

Minutes of the Board of Assessors
Meeting of November 10, 2005

A meeting of the Board of Assessors was held on Thursday, November 10, 2005 in Room 208 at City Hall. Chair, Marylou Blaisdell, called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

Members Present

Marylou Blaisdell Kevin Moriarty Dominic D'Antoni

Assessing Staff Present

Angelo Marino Jeanne Dunfey Robert Lakeman Cheryl Walley

Also Present :

Captain Ronald Dickerson, Nashua Police Department

Minutes of the Meeting:

MOTION BY Dominic D'Antoni to accept the minutes of the meeting held October 13, 2005.

SECONDED BY Kevin Moriarty.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

Abatement Requests Presented:

See attached printout for approvals/denials.

Chair Marylou Blaisdell invited Captain Dickerson of the Nashua Police Department to speak. He began by stating that Chief Hefferan has asked him to come to advise the Board and the Assessing Department that they have been inundated with complaints from police officers who live in the City relating to the ease at which anyone can obtain data on them and their property, at the City's website.

There are 75 employees who live in the City and they are concerned that the data can be accessed just by using their last name. He said he realizes there are other sites at which data can be obtained, but this is just another avenue where those interested have easy access. He asked the Board to perhaps consider eliminating the search by name feature or, if the Police Department provided a list of employees, if these names could be removed from the site.

Dominic D'Antoni asked if there are other communities where this information is filtered. Captain Dickerson said that the Town of Derry had the same complaints so they search by address instead of by name. Mr. D'Antoni asked Chief Assessor Angelo Marino if there was any reason we couldn't address this. Mr. Marino asked Captain Dickerson if his main concern is the search by name feature. Would it be an issue if we had your address and came up with your name after searching by address. Captain Dickerson replied that it is just so easy to get information simply by entering the last name you then get an aerial photo of the house and the backyard.

Chair Blaisdell asked Captain Dickerson to inform Chief Hefferan that this will be discussed at the Board level and the Chief will get a written letter from the Board which will address this concern. Captain Dickerson thanked the Board for their time and then left the meeting.

Appointments:

5:30 – Heidi Jensen, for Beverly Jensen, Regarding Elderly Exemption Denial for 699 West Hollis St.

The Board welcomed Ms. Jensen and informed her they have reviewed the information submitted. The Board invited Ms. Jensen to speak. After a brief discussion, the Board determined at this point to have the Assessing Department staff schedule an inspection of the property. Chair Blaisdell advised Ms. Jensen there would be someone from the Assessing Department calling her to schedule an inspection. Ms. Jensen then left the meeting.

Old Business

The Board then discussed the 2005 charitable exemption request of the Conway Ice Arena. It was noted that the 2004 donations included \$73,000 for the locker rooms, so after deducting that, you are left with the amount of the charitable donations for 2005. Chair Blaisdell asked if in the discussions with the Nashua Ice Commission last year, was there a percentage range stipulated with regard to charitable donations. Kevin Moriarty said no. Dominic D'Antoni asked if a donation of \$5,000 was made would this mean that this privately-owned ice rink should get a charitable exemption. Mr. D'Antoni said he would like to know why the Arena is receiving Meals Tax and why they have increased payroll by 25%. Mr. Marino offered that perhaps it is due to the fact that they are making more ice so therefore they need more employees. Mr. D'Antoni stated that he would be interested in knowing how many more employees this 25% increase in payroll is covering. He continued saying the \$73,000 for the locker rooms has come up again this year when it was already stated as one of their contributions for last year. He pointed out that they are leasing 2-3 acres of land for \$1 a year, so the taxpayers in Nashua are giving around \$100,000 and he strongly feels this property does not qualify for a charitable exemption. He stated he believes the State would agree. Mr. D'Antoni feels we should at least require a payment in lieu of taxes to pay for the fire and police services. Chief Assessor Angelo Marino said that the involved parties have already appeared before the Board and have said that they are exempt. Mr. D'Antoni said that the amount they are attributing to charitable donations is what any business would spend simply on promoting and advertising their business and he does not feel this meets the qualifications to receive a charitable exemption. Chair Blaisdell pointed out that they have a 501-C-3 status from the IRS. Mr. D'Antoni noted that does not mean that they qualify to receive a charitable exemption on property taxes. Kevin Moriarty said the Board was asking to be shown any charitable donations that were made to organizations in the City and they have done what we have asked them to do. He said the ice time they donate to the City is not counted in the dollar amount of donations they have listed. Chief Assessor Angelo Marino suggested we send a written request for the information the Board needs to complete their review of the charitable nature of this organization and discuss this further after this information is received. The Board concurred.

Regarding the request for a religious exemption for 2005 by the Heritage Baptist Church, Chief Assessor Angelo Marino was requested by the Board to get information from the Fire Department and the Building Department regarding whether or not the building at 105 Lock St was legally allowed to have up to 49 people as stated by Pastor Hileman at the October 13 Board meeting. Mr. Marino stated that the prior use of the property had already been permitted to have up to 49 people assemble within and therefore he was advised by the Fire Department that this would have been brought forward to the new owners. After reviewing all the information the Board made the following motion:

MOTION BY Marylou Blaisdell to reconsider the actions of the Board on July 14, 2005 concerning the Heritage Baptist Church.

SECONDED BY Kevin Moriarty.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

MOTION BY Marylou Blaisdell to approve the 2005 religious exemption for Heritage Baptist Church at 105 Lock Street as they meet the criteria as stated in RSA 72:23 as of April 1, 2005.

SECONDED BY Kevin Moriarty.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

Chair Blaisdell asked that the discussion regarding the assessing data on the web be continued. She said she understands that the data on the web significantly lowers the staff's workload in Assessing, but we also have to be in tune with the privacy of individual taxpayers. She said she thinks there has to be a happy medium where taxpayers can opt out of having their name online. Chief Assessor Angelo Marino said that there are other communities who do this but it is limited to law enforcement or judiciary personnel and that is where it generally ends. It is offered to this group because it is more in line with the criminal element. He said it is very simple for people to get information from the Assessing Department. All they need to do is request it. Dominic D'Antoni asked what information is protected. Mr. Marino replied that information on taxpayer's income that is submitted is confidential information and also we cannot supply the public with listing of those receiving the elderly exemption. Other than that, all the information we have is public information. Chair Blaisdell asked the reason this is all public information and Mr. Marino replied because of State law, specifically RSA 91-A. Chair Blaisdell asked Mr. Marino if there would be a problem if we had a procedure to have them sign something saying they would like to have their name removed from the website. Kevin Moriarty said that other towns have that option so why couldn't that option be available here. Mr. Marino said because this becomes unwieldy and staff would be spending more time doing that than doing their real jobs. Chair Blaisdell asked if the option to search by name could just be removed. Chief Assessor Marino said he would look into this and if we remove the name search this can possibly solve the problem. He noted that the information on the web is really a quality control measure because taxpayers can see it and notify us of the inaccurate data.

MOTION BY Marylou Blaisdell to adjourn at 5:50 PM.

SECONDED BY Kevin Moriarty

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

Transcribed by
Cheryl Walley
Department Coordinator