

Town of Dedham

Board of Assessors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 20, 2019, 6:00PM

Present: Richard Schoenfeld, Chairman, Chris Polito, Vice Chairman, Cheryl Sullivan, Clerk, Richard Henderson, Director of Assessments, Kevin Doyle, Assistant Director of Assessments

Meeting called to order at 6:10PM in the Selectmen's Chamber by the Chairman, Mr. Schoenfeld.

John Heffernan, Vice Chair of the Finance & Warrant Committee was in attendance. Mr. Heffernan introduced himself and simply stated that he was in attendance just to listen to the Board's discussion on the Overlay Surplus. Members of the Board of Assessing welcomed him to the meeting.

John Sisson, Community Development Director, was also in attendance. Mr. Sisson thanked the Board for allowing him to attend the meeting. Mr. Sisson explained that he has been working with Mass Development on a project known as The DIF Project, which stands for District Improvement Finance. The goal of this project is to create a district to generate revenue to reinvest in Town Infrastructure, Roads, etc. Mr. Sisson displayed a map of the DIF District that they have identified, which is along the Route 1 Corridor and handed the Board a report with details of the DIF Project. Mr. Sisson stated that he simply wanted to introduce this project to the Board of Assessor's along with other Boards and Committees in Town and has requested to be put on the Agenda for the April Board Meeting to discuss the project in more detail and answer any questions they may have after having time to read and go through the DIF Report. Mr. Sisson again thanked the Board for their time and opportunity to briefly discuss the project and that he looks forward to the next meeting.

With respect to Mr. Heffernan's time, Mr. Schoenfeld asked that the Board to move the discussion to item number 6 on the Agenda, the Overlay Surplus Discussion. Mr. Henderson handed out the Munis Overlay Balance and Surplus Report as well as the OL-1 DOR Overlay Report and Tax Levy History. Mr. Henderson stated that based on the average single family home value and with the current Budget as projected, the average single family tax bill is projected to increase \$517 over last year. Mr. Henderson stated that in reviewing the Overlay Balance, if the Board is in agreement to release \$1.3mil, it would help reduce the average single family tax bill to under \$400 increase. Mr. Henderson stated that the Board had released \$3.2 mil two years ago, when the Balance was around \$6mil. One million translates to roughly 17

cents in the tax rate, which equals to roughly \$85 in tax dollars. Mr. Henderson went to state that the Abatements and ATB Cases have been down and in review of the Overlay Balance and Surplus Report, that he would feel comfortable recommending to release anywhere from \$1mil to \$1.3mil knowing that they have been budgeted to receive \$600-700k in the Fall. Mr. Henderson stated that the Board needs to also consider that if the average single family tax bill increases over \$500 then he would expect a spike in Abatements and ATB Cases for FY20.

Ms. Sullivan agreed that it would be a good idea to release Overlay Surplus to help reduce the average tax bill. Mr. Henderson reminded the Board that as a Board they can approve to release Overlay Surplus but they cannot dictate how the money should be spent, which would be determined at Town Meeting. Mr. Polito stated that he felt releasing the Overlay Surplus is only a temporary relief and is only a band-aid to fixing the taxes. Mr. Polito stated that the town needs to figure out a long term solution and need to be careful moving forward and also need to be cautious when releasing Overlay Surplus as with upcoming tax increases for FY20 that there will be an increase in abatements. Mr. Heffernan spoke to the Board stating that the Levy is comprised with roughly 75% of the funding coming from real estate and personal property taxes for the estimated \$85mil budget. Mr. Heffernan stated that the local receipts have been trending down for the last two years and there is no longer a surplus in Free Cash and at this time are looking at a 7.3% increase in taxes which translates to \$517 increase in taxes to the average single family home. Mr. Heffernan stated that there was a meeting earlier today with the Dedham Retirement Board about funding the Pension. He stated that they were originally aiming to be at 95-100% fully funded based on previous projections, but now being told they should be at 100-105% funding. Currently Dedham is top 4 in the state in funding their Pension and ahead of schedule to be fully funded, but with the new projections, it was understood that the Retirement Board is still expected to fully fund the Pension this year and would not reduce their payment. Mr. Heffernan stated that the payment towards funding the Pension and the Overlay Surplus were the last two options in finding a way to reduce the Levy to help reduce the increase in real estate taxes for FY20.

Mr. Henderson stated to the Board that he has been in discussion with Jane Lepardo, Treasurer/Collector, and that she has stated that she is still looking to write off old uncollectible debt from previous fiscal years ranging from 2000-2016, with a total amount of uncollectible personal property of roughly \$450,000, which would come out of the Overlay. Mr. Henderson stated that this would not be done over the course of one year, but rather in installments over 2-3 years. At this point, the Board felt they were not ready to take a vote on releasing the Overlay Surplus, and needed more time to consider the liabilities to determine the appropriate amount of Surplus to release. The Board stated they would set up a meeting for the following week, prior to the Finance and Warrant Committee meeting to take a vote.

The Board reviewed, approved and signed Meeting Minutes from March 20, 2019.

The Board then reviewed and signed excise tax abatements.

The Board then reviewed and signed real estate exemptions.

The Board then reviewed and signed real estate and personal property abatements.

Mr. Henderson reminded the Board that they will need to meet again in a few days to vote on whether to release the Overlay Surplus and act on some of the remaining exemptions and abatements.

Having no other Old/New Business to discuss, Mr. Polito made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was second by Ms. Sullivan. At 7:50pm, Mr. Schoenfeld adjourned the meeting.