



Minutes of the Brimfield Board of Assessors Meeting held January 19, 2021

Location: The Board of Assessors met pursuant to Governor Baker's Order to Suspend Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, Sec.18, and the Governor's Order imposing strict limitation on people gathering in one place, this meeting of the Town of Brimfield Board of Assessors was conducted via remote participation at +1(623)600-3773 Access Code 625935

Meeting called to order via teleconference at 3:04 P.M. by Robert Sullivan, Chair

Roll Call: Carolyn Haley- Present Cynthia Powers-Present

Host: Cynthia Poirier, Deputy Assessor. No guests in attendance.

Motion made by Cynthia Powers to accept and sign the Minutes as presented. Second by Carolyn Haley. All in favor by roll call vote: Carolyn Haley-I, Cynthia Powers- I, Robert Sullivan -I

- .06 Meeting Minutes from the January 05, 2021 Board of Assessors Meeting. Motion made by Carolyn Haley to accept and sign the Minutes as presented. Second by Cynthia Powers. All in favor by roll call vote: Carolyn Haley-I, Cynthia Powers- I, Robert Sullivan -I.
- .07 The Board noted the Department Payroll and Bills and will visit the office to sign.
- .08 The Board to accept Motor Vehicle Applications marked for approval and the Monthly Report for Motor Vehicle Abatements Granted. Motion made by Cynthia Powers to accept and sign the Motor Vehicle Abatement Applications and Reports. Second by Carolyn Haley. All in favor by roll call vote: Carolyn Haley-I, Cynthia Powers- I, Robert Sullivan -I.
- .09 Motor Vehicle and Trailer Excise Commitment 2020-07 in the amount of \$ 3,540.50. The Board noted the Motor Vehicle and Trailer Excise commitment 2020-07 and will visit the office to sign.
- .10 Motor Vehicle and Trailer Excise Commitment 2021-01 in the amount of \$ 441,718.45. The Board noted the Motor Vehicle and Trailer Excise commitment 2021-01 and will visit the office to sign. Ms. Poirier alerted the Board that the new registry Atlas system continues to roll the Farmers Plate Excise Bills into Commitment 01. Ms. Poirier will send a letter of explanation and instruction along with the Application for Exemption of these bills to the former years exemption record in hopes to reduce the need and cost of abating those bills.
- .11 Warrant to Treasurer/ Collector to Collect Motor Vehicle and Trailer Excise Tax Commitment 2020-07 and Notice to the Accounting Officer. The Board noted the Motor Vehicle and Trailer Excise Warrant to the Collector and Notice to the Accounting Officer and will visit the office to sign.
- .12 Warrant to Treasurer/ Collector to Collect Motor Vehicle and Trailer Excise Tax Commitment 2021-01 and Notice to the Accounting Officer. The Board noted the Motor Vehicle and Trailer Excise Warrant to the Collector and Notice to the Accounting Officer and will visit the office to sign.
- .13 One Application for Property Tax Deferral marked for Denial. Ms. Poirier made recommendations and attached them to the application in the office. After careful evaluation of the information supplied it was not recommended to grant the request. Ms. Poirier suggested the Board send a letter to the applicant explaining the inability to approve this application with the Notice of Denial. Ms. Poirier will also enclose an application and instruction inviting the applicant to apply for the 41C Exemption. The Board agreed with this approach.

Discussion:

FY2022 Assessors Department Budget

Ms. Haley spoke to the lack of increase for the Board Members Stipend. The 2% request was submitted last year with prior years included that had not been put forth on the FY21 Budget. Ms. Haley asked that the Chair address this with the Finance Committee. Mr. Sullivan agreed that the roles and responsibilities of the Board are complex and require constant updating of credentials, and that promoting a Board with experience is a vital. Mr. Sullivan agreed with Ms. Haley in that the stipend should address the commitment, competency and time expended by the members. The entire Board was in agreement with addressing the 4 years this has been overlooked. To Mr. Sullivan's point Ms. Poirier thought the Board may want provide a reminder that the revenue stream in the Town is derived from the values the Assessors are in custody of maintaining all while complying with DOR Standards, the total levy being at approximately 80% derived from property values with the balance being Local Aid, Estimated Receipts and Free Cash. The Board agreed.

Mr. Sullivan acknowledged the Deputy Assessors salary was long overdue for an increase as well. Mr. Sullivan was very concerned in looking at other Towns that have lost experienced Deputy and Assistant Assessors due to rising salaries and shortage of experienced and qualified Assessors across the State.

Mr. Sullivan felt it was critical that a comparison be conducted and adjustments recommended. Ms. Haley concurred and reflected on the very critical time after the tornado and the Deputy Assessors position being vacant and she would not want to see Brimfield in that position again.

Ms. Poirier was in agreement with the points Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Haley made, reminded the Board that when she volunteered after the tornado and later applied for the position, it was posted as a part time position with minimal duties addressed and there were 34 applicants at that time, however none having any municipal experience. Ms. Poirier had five years' experience at that time and explained that assessing positions are not something one "falls into" they are a profession and require a great deal of dedication and ongoing education, securing qualified assessors is becoming more and more difficult as many veteran assessors reach retirement age. Ms. Poirier felt it important to mention that individuals who commit to a community are an investment for that community, the community having fostered the educational requirements resulting in the MAAO certification achievements and ongoing education needed to address valuation methods and legal changes.

The Board noted the only salary change in the past ten years to the Deputy Assessor position was a result of an increase in hours and the 2% COL, which actually nets negatively with the constant cost of the health insurance employee yearly share premium's rising at over 6% most years. The cost of the 50/50 insurance benefit further places Brimfield in the lower ranking of overall compensation to the position, thus making it less attractive to qualified individuals when comparing communities with shares at 60/40, 70/30 and the like.

Mr. Sullivan agreed it was important to address a recent Financial Department loss of employee the difficulty it caused and the exercises conducted to make the adjustments in salary and support staff needed to secure qualified individuals to ensure returned and ongoing stability in that Department. Ms. Poirier agreed this was a good exercise in understanding the need to examine much needed salary adjustments and especially in these times where everyone health is at a higher risk; vacancy and change is costly and Brimfield is in it's first 5-year revaluation for recertification which is an extremely challenging task for Assessors. The Board was in agreement in taking the necessary actions as discussed.

Mr. Sullivan will bring comparison salaries and the job description recently updated in 2019 by the Assessors to Finance Committee to alert them as they begin to develop the budget for FY2022. Mr. Sullivan added he will also address the Town Clerks position.

Ms. Poirier will supply the "Roll of the Assessors" document as presented from the MAAO to address the assessor's stipend increase and the updated job description of the Deputy Assessor that has not been considered in past studies,

It was also noted the Assessor Department does not have any costs related to support clerical staff and all of the roles of the department as a whole are rolled into the Deputy Assessors duties along with supplying support to other departments as directed.

Robert Sullivan asked the members if they had any further business to discuss, having None, a motion to adjourn was made by Carolyn Haley. Second by Cynthia Powers.
All in favor by roll call vote: Carolyn Haley-I, Cynthia Powers- I, Robert Sullivan -I
Adjourned at 3:36 p.m.

Next Meeting of the Board of Assessors is scheduled for 02/02/2021

Respectfully submitted,



Cynthia S. Poirier

Deputy Assessor

Date: 02/02/2021

BOARD OF ASSESSORS

