

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

OCTOBER 19, 2016

MEMORIAL BUILDING

4:05 P.M.

The following are to be considered draft minutes only until approved by the Board at their next meeting.

Selectmen present: Chairman Don Hill, Leigh Callaway and Tamara Butcher

Others present: Tax Collector Cynthia Anderson, Deputy Tax Collector Pixie Hill

This meeting was scheduled at the meeting of October 10, out of the normal cycle since this is the earliest opportunity to deliberate unpaid property taxes and possible acceptance of deeds from the Tax Collector. The deadline for payment of 2013 taxes was 4:00 PM this date.

Tax Rate:

First, the Selectmen discussed options for the 2016 tax rate. Without adjustment by the Selectboard, the rate from the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) will be \$4.06 per thousand assessed. Don noted that in years past the Selectboard had applied amounts up to \$75,000 from the unreserved fund balance to avoid large fluctuations in the rate, in so doing to keep it as “level” as possible. Town tax rates in the past eight years have been:

2008	\$3.14
2009	\$3.82
2010	\$4.29
2011	\$3.98
2012	\$4.26
2013	\$4.00
2014	\$3.90
2015	\$3.95

The Selectboard reviewed the options to adjust the 2016 rate by applying an amount from the unreserved fund balance. This year, application of \$22,000 would maintain a tax rate of \$3.95 per thousand. Motion made by Leigh to apply \$22,000 from the unreserved fund balance, second by Tamara and approved unanimously. Although the exact amount of the unreserved fund balance was not known, the Board noted the Town can easily absorb this amount. When submitted online using DRA’s property tax website, the tax rate will be set within 48 hours. This will have been the earliest decision in years and will get tax bills out at the earliest possible date.

Tax Deeds:

The Board accepted deeds from the Tax Collector for the following properties:

<u>Owner</u>	<u>Parcel ID</u>
West River Road, LLC	27-170-395
West River Road, LLC	48-158-600
Alice Mackenzie	9-541-275

In each of these cases, notification of taxes in arrears had been acknowledged by postal return receipt. Motion by Tamara to accept the deeds, second by Leigh and unanimously approved.

The Board decided that it is in the best interest of the Town to decline deeds for the following properties:

<u>Owner</u>	<u>Parcel ID</u>
Alan J. Brock	23-505-142
Amy Kendall	48-338-226
Cheryl Larocque	43-487-103
Travis R. Morcum	43-540-84

Motion by Tamara to decline these deeds, second by Leigh and unanimously approved.

The Board noted that State law allows for waiver of penalties for taxes in arrears and that other towns have been known to do so. Until a consistent policy for Springfield is approved and made public, such an option is not available. There was some discussion of drafting payment plans, but that option has been discouraged by counsel and is not legally enforceable.

The Board discussed having legal counsel prepare correspondence on its letterhead to notify owners whose deeds were declined that tax liabilities are unchanged and the properties can be deeded at any time. The Board will also ask counsel to include an explanation that unpaid taxes carry heavy penalties and interest which accrue quickly to ever larger amounts. In the case of an accepted deed, Cynthia noted that new legislation allows for a lower penalty when an owner buys the property back and remains living there. Motion to have counsel send letters was made by Leigh, second by Tamara and unanimously approved. Don will send email to counsel with context and details.

The Board commended the Tax Collector and her Deputy for having done an excellent job. Without their patience and persistence the unpaid taxes would be considerably higher.

Budget Item:

Don noted that Healthtrust will be increasing premiums for all health care plans by 5.3%.

Signatures:

- Purchase order for \$2,000 to remove four trees on Sanborn Hill and one off Greeley.
Motion by Don to approve, second by Leigh and unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 4:55 PM.

Submitted by,

Leigh Callaway