

**CHARLEMONT BOARD OF ASSESSORS
JANUARY 9, 2017 MEETING MINUTES**

Members Present:

Karen LaClair, Chair, Jacqueline Cashin, Anthony Ostroski.

Others Present:

Stephanie Gelfan,
Melody Whelden
Keith & Rachel Gammell

Call to Order

Chair Karen LaClair called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

1: Board Discussion

The Board reviewed materials and discussed their three appointments for the evening. It was noted that one of the appointments was a taxpayer who was very disgruntled with his assessment.

2: Approval of Minutes

The Board reviewed the minutes from their 12/21/16 meeting. On a motion by LaClair and seconded by Ostroski, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes as written.

#3: 7:15 Appointment; Stephanie Gelfan

Ms. Gelfan attended the meeting to discuss her Chapter 61 application, which was not filed on time. She explained that she was very new to the Chapter 61 program and feels very foolish for having not gotten her application in, but explained that when she spoke with the Service Forester at DCR, they had indicated that she was all set. Gelfan apologized and appealed to the Board to accept her application, since the management plan had been all completed. Cashin, who also has property in Chapter 61, gave Gelfan a brief overview of the Chapter 61 program. In light of the circumstances, the Board felt they could make a concession this time. On a motion by LaClair and seconded by Cashin, the Board voted unanimously to accept Stephanie Gelfan's Chapter 61 application. Gelfan was very relieved and thanked the Board.

#4: 7:30 Appointment; Melody Whelden

Ms. Whelden attended the meeting to discuss some difficulties she has been having. Whelden first explained that her property gets water runoff from the hill behind her house, causing her property and basement to get very wet seasonally. She noted that previously, the Conservation Commission told her she couldn't do anything on her property because it is in a wetland. She also noted that there is no heat on the 3rd floor of her house and filed an abatement application based on these issues. Whelden also explained that she has been forced to close her bed and breakfast business when the electric company switched to her a commercial rate, which substantially increased her bill. She has also been fighting with the Sewer Commission, charging her for two units, although her property is a single family. Whelden noted that it was getting difficult for her to afford the taxes on her house, as medical issues prevented her from working. The Board reviewed the financial hardship exemption they offer and asked Whelden to bring in the required documentation to see if she qualifies. Whelden agreed and thanked the Board.

#5: 8:00 appointment; Keith & Rachel Gammell

The Gammell's attended the meeting to discuss the increase in their property value. The Board first explained that property values rose throughout town as part of their revaluation. It was also discussed that when Keith refused an inspection of his property last year, Hayden reviewed the features of his property over the phone with him. At that time, a misunderstanding arose as to part of the garage being converted to living space, when only half of it had been. Cashin then reviewed the property card with the Gammell's to ensure everything else was correct on their property. The Board gave the Gammell's a bulletin from the Division of Local Services, explaining the property inspection program requirements of Assessors.

Rachel noted that she had sent an abatement application in and the Board agreed to meet next week to act on the application once received. Hayden agreed to let Rachel know what the abated amount would be and the Gammell's thanked the Board.

#6: Board Action/Signatures

The Board reviewed and signed the following documents:

1. Assessor's Notice regarding forms listing personal property being due by March 1, 2017
2. Monthly abatements of personal property for October-December, 2016
3. Letter to Jean Crowningshield, requesting a copy of the death certificate for removing deceased husband's name from her tax bill
4. Invoice from CAI Technologies, for tax map maintenance.

#7: Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Request

The Board reviewed their Fiscal Year 2018 budget request. Hayden submitted a proposed request, noting that she had reviewed their past and current expenditures, and felt that most could be either reduced or level-funded. She noted that two accounts would need to be increased; Assessor's Mapping, due to CAI increasing their fees and Assessor's Licenses and Dues, as the Board had voted for all members and their Secretary to be paid members of the MAAO. After review and discussion, on a motion by LaClair and seconded by Ostroski, the Board voted unanimously to accept the recommended budget, as submitted by their Secretary.

#8: Review Mail/Correspondence

The Board reviewed the following correspondence:

1. Email from Cathy Marques, MassIT, regarding CAMA site visits. Hayden explained that as part of the conversion to Tyler Technologies, Cathy would be visiting towns to assess the facilities and meet the staff. She will be visiting Charlemont on January 19th.
2. CAMA Conversion Newsletter, noting the conversion process.
3. Email from MassGIS, regarding parcel enhancement work. Hayden noted that the enhancements are needed in order to be in compliance with Level 3 of the MassGIS Digital Parcel Standard, and will be funded by MassGIS.

#9: Discussion

Cashin asked what the status of their Owner Unknown parcels was and if they would be looking into using Valley Title to research any more of these. Hayden replied that these all qualified under the Land of Low Value procedure, and as part of the Municipal Modernization Act, the process for assessing parcels as Owner Unknown and the Land of Low Value process has been simplified. She will be working on this with the Tax Collector for the taking of these parcels.

Adjournment and Enter Executive Session

At 8:52 p.m. on a motion by LaClair and seconded by Ostroski, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn their regular meeting and enter into Executive Session, pursuant to General Laws Chapter 59, Section 60, in order to deliberate on pending abatement and/or exemption applications, with the intent to not return to open meeting afterwards.

Roll Call:

Voting yes: LaClair, Cashin, Ostroski

Voting no: None

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carlene Hayden;
Assessor's Secretary

Documents Viewed in Meeting of January 9, 2017*

1. Minutes from Assessor's meeting of 12/21/16
2. Gelfan Fiscal Year 2018 Chapter 61 application & forest management plan
3. Whelden Property record card and tax bill
4. Assessor's policy on Clause 18 financial hardship exemption
5. Gammell property record card
6. Technical Assistance bulletin from Division of Local Services regarding property inspection programs
7. Assessor's Notice regarding forms listing personal property being due by March 1, 2017
8. Monthly abatements of personal property for October-December, 2016
9. Letter to Jean Crowningshield regarding removing deceased husband's name from tax bill, 1/9/17
10. Invoice from CAI Technologies, 1/1/17
11. Fiscal Year 2018 budget request letter and proposed FY18 Assessor's budget
12. Email from Cathy Marques, MassIT, regarding CAMA site visits, 12/29/16
13. CAMA Conversion Newsletter, noting the conversion process, 12/30/16
14. Email from MassGIS, regarding parcel enhancement work, 1/9/17
15. FY 17 Owner Unknown tax bills

***Documents are stored in their respective files in the Assessor's office.**