

Thursday September 9, 2021 Board of Assessors VIRTUAL Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present: Chairman Jeffrey Quackenbush and members Susan Reyes and Howard Shpetner.

Also present: Administrative Assessor Kevin Rudden and Assessors' Clerk Leslie Bracebridge.

Chairman Jeffrey Quackenbush opened the meeting online at 5:34 PM using ZOOM Meeting ID 889 5682 3938, Passcode: t2shMY, and Phone: 1-646-558-8656, Passcode: 681179.

The June 16, 2021 Meeting Minutes were approved as written.

The following Preliminary Warrants to the Collector were reviewed and authorized for Assessors' signature stamps:

- **Real Property Preliminary Warrant:**

<u>Commit. Year</u>	<u>Warrant Date</u>	<u>Total Amount Committed</u>
FY 22	June 22, 2021	\$2,441,745.16

- **Personal Property Preliminary Warrant:**

<u>Commit. Year</u>	<u>Warrant Date</u>	<u>Total Amount Committed</u>
FY 22	June 22, 2021	\$125,864.32

- **Preliminary Community Preservation Act Surcharge Warrant:**

<u>Commit. Year</u>	<u>Warrant Date</u>	<u>Total Amount Committed</u>
FY 22	June 22, 2021	\$22,025.09

- **3rd Motor Vehicle commitment:**

<u>Commit. Year</u>	<u>Commitment Date</u>	<u>Total Amount Committed</u>
2021	July 14, 2021	\$5,802.28

- **30th Motor Vehicle commitment:**

<u>Commit. Year</u>	<u>Commitment Date</u>	<u>Total Amount Committed</u>
2021	July 28, 2021	\$165.87

The following Accountant Reports were reviewed and approved for signature stamps:

- **Motor Vehicle Abatements:**

<u>Commit. Year</u>	<u>Report Date</u>	<u>Total Amount Abated</u>
2021	July (2021)	\$403.50

- **Motor Vehicle Abatements:**

<u>Commit. Year</u>	<u>Report Date</u>	<u>Total Amount Abated</u>
2021	August (2021)	\$281.62

Kevin and Leslie are reviewing each Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B application as they come in, comparing the information to what is recorded in Vision, and on the deeds and liens recorded at the Franklin County Registry of Deeds. **Assessors unanimously voted to authorize use of their signature stamps to approve straight-forward applications**, as they did last year, due to the continuation of remote meetings. If Kevin and Leslie need guidance with any application, they will seek such from the Assessors. There is a new forestry application, which will need Jeff's notarized signature, and some 10-year renewal applications, which ideally will have at least 1 wet signature rather than all stamped signatures. Leslie will contact Jeff when papers are prepared for his signatures.

Administrative Assessor's Updates:

1. A. **Kevin reported on scheduling and office management:** He is taking phone calls, emails and texts, and responding as needed throughout the week. He is working 1 full day each weekend. He is working toward a schedule, which will allow him to come to Shutesbury on Fridays regularly and on the weekends only as needed for appointments and inspections.
 B. Leslie keeps regular office hours on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. She feels the changes in scheduling and management are efficient and communications are working well.
2. Kevin reported that **real estate valuations are unprecedented**, with a “selling boon” across the United States. Selling prices are “way up” which will push values up. Kevin and the consultant have done their best to minimize Shutesbury’s increases. Perhaps single-family properties will only rise 6% compared to other parts of the state, where increases are as high as 12%. Based on land sales at the time, Shutesbury’s land values were pushed low 6 years ago. More recent sales may push land values up by about 10%. This is in keeping with the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) approved increases in land values assigned by the DOR to the state’s Chapter Program lands. Kevin will prepare a summary of these general trends and the implications for Shutesbury’s property values for the next newsletter.
3. Because there is no plan for a fall town meeting, **Assessors will be able to set Shutesbury’s FY 22 tax rate early in the fall.** There are a few outstanding documents needed from multiple town offices. Kevin targets the second half of October for the Select Board to set its tax classification hearing. This will give the Collector extra time than in usual years to prepare the tax bills. She would like to do a trial run of bills to ensure that “hiccups” between Vision and Point software systems do not occur as they did in June. Both Kevin and Leslie attended a free and informative virtual presentation by the Town of Yarmouth concerning cooperative and streamlined tax-setting procedures.
4. The **Temenos site inspection** is rescheduled to Sunday September 13 from noon to 1 PM. All Assessors are invited to attend; meet at Temenos. A **Sirius Community site inspection** will be scheduled during October. Even though both are 3-ABC properties, and generate no taxes based on values (though they do make Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) Assessors are still required to make a visit within the 10-year cycle to each and every property in town.
5. The DOR will be holding its annual “*What’s New in Municipal Law*” repeat presentations on Thursdays September 23rd and 30th. They are free and being held online, making them an easily accessed source of information useful to Assessors. Kevin will distribute a sign-up form to any Assessor who wishes to attend and get Assessors signed-up for the presentation.

Board Member Questions and Comments:

1. Becky has forwarded the Home Rule petition concerning Means-Tested Real Estate Exemptions as voted at the June Town Meeting to State Representative Natalie Blais. There are petitions from 6 or 7 towns (including Kevin’s home town of Mendon) before the review committee. The multiple towns’ representatives have agreed to write 1 joint letter in support of the petitions.
2. Kevin delivered an update to Assessors on the non-permitted home in the woods off Montague RD, including use of Shutesbury’s Town Counsel by the Regional Building Inspector to guide the process. Resolution is hoped for by the close of the year.
3. Due to COVID rules in which tenants were not penalized if they did not pay their rent, apartment values have dropped statewide. Commercial property values have also dropped, due to failures from COVID. Shutesbury does not have a significant number of businesses, so drops in commercial values have not heavily impacted Shutesbury.
4. Not as predicted, National Grid and Mas Electric values went up. Eversource values dropped. The Broadband project is complete, so we have no new poles being put up.

5. There is no new progress on solar installations at this time.
6. Kevin will continue to make site inspection visits to meet the 10% per year quota in keeping with the DOR standard for Assessors to visit each property in communities within the 10-year cycle. He will leave yellow door hangers on properties where no one is home.

Assessors adjourned at 6:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted, as approved on September 30, 2021,

**Leslie Bracebridge
Assessors' Clerk**

List of Documents used at the meeting:

1. September 9, 2021 meeting agenda.
2. June 16, 2021 draft meeting minutes.
3. Motor Vehicle abatement reports to accountant, as detailed in minutes.
4. Preliminary Warrants to the Collector as detailed in the meeting minutes.