

**Waterboro Board of Selectmen
December 30, 2014 Workshop Meeting Minutes**

PRESENT: Chairman Woodsome, Selectmen Abbott, Girard, Gale and Littlefield, Town Administrator Gary Lamb, Town Assessor Bob Konczal, Alex Konczal, and IT Manager David Lowe

Chairman Woodsome opened the workshop to review the Town Assessor Status Report as follows:

TOWN ASSESSOR STATUS REPORT (As of 12/30/14)

Intro: Town Assessors are charged by law with valuing property based on accurate data, and establishing an annual tax rate. We do this with a variety of tools, primarily the gathering, storage, analysis, and publication of data. This report covers our evaluation of the current status of Waterboro's assessing office operations and a plan that the Assessors suggest to improve them.

Office Operations Status

Having been here since the fall, we have developed some sense of the status of assessing in the town:

Overvaluation

- Taxpayers have brought in a continuous stream of legitimate inquiries on overvaluation. At least a majority of the backlog is cleaned up.
- We will do more analysis after we get ahead of handling taxpayer complaints and inquiries.

Data integrity/Record Keeping

- Many inquiries concern factual errors: incorrect mapping, wrong data on house, wrong owner, etc.
- The paper docs are fairly disorganized, with many large piles of an unclear nature. There are also a lot of unnecessary copies of outdated information.
- On the software side, several software modules are missing (e.g. personal property detail, online property database, or building sketch modules) or never implemented (photo module). As a result, much information is missing or misplaced.
- Most importantly, it appears that a town-wide inspection of properties is needed.

Taxpayer Confidence

- As one can imagine, taxpayers are not only unhappy with high taxes but with the overvaluation issue. They fully expect the town to do something about overvaluation.
- On the other hand, taxpayers now feel like someone is listening to them and that something will happen.
- We are gaining ground in imposing order on information and cleaning up some long-standing issues for taxpayers. In addition, we are preventing things from getting worse organizationally.

Staffing

Frankly, we did not fully gauge the amount of cleanup and ongoing work required. The town has grown and staffing has not grown with it. I was told by some at the outset that this required much more time than was budgeted, and now I believe it...

Waterboro has a population of about 8,000. The 2103 MMA Salary Survey lists 16 towns with a population between 10,000 and 5,000. The average # of hours worked by the assessor for these towns is 38.66.

I advise that the board think about authorizing four days a week (32 hours) in the next budget. This is less than the average, however it is a big budget jump and I estimate that Waterboro has a bit less commercial property than the average town on that list.

It also should be noted that Tammy Bellman (administrative assistant) is very skilled, but she is spread pretty thin now that she has E911 responsibilities in addition to Code Enforcement/Planning/Assessing staffing, plus ZBA and Planning board staffing!

Three Part Plan:

Transition Phase-current year

We think that this will take the remainder of this current year.

- Complete current tax commitment -this has largely been completed
- Address backlog of complaints -this is still ongoing
- Evaluate Data/Software/Office processes -currently in process
- Re-verify fieldwork done in the past two years (revisiting building permits) this is underway
- Clean up and move office to be closer to other land use staff to be completed in January
- Look at options for a comprehensive mapping solution

Town-wide Devaluation/Update software-next year

For the coming year we want to ...

- Increase budgeted hours
- Analyze sales to determine the amount of overvaluation
- Implement a town-wide reduction of values to get us in the ballpark of market value
- Install software modules to the current management package that will increase accuracy, efficiency and taxpayer confidence
- Install online property data module

Town-wide Market Update-following 2 years

Long-term, we'd like to revise valuations by property type...

- Verify property data town-wide via the online module, a mailer to taxpayers, and field validation
- Make market updates of valuations
- Maintain ongoing best practices

Chairman Woodsome closed the workshop at 7:17 pm.

APPROVED: Date: _____
