

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES – JANUARY 11, 2010**

7:00 p.m. - Selectmen's Meeting Room, 63 Main Street, Northborough, MA

MEMBERS PRESENT: Fran Bakstran, Chairman
Dawn Rand, Vice Chairman
Leslie Rutan, Clerk
Jeff Amberson
William Pantazis

*Pledge of Allegiance

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – DECEMBER 21, 2009 REGULAR MEETING

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to approve the Minutes of the December 21, 2009 Regular Meeting as presented; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion. Vote 4-0-1 (Selectman Pantazis was absent from the meeting and therefore abstained).

7:00 p.m. PUBLIC HEARING WITH BOARD OF ASSESSORS

For the purpose of discussing the valuation of each class of property; the minimum residential factor and the allocation of the tax burden among the four classes of real property: residential, open space, commercial and industrial, and of personal property.

Mr. Coderre provided a brief introduction and informed the Board that the third quarter tax bills will be mailed out by January 26, 2010 and will be due on February 26, 2010.

Principal Assessor Diane O'Connor and Board of Assessors Member Arthur Holmes presented information and options for the Board of Selectmen to determine whether there shall be a single or split tax rate for the various classes of property for FY2010.

Ms. O'Connor informed the Board that if they decide to continue with a single tax rate, the FY2010 tax rate would increase from \$13.76 to \$14.38. The average single family tax bill would increase 3.8% from \$5,774 in FY2009 to \$5,992 in FY2010 (excluding the Community Preservation Act surcharge).

The Board of Assessors unanimously recommended that the Board of Selectmen consider continuing the single tax rate. A major factor in the Board's recommendation is the amount of the Town's value that is derived from the commercial, industrial and personal property (CIP) classes. Of the Town's 6,268 taxable accounts, commercial and industrial properties represent 5.2% of the taxable parcels in Northborough, but account for 21.2% of the total tax revenue, indicating that they are paying their fair share of taxes under a single tax rate.

PUBLIC HEARING CONT. . .

Mark Donahue was present as Chairman of the Industrial Development Commission and as a member of the Board of Directors for the Corridor Nine Area Chamber of Commerce. He informed the Board that both the Industrial Development Commission and the Chamber of Commerce strongly support the continuation of a single tax classification.

William Fuller of 48 Juniper Brook Road was present in the audience and disagreed with the valuation figures, claiming that they are too high.

Following several questions and comments, members of the Board expressed their support of the continuation of a single tax classification.

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to continue the Public Hearing with the Board of Assessors for the purpose of discussing the valuation of each class of property; the minimum residential factor and the allocation of the tax burden among the four classes of real property: residential; open space, commercial and industrial, and of personal property to the January 25, 2010 Regular Board Meeting, and to make the following motions contingent on the State's Preliminary Certification of Values; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to maintain a uniform tax rate for all classes of property at a factor of one; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to oppose the implementation of a residential exemption; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to oppose the implementation of a small commercial exemption; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

7:45 p.m. - PUBLIC HEARING – TREE REMOVAL

Consideration of the removal of a tree located directly across the street from 121 Ball Street pursuant to MGL, Chapter 87, Section 4.

DPW Director Kara Buzanoski advised the Board that the proposed removal of a tree located directly across the street from 121 Ball Street was opposed at a Tree Removal Hearing held on November 10, 2009. Ms. Buzanoski stated that although the tree is not in decline, it is intruding into the right of way, narrowing the traveled way and posing both a safety issue and a hindrance to plowing.

Maurice Tougas spoke from the audience and indicated that he owns property from 114-246 Ball Street, which includes the property where the tree stands. He informed the Board that he has planted 12,000 new trees on his property over the years. His concern is

PUBLIC HEARING CONT. . .

that this tree significantly blocks the visibility for himself, his family and his customers when entering or leaving his business. He spoke of his plans to add more parking at this location. He expressed his concern with traffic safety as his business continues to grow.

Cynthia Fawcett at 121 Ball Street stated that she lives directly across the street from where the tree stands. She spoke against the removal of a healthy tree. She does not agree that it creates a traffic hazard and feels that it adds to the character of the scenic road.

Police Chief Mark Leahy and Fire Chief David Durgin spoke in favor of removing the tree due to the fact that it creates substantial traffic safety concerns.

Following some discussion amongst members of the Board, Selectman Rand clarified that the responsibility and associated cost of removing the tree will be that of Maurice Tougas, the landowner.

Chairman Bakstran closed the public hearing.

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to approve the request of the Public Works Director to remove the tree located directly across the street from 121 Ball Street; Selectman Amberson seconded the motion. Vote 3-2-0 (Chairman Bakstran and Selectman Pantazis opposed).

REPORTSWilliam Pantazis

- Reminded the public to vote next Tuesday.
- Thanked the DPW Department for doing a great job plowing this season.

Jeff Amberson

- Encouraged everyone to get out and vote next Tuesday.

Leslie Rutan, Clerk

- Announced that the Board of Selectmen is accepting applications for the last available All Alcoholic Restaurant License.
- Requested an update on JJ's Sports Bar & Grille. Chief Leahy indicated that the Police Department has not been informed of any complaints or recent violations.
- Requested an update on the sewer connection plans for the Senior Center. Mr. Coderre indicated that the sewer connection is currently under construction and is expected to be completed by the end of January.
- Noted that the CMRPC is in the process of compiling the results of the recent Open Space survey. Town Planner Kathy Joubert was present in the audience and indicated that she would be happy to provide an update when the results are complete in March or April.
- Thanked Health Agent Jamie Terry on her efforts with the recent H1N1 clinics.

Dawn Rand, Vice Chairman

- Noted that the Senior Center project should be completed by the end of January. It is anticipated that the Grand Opening will be held in the Spring.
- Noted that the reason for the double poles along Church Street is due to a project that was undertaken by National Grid and Verizon to make the poles taller in order to accommodate fiber optic cables that will be extended to the Church Street Village condominium project currently under construction. Thanked Mr. Coderre and Town Engineer Fred Litchfield for obtaining this information.

Fran Bakstran, Chairman

- Noted that the Building Inspector will be sending out letters to business owners updating them on the current zoning bylaw regulation for signs in an attempt to address the excess number of signs throughout Town.
- Noted that the Solid Waste Advisory Committee continues to meet. The committee plans to appear before the Board of Selectmen at their February 8th meeting to make recommendations for the solid waste program. Added that the committee will hold a public meeting at the Library on January 14th at 7:00 pm. Residents are encouraged to attend this meeting and/or participate in a community poll that can be found on the following website: www.northboronews.org.

John Coderre, Town Administrator

- Announced that the Town Clerk's Office will be open until 5:00 pm on January 15th, which is the deadline to apply for an absentee ballot for the January 19th election.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Cultural Council Chairman Terry Crean announced that the Cultural Council is seeking volunteers.

OVERVIEW - FY11-16 PRELIMINARY CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Coderre made a brief presentation on the preliminary draft of the FY11-16 Capital Improvement Program. He highlighted some of the proposed projects and expenditures that will be considered for both the General Government and the School Department for FY2011.

Mr. Coderre noted that the Financial Planning Committee will begin weekly meetings not only to review the FY2011 requests, but to also review the entire six-year Capital Improvement Program as a whole. He cautioned that these reviews may defer some capital investments, particularly in equipment. Only those projects that absolutely require immediate funding will be brought forward. He added that when the economy turns around, the Town will focus on building free cash back to its previous levels, at which time the goal will be to pay for small equipment acquisitions through available funds rather than through bonding notes.

DISCUSSION ON POLICE COMMUNICATIONS TOWER REPLACEMENT

Mr. Coderre informed the Board that one of the projects included in the Town's Capital Plan is the replacement of the public safety communications tower located behind the Police Station at 211 Main Street. One alternative that represents the potential for cost savings is to pursue private construction of a tower (most likely by a wireless communications provider) at this location in exchange for a co-location of Town equipment on the tower.

Mr. Coderre explained that in order to accomplish this, the Town would need to develop specifications and issue an RFP. In the past year, the Town has been approached by several wireless communications providers who have expressed an interest in working with the Town to replace the existing tower, including one provider who is considering the location of a cell tower at 265 Main Street.

As an abutter to the property, Selectman Pantazis recused himself as a member of the Board, adding that he will abstain from any discussion and/or vote taken on this issue this evening.

Following a brief discussion, members of the Board agreed to move forward with an RFP.

Selectman Amberson moved the Board vote to have the Town Administrator pursue the issuance of a Cell Tower RFP for the Police Station site located at 211 Main Street; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion. Vote 4-0-1 (Selectman Pantazis abstained).

APPROVAL/EXECUTION OF CEMETERY DEEDS A828 & A829

Selectman Pantazis moved the Board vote to approve and execute Cemetery Deeds A828 & A829; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

Selectman Amberson moved the Board vote to adjourn; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Wackell
Executive Assistant to the
Board of Selectmen