

**Town of Norwell
Board of Assessors
345 Main St., Norwell, MA 02061**

Open Session Meeting Minutes

Date: January 4, 2023

Time: 9:30 AM (open meeting)

Location: Zoom Meeting Only

Board Members Present via Zoom: Ms. Mary Horowitz, Ms. Mary Granville, Mr. Theodore Dawe,

Others Present: Ms. Meredith Rafiki, Principal Assessor Via Zoom

Of note: Remote participation continues to be conducted pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order (March 12, 2020, temporarily modifying certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L.c.30A § 20(d) and 940 CMR 29.10(4)(b).) This meeting was also available via Zoom.

Ms. Horowitz called the meeting to order at 9:33 AM

1. Open Forum:

There was no one from the public present at the meeting at this time however Ms. Horowitz indicated that she would leave this public comment section open for the rest of the meeting in case any of the citizens had a public comment.

2. Assessor's Office Monthly Business

- a) **Prior Meeting Minutes.** There were no open meeting minutes to be voted on at this time.
- b) **Monthly Reports.** Rescinded abatement under Chapter 59 to correct a clerical issue. A motion was made by Ms. Horowitz to rescind the abatement and a roll call vote was conducted as follows; Ms. Horowitz, Yes, Ms. Granville, Yes and Mr. Dawe, Yes. The amount of the rescinded amount was \$10,267.95 including the CPA.
- c) **Commitments and Warrants to the Collector.** None
- d) **Account Payable Bills and Invoices.** There was only one invoice totaling \$809.55 for WB Mason for office supplies which the Board approved.
- e) **Reports and Commitments:** The Board accepted the following report.
 - 1) 2021 MV Excise Tax Abatement Report - \$245.71

3. New Business: anything unforeseen:

Under new business Ms. Rafiki presented a proposal from Real Estate Research Consultants, Inc. ("RRC") for personal property revaluation and utility appraisal services in the amount of \$42,000. Ms. Horowitz asked Ms. Rafiki why 600 accounts were used in the calculation of this proposal and how many accounts we have. Ms. Rafiki did not know why the 600 accounts were used but indicated that based on her records approximately 200 accounts would be affected by the revaluation. Ms. Horowitz then asked Ms. Rafiki what was the number of accounts in the last revaluation. Ms. Rafiki indicated that she would research that amount and get back to us and would discuss an adjustment in the proposal if one was warranted based on a revised estimate of accounts. Mr. Dawe asked if the proposal included RRC's representation of their appraised values in court since this feature was not specifically mentioned in the services as proposed. Ms. Rafiki thought this service might be included as part of the main contract but would check and get back to the Board.

Ms. Horowitz then discussed with Ms. Rafiki why she changed the discussion regarding the Senior Means Tested Exemption Update from Executive Session to Open Session. Ms. Horowitz could find no reason for this matter to be discussed under Executive Session under the established guidelines. Additionally, this matter had previously been discussed in past Open Sessions (both BOA and SB), at Town Meeting and the State Legislature.

Ms. Horowitz asked Ms. Rafiki to provide the Board with the status of the Senior Circuit Breaker Property Tax Relief Bill ("Bill"). Ms. Rafiki indicated language changes that she and Darlene (Ms. Sullivan) have been working with the Senate to make the corrections to the language. Ms. Horowitz has read the amended changes (received for the first time yesterday) from the Senate and indicated the wording now reflects more closely the wording originally presented to the SB prior to changes made by the SB and the general intent of the Bill is the same. Ms. Horowitz asked Ms. Rafiki if she was aware of any other changes Ms. Sullivan was going to make to the Bill and Ms. Rafiki was not aware of any additional changes.

Ms. Horowitz asked Ms. Rafiki if anyone in the Town was in contact with Representative DeCoste or Senator O'Connor's office with regards to this Bill within the last couple of weeks? Ms. Rafiki indicated that the first time she was made aware of issues with the Bill was last Thursday or Friday. Ms. Horowitz then asked who in Town Hall was the Senators Office speaking with because according to Senators O'Connor's office they thought this was the first bill of its kind to be presented to the Senate when in fact we are the 21st occurrence of this bill? Ms. Rafiki did not know who they (Senator's office) were speaking with at the Town Administrators Office.

Ms. Horowitz indicated that we (the Board) need a full-time person to support us (the Board) in matters that involve the Board. Ms. Horowitz further indicated that we have an obligation to be fair and transparent with our citizens and the only way we can do this is if we (The Board) are made aware of and brought to the table invited or not on matters regarding our office. Ms. Rafiki agreed. Ms. Granville suggested that Ms. Rafiki check in with the Town Administrators office once a week (ex. Wednesday mornings at 9:00AM) to see if there are any matters pending or proposed that could affect the Board. Ms. Rafiki could then report these matters back to the Board. The Board agreed that there was a total failure in communication regarding this situation. Ms. Horowitz asked that Ms. Rafiki stay on top of this legislation so it does not fall through the cracks again.

Unfortunately, even though multiple follow up efforts were made by this Board to Representatives DeCoste office, our citizens will not be able to take advantage of this abatement until next year.

Mr. Dawe asked why the Town Administrator failed to contact Ms. Horowitz or any other Board member when they (the Town Administrator) were first made aware a problem with the Bill language. Since Ms. Horowitz actually drafted the Bill and made the presentation to the SB and the Town it would seem obvious Ms. Horowitz should have been contacted. Ms. Rafiki said she could not answer that question unless she speaks with Ms. Sullivan.

Mr. Dawe indicated the we (the Board) must have better communication with the Town Administrators Office as this is not the first time a breakdown in communication has occurred


from this office. The Town Administrators Office has to know that we (the Board) cannot execute our duties and effectively serve the citizens of Norwell without their cooperation and communication.

4. Adjourn to Executive Session. The Executive Session will follow the open session.

All documents and exhibits referenced above are retained in the Assessor's Office in accordance with the Commonwealths public records retention schedules

Ms. Horowitz adjourned the open session at 10:12 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theodore Dawe', written in a cursive style.

Theodore Dawe, Clerk

Clerks Note:

With respect to the Senior Circuit Breaker Property Tax Bill there was a heightened sense of urgency regarding action that was required prior to the beginning of the new Legislature and Senate which was technically January 4 2023. If the Senate was unable to pass this Legislation and the Governor was not able to sign the Bill by that date the town would have to go back once again to the State Legislature for a new vote and the process would be delayed another year or two.