

CHARLEMONT BOARD OF ASSESSORS
JANUARY 6, 2025 MEETING MINUTES
CHARLEMONT ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

Members Present/ Participating:

Jacqueline Cashin: Chair, Anthony Ostroski, Karen Rau

Others Present:

George & Laura Hicks

Call to Order

Chair Cashin called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

#1: 6:30 Appointment; George & Laura Hicks

The Hicks' attended the meeting to discuss possible tax relief for significant damage to their property at 191 Legate Hill Road. Laura explained that on November 1st their oil tank leaked spilling 100-200 gallons of fuel oil onto their basement floor. Because it seeped into the soil and groundwater below, the Department of Environmental Protection, Fire Marshall and their insurance company were involved; they have contracted with an environmental consultant to assist them with the remediation efforts and the mitigation and cleanup are extensive. The Hicks' explained that the building needs to be jacked up, the slab taken out, the contaminated soil removed, and ongoing testing required. They are looking for a temporary reduction in their value until the property is restored, as the residence has been uninhabitable. The Board explained that they didn't believe this situation would qualify for an abatement, but Hayden said she believed that they could put an influence on the property, reducing the value by a percentage while the property is undergoing the cleanup. The Board felt this was appropriate but would need to contact their valuation consultant to confirm and to have him determine the percentage, if appropriate. The Hick's provided a copy of the Release Notification and Notice of Responsibility from the DEP and the Scope of Services letter from the consultant, which the Board will forward to their consultant. George and Laura thanked the Board for their time and explained that they are cautioning everyone with fuel oil tanks to have a containment process in place; something under the tanks because oil leaches into the concrete; they had just a pinhole leak in theirs that wasn't visible from the outside. They also noted that insurance companies in Massachusetts are required to offer an oil spill remediation rider and suggested adding this to your insurance policy if you have oil tanks and ensuring that oil tanks are double walled. The Board thanked George and Laura for the advice and their time.

#2: 7:00 Appointment; Town Clerk Thorne Palmer

Town Clerk Palmer attended to notarize the Board's signatures on one Chapter 61 classification land lien. This is an amended lien to reflect an ownership change.

- a. Edith Meeks & Peter Coston.

The Board thanked Palmer for his time in notarizing their signatures.

#3: Approval of Minutes

The Board reviewed the minutes from their 11/25/2024 meeting. On a motion by Cashin and seconded by Rau, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes, as written.

#2: Board Approval/Signatures

On a motion by Cashin and seconded by Ostroski, the Board voted unanimously to approve the following:

1. Invoice from Franklin County Registry of Deeds for plan copies
2. Invoice from CAI Technologies for quarterly tax map maintenance
3. Warrant to Collector for Fiscal Year 2025 property tax commitments and sewer liens
4. Notice of Commitment to Accounting Officer for Fiscal Year 2025 property tax commitments and sewer liens

5. Assessor's Statement of accurate assessment for property tax commitment
6. Assessor's Notice regarding personal property forms of list
7. Warrant to Collector and Notice of Commitment for 2024 Motor Vehicle Excise commitment #6
8. Monthly list of abatements/exemptions of real, personal property and motor vehicle excise tax for November & December, 2024.

#3: Board Discussion and Vote

1. Property inspection of 2143 Route 2. Cashin inspected the property and reviewed her findings, noting that some outbuildings had been removed, and a large greenhouse has been added. She noted there is an outside wood boiler and there are 1 and $\frac{3}{4}$ baths. Hayden will enter the changes and the value will be adjusted accordingly.
2. Request for inspection of 14 Thunder Lane. The owner requested January 11th after 12:30, so the Board agreed to inspect it at 1:00. Hayden will confirm with the owner. After reviewing the property card, Rau discovered that the picture for the second card, the residence over garage is incorrect and actually belongs to on a neighboring property. The Board will make sure that everything is accurate on both residential buildings and get a picture of the second building.
3. Rau had said she wasn't receiving text reminders on the number Hayden was using for her, so Hayden clarified which phone number Rau wanted her use and deleted the other one to avoid confusion. Rau confirmed that she is getting her emails as well.
4. Rau would like the Board to sign the Tax Rate Recap right after the tax rate hearing from now on, to ensure that all their signatures get on it. The other members prefer to sign the recap separately, as they have their logins saved on their personal devices, so Rau will sign the recap in the office right after the tax rate hearing and the others will sign from home.
5. Assessor's FY 2026 budget request. Hayden submitted a proposed budget request based on their past expenditures, noting that we need to increase postage and advertising, as this is a certification year, and that CAI is increasing their map maintenance fee. After reviewing the proposed budget, on a motion by Cashin and seconded by Ostroski, the Board voted unanimously to approve the budget request, as proposed.
6. 38D Request penalty language. Great River Hydro provided financial documents only to the Assessor's consultant last year because they wouldn't sign the confidentiality agreement. The DLS attorney had advised Hayden that the Assessors can exercise a penalty fee, but only if the Board informs the owner that failure to submit the requested information will result in the penalty, so Hayden presented a 38D request cover letter to the Board, with the penalty language added. She explained that all their other 38D requests contained the standard penalty language, so it made sense to add it to the GRH request as well. She had informed Jocelyne Barrett at GRH last year that the Board may opt to levy the penalty in the future and she had acknowledged it. The Board agreed with assessing the penalty and on a motion by Cashin and seconded by Ostroski, voted unanimously to add the language about the penalty fee to the GRH 38D cover letter.
7. The Board reviewed the deeds for November and December, 2024.

Adjournment

At 8:09 p.m. on a motion by Cashin and seconded by Ostroski, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn their meeting and enter into Executive Session for purpose #7; to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements; to deliberate on pending abatement and/or exemption applications, which pursuant to G.L. Chapter 59, Section 60 are not open to public inspection, to sign the minutes from their last executive session meeting, and to not reconvene in open session afterwards. Roll Call vote: Cashin-Yes, Ostroski-Yes, Rau-Yes.

Tony will be traveling over the next couple of months so it was decided that the next meetings will be on February 10th, March 10th and April 14th, 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carlene Hayden,
Assessor's Clerk

Documents Viewed in Meeting of 1/6/2025*

1. Agenda for meeting of 1/6/2025
2. Release Notification and Notice of Responsibility from DEP, 11/6/2024
3. Hoosac Environmental Scope of Services letter, 11/4/2024
4. Chapter 61 Amended Classified Forest, Agricultural/Horticultural, Recreational Land Tax Lien for Eith Meeks and Peter Coston.
5. Minutes from 11/25/2024
6. Invoice from Franklin County Registry of Deeds, 1/2/2025
7. Invoice from CAI Technologies, 1/1/2025
8. Warrant to Collector for Fiscal Year 2025 property tax commitments and sewer liens
9. Notice of Commitment to Accounting Officer for Fiscal Year 2025 property tax commitments and sewer liens
10. Assessor's Statement of accurate assessment
11. Assessor's Notice regarding personal property forms of list
12. Warrant to Collector and Notice of Commitment for 2024 Motor Vehicle Excise commitment #6
13. Monthly list of abatements/exemptions for November & December, 2024
14. Property record card for 2143 Route 2
15. Property record card for 14 Thunder Lane
16. Assessor's Fiscal Year 2026 budget request
17. Draft 38D request cover letter to Great River Hydro

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