



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

Open Session Meeting Minutes

Date: February 7, 2024

Time: 3:00 PM (open meeting)

Location: Osborne Room, Norwell Town Hall

Board Members Present: Ms. Mary Granville, Mr. Theodore Dawe, Mr. James Koehler

Others Present: Ms. Megan Howell, Senior Administrative Assistant

Ms. Granville called the meeting to order at 3:06 PM.

1. Open Forum:

- There was no one from the public present at the meeting at this time.

2. Prior Meeting Minutes:

- Prior meeting minutes were reviewed with the following results:
 - The Open Session minutes for January 24, 2024, were presented for review. Ms. Granville suggested amending the fifth bullet under item 4, 2023 Town Report. Mr. Dawe made the motion to approve the minutes with amendments. Ms. Granville seconded the motion.
- Mr. Koehler reminded Ms. Howell that Board minutes require the recorder's signature.

3. Status of Data Collection Manual:

- A draft of the Data Collection Manual created by Bob Cole, Interim Assessor, was distributed. Mr. Cole had previously created this manual for the Town of Hanover and made adaptations to apply to the Town of Norwell. The Board will decide if they will assimilate the draft previously created by the Assessors Office with this draft. It was noted that the image on the cover needs to be updated. Board members will review this draft and bring feedback to the next Board meeting. Mr. Koehler questioned when Mr. Cole last updated the manual.

4. Office Business: Monthly Reports, Commitments, Warrants, Bills, Etc:

- Ms. Granville reviewed and signed the payroll and turnover for abutter's list payments as submitted by Ms. Howell.

5. Abatement Update:

- 131 abatement applications have been received to date. Ms. Howell is working on a breakdown and will provide the information to the Board members via email. The target date for Mr. Cole to review the applications is March 1.
- Mr. Dawe noted there is a previously established schedule that lists when the application was filed and the outcome. Mr. Dawe will provide Ms. Howell with a copy.
- The value of outbuildings and extra features were discussed. It was noted that some towns value certain items while others do not. It was suggested that a report be generated through Vision software to show what Norwell has applied values to and the amounts assigned.

6. Exemptions:

- No exemptions were presented for review. This item will be tabled to the Executive Session.

7. Town Report:

- Ms. Granville will complete the Communication and Transparency narrative. Ms. Howell will complete the Staffing narrative. Mr. Dawe will speak to the new Circuit Breaker bill.
- Mr. Cole will be asked to update the tax levy statistics, including last year's values and exemptions.
- Suggestions for edits were made, including changing the database to Staff Contacts.
- A discussion was held on Council on Aging presentation. This was not tied to the revaluation; instead, the goal was to educate the senior residents on reading field cards. This was not a public meeting as the Assessors Office was invited by the Council on Aging to present.
- It was decided that Board members will submit their notes to Ms. Granville for review by February 28.
- A discussion was held on Open versus Executive Sessions, according to Massachusetts General Law Privacy Clause. The goal is to keep the definitions simple.
- Mr. Koehler brought up the transparency of the disclosure period versus the February 1 submission deadline for abatement applications. Ms. Granville noted the information was posted on the Town website.
- Members provided edit suggestions. Mr. Dawe will make the edits and bring the revised copy to the next Board meeting.

8. Inclusion of Senior Work Program on Town of Norwell Website:

- The Board would like the Senior Work Program description and application to be more prominently displayed on the Town website. It was noted that the Senior Work Program was posted to the Town website under Town News.
- Mr. Dawe offered to reach out to Susan Curtin, Director of the Council on Aging, to discuss posting the announcement and application on the Assessors page, since the Council on Aging does not have a designated page.

9. Review of To-Do List:

- Ms. Granville suggested tabling the To-Do List until a Principal Assessor is hired. The list was reviewed, and the Board decided which items to table and which to pursue.
 - Ms. Howell will print the finalized minutes for Mr. Koehler to sign, from June to the present.
 - Mr. Dawe will provide Ms. Howell with a sample schedule for the ATB cases.
 - Living square footage will be tabled.
 - Ms. Howell addressed the photo errors in Vision. She stated an email was received from Vision with further details on correcting the errors. Ms. Howell forwarded the email to Mr. Cole.
 - Ms. Granville and Mr. Dawe have consulted with the Finance Director to ensure abatements and exemptions are being handled correctly, including interest paid on abatements.
 - GIS mapping was tabled.
 - Data collection manual was previously discussed in the open session.
 - Universal calendar was tabled.

10. Status of Senior Citizen Circuit Breaker Tax Exemption HR 2765

- Mr. Dawe is reaching out to the Massachusetts Senator's Clerk to obtain an update on this bill. Mr. Dawe will also include an update in the Town Report narrative.

11. New Business: anything unforeseen*

- Ms. Granville presented an article from the Globe newspaper titled "Should You File for a Real Estate Tax Abatement?" Ms. Howell will bring copies to the next Board meeting and will place copies at the counter in the Assessors Office.
- Mr. Dawe discussed the new Municipal Empowerment Act being considered by the legislature and the potential impact it would have on the Board. This could bring about a five percent motor vehicle excise tax surcharge, and the creation of regional Boards of Assessors.

1. Adjourn to Executive Session not to return to Open Session:

- Ms. Granville adjourned the open session at 4:19 PM. 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.

Respectfully submitted,



Megan Howell, Senior Administrative Assistant