached). Ms. Shea asked Ms. Dunn if Plymouth was paying for a portion of this bill. Ms. Dunn did not reply. Mr. Judge stated that Kingston had paid for this conference in the past. Ms. Dunn authorized the charge; Ms. Shea did not authorize the charge; Mr. MacInniss authorized the charge.

The Board reviewed the Overlay Reserve Analysis presented by Mr. Judge (copy of Analysis attached). The Board discussed whether it was customary to release all available funds, or to release funds when and as requested by other appropriate authorities within Town government. Mr. Judge confirmed that to date, neither the Finance Committee nor any other Town body had requested a release of Overlay Surplus. The Board determined not to release any Overlay funds at this time.

The Board then turned to a review of the Early Retirement Incentive plan adopted by Town Meeting (copy of Plan attached). Ms. Dunn highlighted the portion of the plan stating that early retirement in the Assessor's Department would result in a reduction of one-half time employee saving \$25,483.15. Ms. Shea noted that the plan states that the reduction will be "permanent." Ms. Shea referred to an e-mail from the Town Moderator, relating from her notes of Town Meeting that the total cost of the early retirement will be \$10,000 per year for 10 years (copy of e-mail attached).

The Board reviewed the cost savings analysis prepared by the Town Treasurer, showing that hiring a full-time replacement for the Administrative Assessor position, and a half-time replacement for the Senior Clerk position, would result in a total savings for fiscal year 2012 of \$29,298, thus exceeding the savings required by the ERI plan. (Copy of Treasurer's analysis attached.) Ms. Dunn noted that all savings would go directly to defraying the cost of the early retirement. The Board discussed the fact that it was not proper or practical to have the supervisory position be part-time, while the clerk position was full-time. The Board also discussed and rejected the alternative of using outside staffing services rather than filling the part-time senior clerk position.

The Board then unanimously determined to request the Board of Selectmen to lift the hiring freeze to allow the hiring of a full-time Administrative Assessor, and a half-time Senior Clerk effective July 1, 2011.

Ms. Dunn then indicated that the Board would take up a review of applications for the Administrative Assessor position. Ms. Shea stated that she had been told that a neighbor and friend of hers, Ms. Poirier, had applied for the position. Ms. Shea stated that she was therefore recusing herself from the Board's deliberations regarding who should be hired. Ms. Dunn thanked Ms. Shea for her disclosure, but stated that there was no application from Ms. Poirier before the Board, and that it was therefore not appropriate for Ms. Shea to recuse herself from this discussion. Mr. Judge and Ms. Dunn both represented that only one application – from Ms. Holly Merry – had been forwarded to the BOA by the Town Administrator's office for consideration. Ms. Dunn asked Ms. Shea if she considered Ms. Merry qualified for the Administrative Assessor position. Ms. Shea replied that she absolutely believed Ms. Merry to be qualified. Ms. Dunn stated that under the circumstances, it would be unfair to Ms. Merry for Ms. Shea to recuse herself. Based upon the representations of Ms. Dunn and Mr. Judge that no application from Ms. Poirier was before the Board, Ms. Shea agreed to participate in the Board's deliberations.

The Board voted unanimously to recommend Ms. Merry for the position of Administrative Assessor. Each Board Member signed a letter to the Board of Selectmen requesting the lifting of the hiring freeze and recommending Ms. Merry be hired as Administrative Assessor. (Letter attached.)

The Board then discussed whether to ask the Finance committee to adjust the Assessors' Department budget for FY 2011 in light of the staffing changes. Ms. Shea explained her thinking that a modest increase in the postage and training budgets would assist the reduced staff in functioning effectively. Ms. Dunn opposed an increase in the postage budget to allow for mailing of the CPI exemption applications, stating that the taxpayers should bear some responsibility for knowing and meeting the application deadlines. She asked Mr. Judge to investigate whether the exemption deadlines could be more prominently displayed on the tax bills so as to assist the taxpayers. With regard to the training budget, Ms. Shea explained that an increase of \$500 would cover the cost of sending the new senior clerk to the Clerk's training course to be held in August. Mr. MacIniss and Ms. Dunn agreed that this course would be helpful for the new staffer. The Board unanimously agreed to ask the Finance Committee for this additional budget item, and asked Mr. Judge to prepare a memorandum to this effect.

The next meeting of the Board was set for Wednesday, June 15th, at 3:30 p.m. [later changed to Friday, June 3 at 10:00 a.m.].

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy C. Shea