

Minutes of the Board of Assessors Meeting of August 26, 2004

A meeting of the Board of Assessors was held on Thursday, August 26, 2004 in the Assessing Department at City Hall. Meeting was called to order by Marylou Blaisdell at 8:30 AM.

Members Present

Dominic D'Antoni Kevin Moriarty Marylou Blaisdell

Assessing Staff Present

Angelo Marino Robert Lakeman Greg Turgiss Gary Turgiss Elaine Wier
Jeanne Dunfey Cheryl Walley

Minutes of the Meeting:

MOTION BY Marylou Blaisdell to accept the minutes of the meeting held July 22, 2004.

SECONDED BY Dominic D'Antoni.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

Abatement Requests Presented:

See attached printout for approvals/denials.

Residential Assessor Gary Turgiss presented a 2003 abatement for 12 Mt. Laurels Rd., Unit 603. The owner claims the amount of square footage listed on his property record card is more than what is actually there. Gary advised the Board that he had inspected the property and concurs with the homeowner and believes that the square footage should be adjusted to reflect what is there. He believes that after the plans for the development were submitted to the City, the units were moved around and we were not notified; therefore, our data had not been changed and the unit is listed with the wrong square footage. Dominic D'Antoni asked Gary Turgiss to obtain a copy of the condominium's deed and Declaration of Condominium, and said he would like to review the condominium documents to see what is officially listed for square footage for this unit with the Attorney General, before our records are changed. He stated that he believes if changes are made to our records, it is important the condo association makes the same changes. He stated he believes the condo fee the association collects is based on this square footage.

MOTION BY Dominic D'Antoni to table the 2003 abatement for 12 Mt. Laurels Rd., Unit 603, so the Board can review the condominium documents filed with the Office of the Attorney General to determine the square footage officially listed for this unit.

SECONDED BY Marylou Blaisdell.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

Appointments: none

Old Business: Chairwoman Marylou Blaisdell commented that she was surprised at what she read in this morning's paper which said the public meeting will be held after the 2004 update assessment notices are mailed. Chief Assessor Angelo Marino said this was an error, the public meeting will be held before the updated assessment notices are mailed. Chairwoman Marylou Blaisdell advised the Board that she and Angelo discussed the update and the shift from commercial to residential properties. Lower-end residential properties in the City have experienced the greatest increase. This would be condominiums or properties that were in the \$125,000 range which are now worth \$250,000, with a 90-100% increase. The higher-end residential properties are not experiencing such increases. She noted that the low interest rate and limited housing stock are major factors contributing to this shift. It is a seller's market. Chief Assessor reminded the Board that it is their responsibility to set the policy of how to arrive at the updated assessments and the Board of Alderman can only make suggestions. Dominic D'Antoni asked if Angelo would be addressing the Board of Alderman regarding this issue. Chief Assessor Angelo Marino advised the Board of Aldermen have been invited to attend the public meeting. He said they are aware of the situation, but are not aware of the effect. He went on to say that we did not update two years ago because he was not confident in the numbers. We have gone back to the way we have done it previously, by using indexes and looking at every individual commercial property to make sure these are accurate. One of the problems we have had is when there are errors in the system, these errors only are compounded. Using something other than market value allows us to avoid that. Dominic D'Antoni asked why we did not use market value. Chief Assessor Angelo Marino then showed the Board a powerpoint presentation which made it evident that using only market value would result in a more significant tax increase for the residential homeowner. He said the State of NH has given us 2005 as our certification year. After the new software is implemented we can move from our existing assessment system to the new system which will then allow us to bring the properties to market value next year. The market appears as if it is slowing down so being more conservative with the updated assessments may be the right approach. One of the things the new software will allow us to be is more efficient and do more inspections, which will allow us to have more accurate data. Kevin Moriarty noted that over the last couple of years working with the equalization ratio on abatements has not been fair. He commented that he just wants things to be fair. Chief Assessor Angelo Marino said the courts have forced the municipalities to apply the equalization ratio. He then said he needs a consensus as to how to proceed with this update and he would then like to schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss this with the Board of Aldermen. Chairwoman Marylou Blaisdell asked Angelo if he can come up with figures of what impact this will all have on the residential homeowner's tax burden and we can continue discussion on how to proceed with this update at 4:30 next Thursday. The Board asked that an invitation be extended to Mayor Bernard Streeter and Administrative Services Director Maureen Lemieux to attend this meeting for discussion of the update.

Chairwoman Marylou Blaisdell told the Board that the Administrative Assistant to the Mayor, Mary Nelson, had called and advised her they were making a mistake by having her leave the Board and that Mayor Bernard Streeter would like her to remain on the Board of Assessors. She advised that she will remain on the Board.

MOTION BY Marylou Blaisdell to adjourn at 10:00 AM.

SECONDED BY Kevin Moriarty.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

Transcribed by Cheryl Walley

Department Coordinator