

SELECTBOARD MEETING - December 15, 2010

Present: Select Board - Dave DeHerdt, Doug Field, Norm Russell
Assistant Administrator – Mary Fitz-Gibbon

Assessors' Classification hearing - Present: Assessors- Rick Chandler, Sandra Lilly, Mark Graves
Assessors' Clerk – Faye Whitney

Rick Chandler, Chairman of the Board of Assessors, presented a form which he said was the same as the one used last year. It was used to summarize the information needed for the Select Board along with the Assessors to consider in setting a rate(s) for taxation. The rate can be a single rate, as it is currently, or split into different rates. The possible categories for rates are: residential, commercial/ industrial and personal.

The Town is 92.8% residential and 3.9% commercial (including chapter land). Total value of the Town is \$ 222,278,461 – about a million more than last year. The tax rate is expected to be \$13.91/ thousand. The average parcel is valued at \$196,230 and the average tax \$ 2,729 at that rate. Last year the average tax was \$2,550. If the Town uses a single rate the average residential tax will be \$2,729, the average commercial tax 1,965, and the average chapter tax \$113.

A question was asked about the increase of \$250.00 for an average parcel. One reason given was that a couple of large eligible parcels were put into chapter land. Partly because this change affects the overall picture, the Assessors have been paying close attention to the applications, making sure there is documentation for the uses applied for. Persons applying for Chapter 61, need to have a forest plan; applications for 61A need to show farming for income, etc.

Commercial/ Industrial rates are generally about the same. The difference is that they tend to have different types of assets. Would windmills be considered industrial? Windmills, not being land, would be taxed as personal property. Wind people would probably not own the land, so they would pay personal property tax; the landowner would continue to pay tax on the land. This is the same as public utilities which are taxed for personal property – the property is not land.

To a question about farm animals, it was learned that farm animals are no longer taxed. Previously they were taxed as personal property. Land that is just open space is taxed higher than that in chapter land (61, 61A, 61B), but less than residential land.

A motion was made by Norm Russell to keep a unified (single) tax rate for fiscal year 2011; it was seconded and unanimously approved.

The hearing adjourned at 7:23 PM.
Respectfully submitted,

Priscilla Phelps

SELECT BOARD Meeting – December 15, 2010

The regular Select Board open meeting was called to order at 7:25 PM.

Present: Select Board members – Dave DeHerdt, Doug Field, Norm Russell
Assistant Administrator – Mary Fitz-Gibbon

Minutes of the December 7th open meeting were approved.

Possible Sewer Commissioner – none present

Cultural Council member - will attend the January 6th meeting

Highway Truck Borrowing Field said Poissant presented him with his equipment needs for the next ten years. With that in mind he (Poissant) would like to see the truck financed for not more than three years.

Financing information presented:

5 years - \$145,000 @ 3.75% = \$18,575 interest = total cost \$163,575 (.14/1,000 on tax rate)
3 years - \$145,000 @ 2.50 % = \$9,666 interest = total cost \$154,666 (.23/1,000 on tax rate)
2 years - \$145,000 @ 1.7% = \$3,697.50 interest = total cost \$ 148,697 (.33/1,000 on tax rate)
1 year - \$145,000 @ 1.14% = \$1,653 interest = total cost \$146,653 (.66/1,000 on tax rate)

After discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and voted to finance the truck for three years at a Fixed 2.50% interest rate.

FRCOG A letter from Linda Dunlavy answering the questions raised during her recent meeting with the Board.

- 1) Emergency communication coverage – spotty coverage in Ashfield - Hope to co-locate on the communication tower in Plainfield. The best solution for Ashfield would be construction of strategically located towers within the town, which the Town has not been willing to consider.

Field refuted this saying for years the Town had been screaming for towers and the response had always been that there was no money available.

- 2) Cooperative Inspection costs - The FRCOG recognizes the situation and continues to monitor the situation carefully.
- 3) Public Building inspections – The definition of public – Mass law states that inspections are required for certain types of buildings open to the public to assure public safety. The issue of charging for the inspections will be brought before the FCCIP at its next meeting. The Town can wave permitting fees, but in doing so increases the net cost for the program to the Town.
- 4) Cooperative Bidding – FY'09 fuel bid - Ashfield oversubscribed its fuel needs. Contracts were signed at the height of the fuel cost. All of the fuel companies did offer some reduction of fuel costs as well as buyout options. Most Towns chose to stay with their contracts. Ultimately, the Town of Ashfield negotiated a storage fee with Sandri for the surplus amount ordered.
- 5) Green Communities - Towns can receive Green Community grants once they apply to participate in the program.
- 6) Wind turbine - RT 116 issue - Use of RT 116 was an alternate route. Field said when the wind tower came for Charlemont it came up RT 9 and across RT 112.

- 7) Scenic bylaw - The bylaw is used to permanently protect the land. The FLT works with private landowners to do this. In places where this is not possible it is necessary to work with the state.
- 8) Fall Festival Food Inspections - Food inspections did not occur until Saturday morning, as the temporary booths were not ready for inspections until that time.
- 9) Regional Preparedness - The Town did not have the password to access information and was concerned about the short timeline for participation in programs. A letter was sent on 10/28 providing information and the Password. The deadline for the submission discussed was 11/21, not 10/21.

Application for use of Town Hall:

Wayne Gardner presented an application from Elmer's for use of Town Hall for a concert on January 15th. Use of the building would be from noon to 11:pm. There will be an admission fee, food will be available, and no alcoholic beverages will be served. There is a request to use the lift to transport sound equipment, which the Town Hall Steward agreed to be on hand to supervise. This use is generally forbidden; the lift intended for accessibility use frequently fails. Gardner said the building committee has discussed this request; it wants to reevaluate possible use for specific purposes.

A motion was made, seconded, and voted (2 in favor, 1 abstention) to approve the request.

Town Hall – Burner/ boiler & issues: Present: Wayne Gardner

The committee has been discussing ways to improve heating. He has spent the past two days in the crawl space insulating pipes. Cleaning of the boilers is going to be done on the 21st at a cost of \$200.00. Glen White will provide the service. (Whiting fuel is under contract to do the annual cleaning.) Whiting will handle emergency situations. Gardner said the boiler room at the back of the building is way too hot. The plan is to mount a unit to blow the hot air down into the crawl space. He feels this should help the boiler to run more efficiently.

Town Hall Hours: Effective January 4, 2010

Monday & Tuesday 9:am to 4:pm, Wednesday 9:am to 11 am, Thursdays 1:pm – 5:pm. Closed on Friday.

Russell thanked the staff for coming up with the new schedule. He said there is one catch. The staff would like a cat. There was some concern that there could be a problem with people who have allergies. The Board will take the request under advisement.

Holidays: It has been brought to the Board's attention that there 13 holidays, according to the contract of the Town with its employees. The Board having not seen a contract, requested that someone show them a copy.

[The personnel Policy includes the following paid holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, Patriot's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and the day before or after Christmas.]

A motion was made to approve thirteen paid holidays for the calendar year 2011. It was seconded and unanimously voted.

WiredWest: The Board reviewed a survey and provided information for completion of some items. The town has a list of utility poles. There are no fire alarms on utility poles. The town may own some utilities poles. When electrical power was first available in Ashfield, the town owned some poles ; research would need to be conducted to see if this continues to be the case. The town has one Town designated scenic road, thought by persons present to be Smith Road. Ms. Fitz-Gibbon will forward what is known to the WiredWest group.

Solar Panel lighting – Russell said he recently encountered a person who uses a solar powered light to light his flag pole. Field reported he has seen the main street of a town in NY lit with solar powered lights. He said they were on shorter poles, providing light where it was needed. DeHerdt said a year ago some information about solar panel lighting had come to the Board.

Senior Center – Field reported that Colrain Council on Aging members have a problem with the senior center in Shelburne Falls. It was a long way to travel. He said he understood there is a movement in that town to remodel an old church for a senior center [the Brick Meeting House] and withdraw from the Shelburne Senior Center. It is the town's prerogative to do this. Field said his concern was that withdrawal of the town would increase the cost to Ashfield. Fitz-Gibbon said Ashfield's representative had been inquiring about the letter. She will put him on a future agenda to talk about Colrain's decision.

Safe-grant - The Fire Department has received a grant to be used for fire education. The grant can only be used to create awareness for students and elderly. Field said the department has been receiving the grant for about 10 years. He went on to describe some of the programs that have been conducted.

Invitation to join Timothy Murray for the administering of oath of office to the new sheriff, Christopher J Donovan at Superior Court on January 5th.

The next meeting will be Thursday, January 6, 2011.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Priscilla Phelps

