

LUNENBURG BOARD OF ASSESSORS

February 19, 2025

RITTER BUILDING, LOWER-LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM
960 MASSACHUSETTS AVE.

Present members: Chair Brian Laffond, Vice Chair Sarah Cammer, Clerk John Rabbitt (Zoom), Principal Assessor Lynda McQuade, Rena Swezey (6:40).

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting opened at 6:32 PM.

OPENING COMMENTS

-Board

John Rabbitt anticipates the first deferral in circuit breaker will be delivered to the Assessor's Office early next week.

- Public

There were no comments from the public.

STATUS REPORT FROM PRINCIPAL ASSESSOR

- Status of FY2025 Abatement Applications, Vision Property Record Cards Update with CAI. Other items as needed

Updates from Lynda McQuade include:

- There have been 4 abutters list during the last month.
- 5 additional exemptions were approved on February 5th.
- To date 121 real estate exemptions have been received.
- 35 real estate and property abatements were received. 50% have already been inspected.
- 4 motor vehicle excise tax abatements have been received. A total of 12,599 bills are being mailed out on February 20th for commitment number 1 of 2025.
- The last commitment number 7 of 2024 has an additional 326 bills being mailed.
- Robin Nano mailed out 225 FY2026 income and expense forms to businesses last week.

There have been some mapping issues in MUNIS and CAI linking maps.

Goals for next month include:

- Continue working on new growth for FY 2026
- Continuing to schedule inspections
- Complete more real estate abatements
- Review FY 2025 chapter liens

CURRENT BUSINESS

- Review and Approve Minutes of December 10, 2024, November 20, 2024, November 6, 2024, October 16, 2024, October 2, 2024. Executive Sessions of December 10, 2024, January 22, 2025.

Brian Laffond sent out his revision for the meeting on October 2, 2024.

There was a motion to approve the minutes from October 2, 2024, with revisions by Sarah Cammer, seconded by John Rabbitt. Roll Call Vote. John Rabbitt aye, Sarah Cammer aye, Brian Laffond aye.

There was a motion to approve the minutes from November 6, 2024 by Sarah Cammer, seconded by John Rabbitt. Roll Call Vote: John Rabbitt aye, Sarah Cammer aye, Brian Laffond aye.

There was a motion to approve the minutes from November 20, 2024 by Sarah Cammer, seconded by John Rabbitt. Roll Call Vote: John Rabbitt aye, Sarah Cammer aye, Brian Laffond aye.

There was a motion to approve the minutes from January 22, 2025, by Sarah Cammer, seconded by John Rabbitt. Roll Call Vote. John Rabbitt aye, Sarah Cammer aye, Brian Laffond aye.

There are several outstanding executive session minutes that need to be completed and filed.

- Review and Approve Invoices, Expense Vouchers, Billing Errors, Etc.

A motor vehicle refund totaling \$767.68 was signed. Motor vehicle commitments were signed. The first commitment of 2025 for motor vehicle excise tax totaled \$1,745,393.70 consisting of 12,599 bills. The final commitment for 2024 totaled \$14,563.51 consisting of 326 bills.

There is a motion to use the signature stamp to sign the individual certificate for motor vehicles by Brian Laffond, seconded by John Rabbitt. Roll Call Vote. John Rabbitt aye, Sarah Cammer aye, Brian Laffond aye. Commitment still requires individual signatures.

- Senior Means Tested Exemption/H.3911 Plan

John Rabbitt and Lynda McQuade did some research and found that in towns like Concord and Westford have different applications and forms related to the means tested exemption. There were questions about the qualifying age and whether it was age 70 or age 65. Due to the changes we made to 41C it was determined the minimum age would be 65. Lynda McQuade provided the Board with a copy of the law that was signed by Governor Healey on January 6th.

The qualification list includes:

- Resident must be 65 or older.
- Resident must have lived in the town and occupied a home for not less than 15 consecutive years.

- If they haven't received a circuit breaker then they do not qualify.
- Total exemptions cannot exceed 1% of the tax levy.

Update expected in 2 weeks.

- Neighborhood/Site Index/Plan in response to DOR Directives

Lynda McQuade and Rena Swezey spoke to Mike Tarello from Vision. They reiterated the intend to start with the lake neighborhood. Mike Tarello states that he would not start with this as the first neighborhood because it's a huge project. Due to the completion of the recent evaluation he suggests this task could be something to add to the next revaluation. Sarah Cammer disagrees and believes the neighborhoods were overlooked and nothing was modified.

Lynda McQuade has been trying to get bids for outside consultants to work on this project. Based on difficulty getting bids and the fact we are now fully staffed, she suggests we might want to do the Neighborhood revisions in house. Brian Laffond states there is \$27,500 in the proposed budget under capital and suggests these funds could be used as a good starting point.

- Status of Homeowner Letter for Issues with Deeds

Brian Laffond drafted and modified a letter based on conversations with the Town Counsel. Town Counsel suggests an option would be to pay for a title search, but these can be very expensive.

In order to make any changes to the property record, database, or billing software the deed needs to be clarified.

There was a motion to approve the letter regarding deed issues by Sarah Cammer, seconded by John Rabbitt. Roll call vote: John Rabbitt aye, Sarah Cammer aye, Brian Laffond aye.

- Assessor Website

John Rabbitt will inquire with Kara McCarthy about having the presentation from the conference at the senior center added to the website.

The policy section is still blank, and Brian Laffond confirms nothing has been written up yet.

John Rabbitt suggests adding a dedicated section on circuit breakers to the Assessors Website. Brian Laffond disagrees.

John Rabbitt wants to discuss Clause 18. Brian Laffond suggested that John Rabbitt bring a proposal to the Board defining the criteria we should use.

Brian Laffond volunteered to help Lynda McQuade create the application for an "8 of 58" that the board previously agreed to submit.

- Annual Report

Lynda McQuade added the financial information, and it was submitted yesterday.

- FY 2026 Overlay

Ezequiel Ayala confirmed the total in the overlay account is \$790,000.

The Board needs to put a recommendation forward to the Town Manager about the suggested amount to put aside in the overlay account for next year.

Last year there were 44 applications for real estate/personal property abatements and this year there are 35.

- Clause 41 and 17 Assets/Income Level Adjustment Exemption Warrant

Brian Laffond sent a proposed copy of the warrant to the Board and received several suggestions from Town Counsel. Brian Laffond will re-write and provide a copy to the Board prior to the March 14th deadline.

POSTPONED TOPICS

- BOA Policies

UPCOMING MEETING/EVENTS SCHEDULE

Upcoming Meetings: March 5, 2025, March 19, 2025, April 2, 2025, April 16, 2025

There is a tentative meeting scheduled for March 12th in case there isn't a quorum on March 5th.

CLOSING COMMENTS

- Public

There were no comments from the public.

- Board

There were no comments from the Board.

ADJOURN

There was a motion to adjourn into executive session not to return to open session by Sarah Cammer, seconded by John Rabbitt. Roll call vote: John Rabbitt aye, Sarah Cammer aye, Brian Laffond aye.

The meeting closed at 8:32 PM.