

Town of Dedham

Board of Assessors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 10, 2021, 6:45PM

Present(via zoom): Chris Polito, Chairman, Cheryl Sullivan, Vice Chair, Richard Schoenfeld, Secretary Richard Henderson, Director of Assessments, Kevin Doyle, Assistant Director of Assessments

Meeting called to order at 7:45PM by the Chairman, Mr. Polito once it was the Board of Assessor's turn to speak at the Charter Advisory Committee. Mr. Polito took a roll call. All Board members were present along with the Director and the Assistant Director.

Mr. Polito thanked Chairman Dello Iacono along with the other Members of the Charter Review Committee (CRC) for inviting the Board of Assessor's to their Meeting. Chairman Dello Iacono thanked the Board for coming and explained to the Board that the CRC is in the process of the Charter Review and wanted to speak with the Board of Assessors and their thoughts on the Director of Assessments reporting to the Town Manager, as it currently stands, as well as if the Director of Assessments reported to the Board of Assessors, as it did previously in the past.

Mr. Polito stated that he is fortunate to sit on the Board with great fellow board members like Mr. Shoenfeld and Ms. Sullivan. He also stated that he is fortunate to have Mr. Henderson as the Director of Assessments alongside his great staff in the Assessor's Department. Mr. Polito went on to state that Mr. Henderson reports to the Town Manager, he also gives routine updates and speaks regularly with the Chair of the Board of Assessors.

Mr. Polito stated that previously the Director of Assessments reported to the Board of Assessors. He stated that reporting to the Board of Assessors has great strengths where there is no influence from Town Administration over the work and progress of the Director of Assessments. He also stated that reporting to the Board works well as there are 3 Board Members who are all elected into position by the voters in the Town of Dedham. The drawback is that the Board Members are not in the Office on a daily basis or weekly basis which has several drawbacks as it had in the past under previous Directors. Another drawback is that the Board Members are up for election every 3 years and the Board can change from year to year, however, there seems to be less turnover on the Board of Assessors than compared to some other Boards, as the Board of Assessors is more of a unique position and tends to draw people who have a real estate, law, or financial background.

Mr. Polito went on to state that having the Director of Assessments report to the Town Manager has the benefits of working in the same building and able to see how the Office is being managed on a daily and weekly basis and has more interaction with both the Director and the Assessing staff. Mr. Polito stated that there is also some rate of turnover with Town Managers every few years and that there has been 3 Town Managers over the past 5 or so years. One drawback is a potential element of risk for political pressure coming from Town Administration. However, during that same time period while reporting to 3 different Town Managers, there has been zero issues, incidents and only good repore and working relationships between the Town Manager and the Director of Assessing. Ms. Sullivan second Mr. Polito's comments.

CRC Member Michelle Apuzzio posed the question to Mr. Polito asking if there was a need to increase the number of Board of Assessors from 3 to 5. Mr. Polito responded that it was a good question and one that he would like to have more time to think about. He stated that he has not experienced any issues with having just 3 Board Member and that he does not believe there is a need to increase, but would like to think about the pro's and con's of increasing from 3 to 5. Mr. Schoenfeld stated that as mentioned previously, that with the Board of Assessor's being more of a unique Board that has it's own niche, that it can be difficult at times to find strong candidates for the position. Mr. Schoenfeld stated that he felt 3 members was the appropriate amount of members for the Board of Assessors.

At this time, Chair Dello Iacono thanked the Board of Assessors as well as the Assessing Department for all of the work they do and that it can be a difficult and thankless job and appreciates the great work they have done.

Having no Old/New Business to discuss, Ms. Sullivan made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was second by Mr. Schoenfeld. Mr. Polito then adjourned the meeting.