

Sterling Board of Assessors
Room 109, Butterick Municipal Building, 1 Park St., Sterling MA 01564
Minutes of Meeting February 2, 2018

Present: Donlin Murray (Don), Chairman
Richard Sheppard (Dick), Clerk
Harald Scheid (Harald) Regional Assessor
Debbie Dreyer (Debbie) Assistant to the Assessor

8:10 - Robert Cutler (Bob), Member

Meeting Opened at 8:07am

Roll Call- Sheppard present, Murray present - along with Debbie & Harald

Approval of Agenda - MOTION: Dick made a motion to accept the agenda, 2nd by Don, all in favor, aye.

NEW BUSINESS: **MOTION:** Dick made a motion to accept the minutes of the 1/12/18 meeting, 2nd by Don, all in favor aye

OLD BUSINESS: **Property Lister** – Donny had asked Harald to put together some points regarding the responsibilities associated with this position – all of this to be used to put together a job description. The Board needs to start the process of advertising this position & deciding if there are any candidates that qualify or if it's to be added to RRG's contract. If the position is added to RRG's contract, it will have to be presented at Town Meeting for the extra monies added to our budget to cover it. This year is a full revaluation certification year for Sterling - Harald would like all the permit work done by the 1st of June. Starting early March, April, May – all the new construction needs to be done.

Contract Regional Assessor (RRG) Update

Harald has been asked by the Selectman to come to their next meeting to do a 5-minute talk about assessments & tax rates.

The abatement period is now over - we received 31 abatements. Going back 5 years there were: 33/FY14, 18/FY15, 49/FY16 & 21/FY17. Harald has met with several taxpayers & after discussion have determined their values are correct with no need to apply.

Pending ATB case: Sterling Nursing Home files an abatement every year & for the past 10 years they've scheduled an ATB hearing & end up at the last minute withdrawing. This year their attorney wants to go forward after winning a case recently in Newton. The decision that came down from the ATB, according to the attorney, he feels the ATB prescribes a formula by which assessors must now use to value nursing homes. The attorney is appealing all nursing homes based on this formula & if a town is not following this formula, he feels they are overvaluing the property. Harald took a weeklong course in the valuation of hotels, nursing homes, etc. where the business is wrapped up with the real estate. When you develop a value, you need to value three components: real estate, personal property & the value of the business. Harald has a problem with the sequence of calculations – when he uses that formula, he comes up with a negative value or ridiculously low. Harald prepared & presented two versions of the income approach & shown how they support the values we have - 8.2 to 8.5 million. Harald's prepared to go to ATB to demonstrate that they have the sequence of calculations wrong.

This ATB case was supposed to be heard last week but Harald had it pushed out so the Board could meet to discuss & make a decision. The attorney is willing to say, if the Board gives me something reasonable to take back to the owner- a five and a half million reduction in value; then they'll withdraw their case. We have to acknowledge a reduction & we would stipulate they can't return to us with this for 3 years. **MOTION:** Dick made a motion to concede to a \$500,000 reduction in value, 2nd by Don, all in favor aye.

Budget: We will be submitting a warrant article in at Town Meeting to transfer funds from free cash for RRG to cover the Property Lister position until the end of this year for \$3,000. RRG will add \$15,000 to the renewed FY19 contract to cover personal property & inspections.

Field Cards: Cost under \$500 for remediation – Town Clerk has \$1500 left in her budget to cover remediation for the vault & we can transfer the field cards to the Clerk. **MOTION:** Bob made a motion to have the assessors' field cards from the 1835 Building transferred to the Clerk for remediation, 2nd by Dick, all in favor aye.

Any Payroll, Payables, abatements, warrants signed.

No Executive Session required this meeting

Future agenda items: Abatements

Next mtg: TBD

Dick made a motion to adjourn the meeting @9:07am, 2nd by Don, all in favor aye.

Respectfully submitted
Debbie Dreyer
Assistant to the Assessor