

Carlisle Board of Assessors

Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting date: Friday, February 18, 2022

Town Hall, Nickles Conference Room

66 Westford St.

Carlisle, MA 01741

BOA members in attendance:

- Ken Mostello, Chair
- Teresa Kvietkaukas

Others attending: Principal Assessor, Brian MacDonald

Motioned for approval: Chair Mostello

Second: Ms. Kvietkaukas

Roll call vote: 2-0

Approval date: Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Chair Mostello called the meeting to order at 8:05 am.

Mr. MacDonald began by reiterating his approval of the work done by George, who is now a part-time, temporary town employee.

Per Mr. MacDonald, 177 of the open building permits he's discovered are over \$500,000. He stated he believed Patriot did the least work possible to get the town approved by the DOR last year. He noted that the town is out of compliance on its cyclical assessments as required by the DOR.

Mr. MacDonald stated that he expected there to be some abatement cost to the town from the 508 appeals on personal property that the Commonwealth is currently undergoing with utility companies.

Mr. MacDonald stated that he considers the property grading and condition grading system requiring major adjustment to get assessment values to work properly. Many mediocre properties receive A or A- grades, leaving little room to recognize the properties that are truly superior. Furthermore, the condition grading on new properties he states should be average so that depreciation doesn't occur too rapidly. He says that high grades on condition shouldn't be the norm on new construction.

He went on to say that he was finding “across the board inconsistencies” on the work performed by his predecessor.

Mr. MacDonald proposed sending letters to homeowners notifying them of in-home assessments. Mr. Mostello replied that he liked the idea. Mr. MacDonald went on that many assessments “were out of whack” and would take time to fix.

Mr. MacDonald noted that George would now be working part-time (19 hours per week). He went on to say that he was looking to change the excise tax process to make it easier for residents so that they would not be paying two bills when they bought a car and having to wait for a refund on a car they just traded in.

The discussion moved on to the assistant assessor’s position. Mr. MacDonald handed out a job description he obtained. He said that Patriot quotes \$24/residence to conduct a field assessment. He said the price to do this properly in Carlisle would be more like \$50/residence. Mr. Mostello said the Patriot assessments would be “neighborhood drive-by’s”, not in-home inspections, and you get what you pay for. Mr. MacDonald added that the Patriot quote was suitable for communities like Stoneham, where he came from, because the housing is densely packed, and the homes relatively small. He continued by saying that in Carlisle, there are residents with ¼ mile driveways with secluded homes. You cannot just drive back there unannounced and expect a friendly greeting.

The pay for the assistant assessor was discussed. Mr. MacDonald expected \$60-\$70K. Mr. Mostello said he’d look for \$70-75K for budgetary purposes. Mr. Mostello pressed for details on cost justification. The prior admin assistant was earning \$45K, leaving a \$25K to \$30K increase. \$10K would be covered by bring the interim assessments in house that Patriot was doing. The conversation turned to additional new growth. Mr. MacDonald said that he fully expected a 60% growth in what new growth would otherwise be. That amounted to an additional \$9 million, roughly equivalent to \$150K in additional annual tax revenue. Mr. Mostello said he considered the cost justification a “slam dunk” now.

The final topic discussed was the senior deferred tax program. Mr. Mostello noted that he and Joan Ingersoll, the director for the COA, had collaborated and had worked a set of parameters for the program that they could both live with. That included a 6% interest rate. Mr. Mostello went on to say that state law threw a monkey wrench in the works by restricting several provisions he wanted, particularly an asset cap and a residence assessment cap. He went on to mention that the law provided no means of securing the town’s interest with homeowner’s insurance and that, in case of default, the town’s down could be subordinate to a reverse mortgage. He went on to read a legal opinion sent to him by Donna Brewer, Esq. Mr. Mostello said he was going to present it to the Select Board on Tuesday night. He said he’d present the pros and cons, and ultimately the town boards and town meeting would have to decide how they wanted to proceed. He added that he felt it was good to have this kind of program but had some misgivings that he couldn’t protect the town in the way he wanted.

Mr. MacDonald stated that he thought we may need more money in the overlay account to cover anticipated abatement claims arising from corrective reclassification. Mr. Mostello

mentioned that we already had quite a bit of money in the account and that any payouts would be down the road.

Mr. Mostello asked for a motion for approval on meeting minutes for 02/10/22—all of which had been distributed to the BOA members prior to the meeting for review. Ms. Kvietkauskas so motioned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mostello. The roll call was 2 in favor, none opposed.

Chair Mostello introduced a motion to adjourn at 10:30am. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kvietkauskas and carried 2-0.