

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Lois Stearns, Dan Campbell, Tony Matteo, Bonnie L'Etoile, Bernhard Porada and Sue Kaczinski

**ALSO PRESENT:** Bob MacEwen, Board of Assessors; Alice Lord, Board of Assessors; Willie Morales, Town Administrator; Deb Mero, Town Accountant; and Bethany Walker, Board of Assessors/FINCOM Secretary

The joint meeting between the FINCOM and the Board of Assessors was called to order at 7:00 pm by Stearns. This meeting was not video recorded.

• **ASSESSORS DISCUSS EXEMPT PROPERTY IMPACT**

- Walker began discussion with the news that the majority of the property owned by Thomas Aquinas College (TAC) will be tax exempt for FY18 based on MA General Law allowing a 2 year relocation/re-development time frame. (Two year allowance began the day TAC took ownership; May 22, 2017).
  - Everything except the houses along Winchester Road will be exempt for FY18.
  - This is an approximate value loss of 21.5 million.
  - It is to be noted that there is no revenue shortage to the town; the remaining tax payers will absorb the roughly \$350,000 in taxation.
- Discussion on how this will affect the FY2018 tax rate. The model used at Annual Town Meeting projected a tax rate of \$17.07, with the efforts put forth by the FINCOM to keep the tax rate around the \$17.00/1000 mark. With the TAC property coming off of the tax rolls and onto the remaining tax payers, the projected new tax rate is \$17.86/1000; an increase of \$1.41/1000 from FY17.
  - L'Etoile recommend to have this information published as much as possible before Actual Tax bills go out to notify the tax payers that the tax rate will not be what was originally thought at \$17.07. The BOA agreed to get this information out there, however; the tax rate has not officially been set. The Tax Classification Hearing will be on Tuesday, October 24<sup>th</sup> at 6pm between the Selectboard and the BOA. At this hearing the Selectboard will vote on the classification. Department of Revenue will then need to approve before the tax rate becomes official; which can potentially take up to a week.
- Stearns asked if any other properties could potentially be exempt in the future.
  - The BOA advised that The Moody Center (who took ownership of the remaining portion of the former NMH campus) is also seeking exemption, however, because they are not a school they do not have the two year window and the process for exemption is slightly different. At this moment they are not exempt; but the BOA is prepared to review the exemption application during the appropriate time frame (by April 1, 2018).
- P.I.L.O.T (Payment in Lieu of Taxes)
  - MacEwen advised the FINCOM that the Selectboard and the BOA had met to discuss PILOT with tax exempt entities in Town. Nothing has been generated as of yet, but the two boards as well as the Town Administrator will be working closely together to get PILOTs established in Northfield.

7:21 MacEwen and Lord adjourn the joint meeting and leave the FINCOM meeting

• **MINUTES**

- Minutes from the July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting were reviewed. ***A motion was made by L'Etoile, seconded by Porada and VOTED to accept the July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting minutes as presented.*** All In Favor: Stearns, L'Etoile, Kaczinski, Porada and Matteo Abstained: Campbell.
- Minutes from the July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017 meeting were reviewed. ***A motion was made by Matteo, seconded by Campbell and VOTED unanimously to accept the July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017 meeting minutes as presented.***

- **MAIL**

- (2) Monthly balance sheets from Mero; balance ending 8/31/17 and balance ending 9/30/17
  - Mero commented that on the Workers Compensation line currently shows a negative balance for recording purposes, however, there is no area of concern overall.
- Letter from the Town of Warwick for a School District Leadership Meeting (for School Committee members, Town Finance and Selectboard members) to be held on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017 from 6:30-8:30 at PVRs. Stearns wants each member of the FINCOM to RSVP on their own.
- An invitation from Morales for a Meeting of Boards and Committees with Board of Selectmen on Wednesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 at 6 pm at the Town Hall. Items to review are *Identifying initiative and programs that might overlap between boards/committees* AND *Successful communications between boards, committees and administration.*

- **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES**

- Clean up on the former Smith property, now owned by the Town, is complete. The dollar figure showing on the monthly balance sheet from Mero is pending review to see if money is owed to the Police Department wages account.
- Zoning By-Law and Codification update. The general Town By-Laws are also being reviewed per Town Clerk, Campbell. Once the General By-Laws are done then both sets of By-Laws will be completed at the same time as opposed to having two separate reviews. Assistance is coming in from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts per Campbell.
- The Town Hall Wiring project: phase 3 will be starting shortly. The contract has been received and it will be signed on October 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Morales stated that he is working with the abutting property owners to see if they would be willing to work with the Town for the Parking Lot/drainage project.
- L'Etoile asked about the leasing of computers vs. buying new computers when needed. Currently the Police Department is working on a trial run of leasing computers and L'Etoile was interested in knowing if there was more thought about this route for all Town computers; Morales was unsure of status on this.
- Special Town Meeting to be held at PVRs on Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, at 7pm. All articles (money and non-money) are due 10/24/17 by noon.

- **PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FY19 TOWN BUDGET**

- Stearns briefly explained the FINCOM procedure and their responsibility regarding the budget process. Next month Stearns will have budget letter ready to go

- **MEETINGS ATTENDED AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FINCOM**

- Porada: Public Safety Building Committee meeting (Morales also attended). Current status is that there is no clear title or deed found for the property in which the current fire station sits. This is needed in order to have a bond to build a new complex. The Law firm is estimating \$15,000 for a title search. This is partially the reason behind the Special Town Meeting set for December 4<sup>th</sup>. If the Town were to seek the route of Eminent Domain, the cost of that process would be around \$85,000.
  - This also prompted Morales to look into all town owned lots to see if any other parcels have issues with clear title/ownership.
- Matteo: H.E.A.R.T meeting. The group is hopeful to finalize the RFP for a group to collect data on regional schools and enrollment issues; next meeting 10/25/17.
  - Matteo attended a school committee meeting on behalf of HEART to give an update. The Superintendent had inquired about the District Agreement (one of the main reasons for this

group's formation). HEART wanted more information before working on that project so for now it is "on the back burner".

- Matteo stated that HEART has been meeting about every 2 weeks since February; approximately 3 members from each PVRs district town.
- Matteo: Community Preservation Committee met and is working on increasing the current amount of  $\frac{1}{2}\%$ . Matteo asked Walker to provide figures for 1%, 1-1/2% and 2%. Next meeting is on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017
- Stearns: School Committee and Budget Sub Committee meetings

- **NEXT MEETING**

- 11/13/17

*A motion was made by Campbell, seconded by Matteo and VOTED unanimously to adjourn the FINCOM Meeting.*

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm

Submitted by:

Bethany Walker

FINCOM Secretary

Approved On: 11-15-17

Approved By: Lois M. Stearns