

SENIOR TAX RELIEF COMMITTEE
February 12, 2013
Large Hearing Room

Minutes prepared by: Julie Secord

Committee Members in Attendance:

Rebecca MacGregor, Pauline DiCesare, Steve Colella, Bill Zellen, Pat Nelson

Committee Members Absent:

Kara Harvey, Ann Gilbert, Lillian Mills

Also in attendance:

State Rep. Thomas Conroy

Ellen Brideau, Director of Assessing

Julie Secord, COA Director

Public Attending:

Donald Bustin

Jane Mansfield

The committee asked Ellen Brideau, Director of Assessing to provide an overview of the state law that allows municipalities to implement the Town match as long as any additional exemption shall not result in the taxpayer paying less than the property taxes paid in the previous fiscal year. Ellen cited Section 4, Chapter 73 of the Acts of 1986. With the reduced tax rate for FY2013 and property values remaining stable, Ellen indicated that the greater percentage of exemption applications submitted could not benefit by the Town match as their tax bill would have been less than the year prior.

The Committee asked State Rep. Thomas Conroy for his input and if it was possible to amend the state law. Members commented that the law had become an unintended negative consequence of a well-meaning initiative. Those individuals who were in need of tax relief were penalized and denied the Town Match while residents with high value assessments greatly benefitted due to the reduced tax rate. Representative Conroy expressed concern about attempting to change this law on the state level. His recommendation was to try and resolve it on the local level through a Home Rule Petition. He suggested that the Council On Aging Board might consider submitting an article for the warrant at the next Town Meeting with support from the Senior Tax Relief Committee. Rep. Conroy commented that lowered property tax rates coupled with stable property values might not be a concern throughout the Commonwealth and could present an obstacle for implementing change on the state level.

Rep. Conroy was also asked to provide an overview of the Sudbury senior residential tax exemption bill. The Sudbury bill limits property taxes to not exceed more than 10% of the senior's income. There is a cap on the percentage (.5%) of the total tax levy that can be put aside. There was also an observation that Sudbury's initiative could be a greater

benefit to a senior with a high assessment and lower income than Wayland's Town Match.

Rep. Conroy was also asked for his input on increasing the capped income amount for 41C eligibility. The income levels are extremely low. Rep. Conroy indicated that he would see if an inflation and asset limit review could be done.

The minutes of the Feb. 12, 2013 were reviewed and amended. On a motion by Steve Colella and a second by Bill Zellen, the minutes of the Feb. 12, 2013 meeting were accepted unanimously as amended.

The committee was asked if changing to an evening schedule was possible for the Senior Tax Relief Meetings as the noon time meeting was a conflict for some. The Committee agreed to schedule their next meeting on Wednesday, April 3, 2013 at 7pm.

The meeting adjourned at 1pm.