

**CHARLEMONT BOARD OF ASSESSORS
DECEMBER 4, 2017 MEETING MINUTES**

Members Present:

Anthony Ostroski; Chair, Jacqueline Cashin, Karen Rau

Call to Order

Chair Ostroski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

#1: Board Discussion for Tax Rate Classification Hearing

Secretary Hayden presented tax class options sheets to the Board showing the effect on the tax rate between a single and a split tax rate and levying to the limit or below.

1. Single vs. split tax rate: After comparing the resulting tax rate in splitting between residential and commercial, industrial, personal property (CIP), the Board noted that the decrease in the tax rate to the residential was minimal while the increase to the CIP was substantial. The Board agreed that the shift would be detrimental to the smaller commercial businesses in town and therefore, on a motion by Cashin and seconded by Ostroski, voted unanimously to recommend a single tax rate.
2. Levying to the limit vs. levying below the limit. The Board reviewed the effect to the tax rate in levying to their levy limit, utilizing all excess levy capacity and noted that first, the mechanism for levying up to their limit was to adjust their FY 2018 estimated receipts down on page 3 of the Tax Rate Recap. It was discussed that the problem with this is it skews their numbers for future projections, as past year's actual and estimated receipts are used when deciding on the projections each year. Additionally, increases or decreases from previous years requires documented justification to the DOR. Second, this would increase the tax rate by \$1.21 over levying below the limit. Therefore, on a motion by Ostroski and seconded by Cashin, the Board voted unanimously to recommend levying below their levy limit.

#2: Board Action/Signatures

The Board reviewed and approved/signed the following documents (Ostroski motioned, Cashin seconded):

1. Minutes from the meetings of 9/11/6/2017
2. Warrant to Collector for 2017 motor vehicle excise Commitment #6 & 6A
3. Monthly motor vehicle abatements for November, 2017

The Board reviewed and signed the following Gateway tax reports (Ostroski motioned, Rau seconded):

4. LA-5 Options report
5. LA-4 Assessment Classification report
6. LA-13 Tax Base Levy Growth report
7. Levy Limit report

Adjourn to Join Select Board for Tax Rate Classification Hearing

At 7:14 p.m. on a motion by Ostroski and seconded by Cashin, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn their meeting and join the Select Board for the Tax Rate Classification Hearing, and will return to their regular meeting afterwards.

The Board of Assessors met with the Select Board for the tax rate classification hearing at 7:15 p.m.

1. The Board distributed worksheets, showing the effects of both a single and a split tax rate and levying to the limit vs. levying below the limit. It was explained that after reviewing the effect of a tax rate shift, the Assessors felt the benefit to the residential property did not outweigh the negative impact to commercial, industrial and personal properties, and Charlemont's small commercial tax base does not substantiate a split tax rate. Therefore, the Board of Assessors stated that they were again recommending a single tax rate this year.

2. The Assessors then explained to the Select Board that they had discussed levying up to their levy limit and had decided against it, citing their concerns with skewing the projections in order to do this. Also, they noted that levying to their levy limit would increase the tax rate by \$1.21 over last year's, and that with the tax rate increasingly rising and many folks struggling to pay their taxes, they were not in favor of an additional increase to the tax rate and recommended levying below their limit. The Select Board agreed with both recommendations by the Board of Assessors and voted unanimously in accordance with their recommendations.

The required Select Board and Town Clerk signatures were collected for the LA-5 Options report.

Return to Board of Assessors Meeting

At 7:40 p.m. Chair Ostroski called the meeting to order.

#3: Review Correspondence

1. The Board reviewed the deeds for November, 2017.
2. The Board reviewed the building construction for October and November, 2017.

Adjournment and Enter Executive Session

At 7:43 p.m. on a motion by Ostroski and seconded by Rau, 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 return to open meeting afterwards. **Roll Call Vote:** Voting yes: Ostroski, Cashin, Rau. Motion passed unanimously.

Return to Board of Assessors Open Meeting

At 7:50 p.m., Chair Ostroski again called the meeting to order.

#4: Discussion on Overlay Balance

Hayden noted that when entering the OL-1 form on Gateway, she had asked the Accountant for their overlay account balance. When he gave her a figure of \$907.50, she was concerned as the balances for the last several years were between \$58,000-62,000 and questioned this. An email from the current Accountant stated that the FRCOG (Accountant) had entered a \$-57,129.46 deficit in FY 2015, and that he had no documentation on this. Hayden noted that the balance last year was \$62,000 and that the last debit given to the outgoing FRCOG Accountant was a \$12,000 MCI/Verizon ATB settlement. She also noted that she has provided for all outstanding ATB appeals and that she had again questioned the balance. Because a recent audit of the Town had been completed and was pending the Auditors report, this information was given to them. Tom Scanlon, Auditor sent an email stating they could not explain the deficit either but that their testing showed the FY 2015 overlay balance to have a positive balance of \$4,000. Cashin, being an Accountant herself formerly was concerned with this discrepancy and felt that they needed to investigate this by requesting documentation on the deficit, overlay balances for past years and abatements and exemptions paid out. Ostroski and Rau agreed and it was discussed that the Select Board would need to request documentation from the FRCOG. After discussion, it was decided that Cashin would draft a letter to the Select Board, requesting an investigation into this issue and an appointment with them to discuss and explain their finding. She asked for a copy of the email from the Auditor as well.

Adjournment of Meeting

Business being concluded, at 9:09 p.m., on a motion by Ostroski and seconded by Rau, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn their meeting. The next meeting of the Board will be Monday, January 8th, 2018, due to the New Year's Day holiday.

Documents Viewed in Meeting of December 4, 2017*

1. Tax Classification Options worksheets
2. Minutes from the meetings of 9/11/6/2017
3. Warrant to Collector for 2017 motor vehicle excise Commitment #6 & 6A
4. Monthly motor vehicle abatements for November, 2017

Gateway Tax Rate Reports:

5. LA-5 Options report
6. LA-4 Assessment Classification report
7. LA-13 Tax Base Levy Growth report
8. Levy Limit report
9. OL-1 Report
10. Email from Accountant, Justin Cole, dated 11/6/2017
11. Email and overlay balance analysis from Auditor, Tom Scanlon, dated 11/15/2017

Respectfully Submitted,

Carlene Hayden,
Assessor's Secretary

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