

TOWN OF LUNENBURG  
BOARD OF ASSESSORS  
P.O. BOX 135  
LUNENBURG, MA 01462

Minutes from BOA (Board of Assessors) meeting held: May 16, 2023.

Location: In person at the Lunenburg Town Hall and broadcast over the Lunenburg Public Access Channel.

The meeting was opened at 3:00 PM.

Members Present: Principal Access CJ Carroll, Administrative Assessing Assistant Sheila Craigen, Board Member Kevin Fish, Board Member Christine Higdon, Chairman Richard Letarte, Interim Principal Assessor Rena Swezey.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Motion to review and approve minutes from the March 28, 2023, meeting. Motion to approve by Kevin Fish, seconded by Richard Letarte. The minutes have been approved.

**Abatement Process Update**

Currently, over 100 abatement applications have been received.

There was a discussion to determine the procedure to be used regarding the abatement process. The 3 options available are:

1. Full executive session.
2. General meeting with public comment. This consists of new information only, a speaking limit of 2 minutes per person, and only to take place for 1 hour per meeting. If residents didn't have a chance to speak during the hour, then they will be moved on to the next meeting.
3. Participation in the executive session.

Motion to proceed with option 2 by Kevin Fish, seconded by Richard Letarte.

**Public Comment**

Lou Franco - 260 Arbor Street- inquired how public comments can be made during public meetings since abatements are confidential. Kevin Fish states that only new information will be presented that was previously unknown and not on the application.

Bill Hudson - 90 Hemlock Drive- wants to know if applications are currently being reviewed and how the applicants are going to know if they are 1 of the 100 applications being reviewed during the meeting. Richard Letarte states that if the parcel has been accessed an adjustment

has been made that the committee is unaware. If the homeowner doesn't like the response or result, they can then go to ATB.

Renee- states that homeowners need to see the MFS report. Richard Letarte says the MFS report is available online. Renee has reviewed the report, but it doesn't address notes on individual site visits. Renee believes homeowners should have access to their own personal information prior to their abatement hearing. Kevin Fish states there are no reports for individual properties. Richard Letarte states the report is mostly based on land quality and it doesn't list the quality of the property. Renee states that homeowners need to know the value of their home and the information that led to that current assessment. Richard Letarte responds with if you are unhappy with the results you must go to the ATB. Renee inquires how people will know when their abatement hearing is being held. Richard Letarte says essentially individuals need to come to every meeting to get their public comments heard.

Dave McDonald - questioned if Nate Cramer gave recommendations for individual houses for tax bills. The board does not know the answer. Dave McDonald responds that people are already getting their bills for next year and requested a letter be sent to homeowners to explain to the banks that there is an error. This wasn't done and the board doesn't intend to write letters to homeowners to then give to their banks. Dave McDonald inquires if Nate Cramer made a recommendation to the board for his specific property. Richard Letarte confirms there was a recommendation, and chances are those recommendations will likely be put into place. Dave McDonald wants to know why homeowners can't see the recommendations and wants to know when a copy of the report be available. The board responds that this isn't the way that the abatement process works. The abatement meeting comes first and once completed the results are presented to the homeowner. Lastly, Dave McDonald asks what the schedule will be, when will the hearings be held, and how many days during the week applications will be reviewed. Richard Letarte is unable to give an answer but states the abatements will start at 4 pm and will conclude after 1 hour.

Bill Hudson – 90 Hemlock Drive - wants to know which properties are considered good or average. The board states they already have the information and it's being reviewed. Richard Letarte confirms that the abatement process must first go through the Board of Assessors to be approved or denied. The homeowner will receive a letter containing the amount of the abatement.

Rich Pearson – inquires if individual reports are available or if it's only general information. Also wants to know if the board is going by percentages and looking at the notes provided. Kevin Fish states that each property is being looked at individually.

Tom Alonzo – believes that the homeowners should get their individual reports before their abatement hearing. Tom Alonzo wants to know how the process can be streamlined but also include the homeowner. Richard Letarte states the easiest way is to give the board time to review and get letters sent out. Homeowners should receive their letters within a month. Lastly,

Tom Alonzo wants to know why people aren't aware of when their abatement hearing will be held. Richard Letarte responds that the abatements came in on a certain schedule and the inspections were done on a neighborly basis. Also feels that letters being sent out with homeowners hearing information would be an administrative nightmare.

**Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn and enter into executive session and not return to the open meeting by Kevin Fish, Seconded by Richard Letarte. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 3:31 PM.