

TOWN OF RAYMOND
401 Webbs Mills Road
Raymond, Maine 04071
207.655.4742

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES
Tuesday, September 29, 2005

Selectmen present: Betty McDermott, Chairman; Mike Reynolds; Lonnie Taylor; and Dana Desjardins.

Selectmen absent: Mark Gendron

Staff present: Don Willard, Town Manager; Amanda Simpson, Assessors' Agent; and Denis Morse, Fire Chief.

Others present: Frank Dexter, Barry Holmes; Bob Wetzel; and others.

1) Call to order. Betty McDermott called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm at the Town Office.

2) Minutes of the previous meeting dated September 20, 2005.

MOTION: Mike Reynolds motioned to table until their next meeting. Seconded by Lonnie Taylor.

VOTE: 3 in favor (Reynolds, Taylor, Desjardins) 1 abstention (McDermott)

3) New business.

a. Set 2005/2006 fiscal year tax commitment and establish mil rate – Assessors' Agent Amanda Simpson.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Reynolds announced that the commitment is not debatable by the public because the mill rate resulting is determined mathematically by the total valuation of the town in relation to the total budget passed at town meeting in May. He added that there will be an abatement process in which taxpayers can participate if desired. Applications would be available September 30th.

Ms. Simpson gave an overview of the valuation process and stated that the taxable value for Raymond was \$980,346,273.00 with the net value to be raised \$8,869,926.00. This allows a range of \$9.00 to \$9.45 per \$1,000 valuation to be used. She recommended an overlay of \$295,097 to cover any abatements allowed and unpaid taxes which would give the town a mill rate of 9.3 mills or \$9.30 per \$1,000 valuation. Mr. Willard concurred with her recommendation.

MOTION: Dana Desjardins motioned to accept and approve Amanda Simpson's recommendation of 9.3 mills for the 2005-2006 tax year. Seconded by Lonnie Taylor.

VOTE: Unanimous 4-0

NOTE: Ms. Simpson had the Selectmen sign 4 copies of the commitment warrant.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Simpson reviewed the abatement process saying that the entire list of valuations would be available next week on line and in print. She felt that tax bills would be mailed within two weeks. She said that any property which had a change through the Vision discovery meetings would receive a letter by mail very soon. She continued that the abatement application deadline would be April 4, 2006 at 3:00 pm which is 185 days from commitment. She added that if the Board of Assessors didn't agree with the applicant, then the application could go to the Board of Assessment Review within 60 days of the Board of Assessors decision. If the Board of Assessment Review didn't agree with the applicant, then the applicant could go to Superior Court. Mr. Reynolds asked that Ms. Simpson explain the interest decision. Ms. Simpson reported that the Selectmen had voted to allow a delay in beginning interest until 30 days after the tax bills are mailed. The date for collection will remain October 31st because that was approved at the annual town meeting. She noted that the original total from Vision was reduced by \$13,500,000 or 7 mills net reduction because of the Vision discovery meetings.

Barry Holmes asked Ms. Simpson to characterize the types of properties which received reductions and increases. Ms. Simpson said that she couldn't tonight because she had just received the information yesterday from Vision and hadn't had time to work with that information.

Frank Dexter asked about the data base. Ms. Simpson said it would be posted on the website by early next week. It will be shown as the September Update because the original values are the August numbers. Mr. Dexter had frustration because the Vision representative he talked with said that he couldn't make any decisions but just report information gathered from the tax payers. He had many questions about how the process was conducted. Ms. Simpson acknowledged that the Vision meetings were for information from the owners and not making final decisions about value. She noted that Kevin Leen was the project supervisor and the only person who could make decisions about values. She added that until the Vision final values are delivered to Raymond their information and software is proprietary. The recent information will be printed for public use but not Vision's software. She said that the process allowed for more review by the public than before.

Mr. Reynolds asked if the abatement process would allow individual assessment of a property. Ms. Simpson replied that the values were taken at 90 to 100% of full market value. The abatement process would be more individual rather than an

area/neighborhood reflection. She said that the onus would be on the owner to prove a reduction in value with hard facts.

Mr. Dexter said that when he asked the Vision representative how they came up with his value he said that he didn't know. He asked that he be informed of Vision's view so that he will have direction in how he should dispute their findings. He said that regression analysis has a 3% variation. He asked how the Selectmen can believe the Vision representatives were correct. Ms. Simpson felt that it may be necessary to have Vision come to Raymond and explain their process. She had total confidence in Vision.

Mr. Willard said that Vision is a highly regarded company which does valuations all over New England, many in Maine. He didn't believe that their methodology was flawed but time tested. Mr. Reynolds concurred saying that he was confident in their process and added that Raymond has not had a town wide revaluation since 1989 which means that there was a 15 year period where many values weren't updated. He added that he has confidence in Vision and would like to have the opportunity for the public to hear Vision's views.

Ms. Simpson explained that the abatement process would allow any discussion to be fully documented in writing for everyone's review.

Mr. Holmes asked to be informed of the criteria used. He felt their criteria should be public information. Ms. Simpson replied that all values will be on the website and in paper format very soon.

Mr. Willard was concerned about taxpayers who aren't happy and wanted to give them all the information that we can. He reiterated that the abatement process is available and some changes are likely to be made.

Ms. Simpson requested that taxpayers pay the first half of their taxes and if they get relief through the abatement process, that amount would be credited toward their second half payment. In this way no interest will be charged. If a taxpayer wants to pay the full amount in 2005, then if they receive an abatement they would receive a refund.

Bob Wetzel felt that the abatement process makes the taxpayer seem guilty until the taxpayer proves he is eligible for an abatement. He didn't feel that the taxpayer should have to hold the burden of substantiating a lesser value. Ms. Simpson replied that there is no guilt or innocence but only a value based on fair market value.

- 4) Old (unfinished) business. None
- 5) Town Manager Report and Communications.

- a. Assessment Review Board

Mr. Willard announced that Ada Brown has resigned from the Assessment Review Board because she can't attend night meetings. It was decided to contact other people who have expressed interest in a position on this board and advertise if necessary.

- b. Keenan Auction

Mr. Willard announced that 5 pieces of equipment from Public Works and the Fire Department were sold at auction.

Old Fire Truck	\$3,500
1995 Plow truck	\$4,500
1994 Ford utility truck	\$2,900

Old track loader	\$2,000
Old trailer	TBA

Mr. Willard said that a possible scenario would be that the Public Works Director's diesel truck be given to the Fire Department for their use and get a new truck using this revenue and money from the CIP for the Public Works Director's vehicle. Mr. Desjardins said he thought this money was going to be used for replacement equipment especially extrication equipment. Mr. Willard said that could be considered. Chief Morse noted that the old utility truck was expensive to run, high mileage, rusted, and needing replacement. He was agreeable to any consideration.

c. November 15, 2005 meeting

Mr. Willard announced that Mark Gendron would not be available for the November 15th meeting. It was felt that since the Public Works Department was set for that date, they should change the meeting night to when Mr. Gendron can attend.

6) Adjournment

MOTION: Mike Reynolds motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Lonnie Taylor.

VOTE: Unanimous 4-0

ADJOURNMENT: Betty McDermott adjourned the meeting at 6:46 pm.

Louise H. Lester
Town Clerk