

Sterling Board of Assessors
Room 109, Butterick Municipal Building, 1 Park St., Sterling MA 01564
Minutes of Meeting February 18, 2015

Present: Donlin Murray (Don), Chairman
Robert Cutler (Bob), Vice-Chairman
Michael Rivers (Mike) Clerk
Harald Scheid (Harald), Contract Assessor (RRG/Regional Resource Group)
Debbie Dreyer (Debbie), Assistant to the Assessor

Meeting Opened at 7:31am

Payroll & Payables Signed

Roll Call & Approval of Agenda

Robert Cutler, Michael Rivers & Donlin Murray present along with Harald Scheid & Debbie Dreyer. & Mike made a motion to accept the agenda, 2nd by Bob, all in favor, aye.

Review and Accept the Previous Meeting's Minutes– Mike made a motion to approve the 1/21/15 meeting minutes with the budget added as a reference, 2nd by Bob, all in favor – aye.

Payroll & Payables were signed

NEW BUSINESS

- **Review Real Estate & Personal Property Abatements** – David Manzello was not available to present the abatements so this will be held for another meeting.
- **Discuss Harald's Contract & Scope of Services** – Harald presented the Board with a copy of RRG's "Scope of Services" for review. Specification of "eight hours in-office" will be added & then sent up to the administrator's office for preparation of a RFP.
- **Discuss a Personal Property Threshold** – The Board discussed having a threshold on Personal Property.
Motion: Mike made a motion to implement a \$1,000 threshold, 2nd by Bob, all in favor - aye
- **Discuss Increasing Statutory Exemption amounts** – We're principally looking at the Elderly exemption – increasing it from \$500 to \$1,000. The state reimburses the first \$500 on the cherry sheet – the \$500 increase would be the Town's responsibility. When the elderly exemptions were first put into law they represented about a 50% reduction in their taxes – the benefit has eroded & now only represents 10%-15%. The Board might look into this again at a future date, but for now the exemptions will remain as they are.

CONTRACT REGIONAL ASSESSOR (RRG) UPDATE

Update on Chapter Land review process – Sherri, who is working on the Chapter project, is a third of the way through – she has researched & drafted new liens on 14 accounts - letters will go out requesting filing fees for the updated liens. Letters will also be going out to 20+ accounts that have liens but no acknowledgement statement. Harald asked her what the timetable was for completing the project & she feels it will be wrapped up by summer.

Update on the Solar Project – At the Board's request Harald had contacted Pandolf suggesting we have a discussion around a pilot agreement – that prompted a call from Sean Hamilton of the light department & there was a meeting with Harald, Sean & Joe Curtin from Pandolf. Harald read to the Board Pandolf's official response in which Pandolf still stands firmly on the belief that they are tax exempt. They referred to the recent Westboro ATB findings. Due to the time-sensitive nature of ATB appeals they've initiated the appeal process. Their intention is not to have the town or Pandolf incur any unnecessary legal expense – they would like continue to operate in good faith. The tax agreement offer presented to the Board of Assessors at their 10/15/14 meeting is still valid so long as it can be acted upon in a timely manner before many resources are directed to the ATB appeal at which point they will withdraw the tax agreement offer & wait for the ATB to hear the case.

Motion: Mike made a motion that we go to Town Counsel to get an opinion on this- 2nd by Bob, all in favor, aye. Mike would also like to be sure the BOA Chairman Don & the Town Administrator be included in any further discussions on this matter.

Harald had a meeting with his certification rep to map out the plan for the upcoming reval – they wanted to have a date when Mike would be completing the Course 101. Mike will be looking into upcoming classes.

OLD BUSINESS

- Job description: future meeting
- Review Employee Personnel Handbook: future meeting

No Public Session

Next Agenda: Meet with Town Counsel **Next meeting:** Contingent on Town Counsel's schedule

Mike moved to close the meeting, 2nd Bob Cutler, all in favor, aye. Meeting Adjourned at 9:04am

Respectfully Submitted: Debbie Dreyer / Assistant to the Assessor

References: Pandolf Perkins Letter