



Town of Bellingham

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

10 Mechanic Street

Bellingham, Massachusetts 02019

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November 18, 2019

The regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 7:00 PM by Vice Chairman Michael Connor with all members in attendance except for Chairman Dan Spencer.

Public Hearing – on the issue of allocating the local tax levy among the different classes of real and personal properties, as provided for in Chapter 797 of the Acts of 1979. The Board of Assessors will present the options and impact of adopting different tax rates for Residential/Open Space and Commercial/Industrial/Personal Properties.

Mr. Connor read the Public Hearing.

On a Martinis/Biagi motion, the Board unanimously voted to delay the public hearing and move on to the additional items on the agenda and then come back to the public hearing.

Jim Kupfer

Town Planner, Mr. Kupfer, appeared before the Board to present the Energy Reduction Plan and the Vehicle Policy for adoption. Now that the Stretch Code had been passed at the Fall Town Meeting, Mr. Kupfer stated these were the final items needed in becoming a Green Community. The Selectmen were given a chance to review and ask questions at the previous Board meeting and tonight Mr. Kupfer was looking to see if they would move to adopt. On a Martinis/McNulty motion, the Board unanimously voted to adopt the Energy Reduction Plan and Vehicle Policy.

Mr. Kupfer also appeared before the Board this evening to discuss the Town of Bellingham Housing Production Plan for 2020-2025. The plan must address local housing needs, set goals and preferences and list ways to implement these plans. A significant goal of the Town is to meet the 10 percent affordable housing requirement. Currently Bellingham is at 8.6%. Mrs. McNulty thanked Jim for coming and stated that he had provided them with a wealth of information and that she would like to sit down with him personally to go over the HPP before its adoption. Mr. Fraine stated that the Town needs to have a plan like this in place to be competitive with various grants. The Board briefly discussed the aging population, school enrollment and the glaring gaps in housing options and agreed to put this back on the first agenda in January.

Tax Classification Hearing

Mrs. MacKinnon and Mrs. Cournoyer came before the Board for the annual tax classification hearing. Mrs. MacKinnon explained the tax classification process and explained that the goal of this evening was to adopt a factor, adopt a percentage of small business exemption and to adopt an amount of exempt debt. Mrs. MacKinnon presented a ledger sheet depicting the rate of various splits. She stated the current split is .89% and explained shifting left would close the gap between commercial/industrial and residential and shifting right would put more of a tax burden on commercial/industrial properties. Mr. Biagi asked how long we have had a split tax rate and asked if this would come as a surprise to commercial taxpayers. Mrs. MacKinnon stated the Town has had a split tax rate since 2001.

Mrs. Cournoyer reported new growth from last year was up and reported an average increase in both residential and commercial properties and said the forecast looks good. She stated her office does not have a problem defending the current rate to its residents and there have been fewer abatement applications.

Mr. Martinis asked about affordable housing for our seniors given the fact that the Town is seeing higher condo prices. Mr. Fraine stated that Federal Funds are the driving force behind housing for the elderly and it might not be a bad idea to bring in the Housing Authority at a future Board meeting to discuss.

Mr. Connor asked Mrs. Cournoyer if she was aware of any areas of town where the tax rate might jump off the charts because of the increase in values. She said condos in general will see the biggest increase based on sales across the board.

Mr. Martinis stated he was in favor of leaving the factor as is and Mrs. McNulty agreed with him.

Mr. Connor asked if there was anyone in the audience present to speak on this hearing. No one responded.

On a Martinis/Biagi motion, the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to accept a residential factor of .89% for FY20 tax classification purposes.

On a Martinis/McNulty motion, the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to accept an FY20 small business exemption of 10%. Under discussion Mrs. MacKinnon stated there have been some bills crafted to increase the \$1M tax exempt amount but there has been no movement on them. Only 14 communities of the 351 in MA in 2018 adopted this exemption which is a surprising number. In our Town 98 businesses are eligible to apply for the exemption and 87 businesses applied.

On a Martinis/Biagi motion, the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to NOT accept a residential exemption for FY20.

On a Martinis/Biagi motion, the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to accept an exclusion for FY20 of \$740,000 for water debt repayment. Under discussion Mrs. McNulty asked Mrs. MacKinnon to briefly explain this. She stated the water plant cost roughly \$15-16M and it was agreed that the general fund would help pay for it and this amount shifts onto the tax levy.

On a McNulty/Biagi motion, the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to continue the public hearing on Friday November 22, 2019 at 9AM in the selectmen's lower level conference room at 10 Mechanic Street.

On a McNulty/Martinis motion, the Board unanimously voted to approve the disposal of the items listed on the DPW surplus sheet as submitted.

On a Biagi/McNulty motion, the Board unanimously voted to approve the October abatements for capital improvement charges, residential sewer, residential trash, and residential water in the amount of \$3,653.97.

On a McNulty/Martinis motion, the Board unanimously voted to approve the November 4th minutes as submitted.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Fraine stated he had received positive feedback from the electronic voting that was debuted at the Town meeting. He thanked Karen Dutil for all her hard work and the Town Clerk in Uxbridge for helping with the process as well as loaning the Town an extra 200 clickers.

Mr. Fraine stated we should have the PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) agreement for the solar farm on Williams Way that was authorized at Town Meeting by December. Between the lease and the PILOT program the Town should receive roughly \$250,000 annually.

With regards to the sale of the Dominos building, Mr. Fraine thought the Town would be passing papers sometime in late January and would vacate the building at that time with possible demolition in June/July.

Mr. Fraine stated the recycling center would be closing on Sundays at the end of the month and that the Board should have future discussions about continuing our recycling program and its rising costs.

Mr. Fraine stated a letter would be going out this week to the MPO to advocate for possible TIP projects in the near future.

Minutes of November 18, 2018

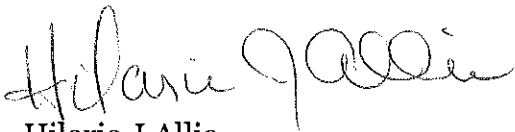
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Mr. Biagi stated he was moved by the Veteran's Day ceremony and commended Jim Hastings and the committee for a job well done and thanked PJ's for the delicious lunch.

The Board discussed the most recent Town Warrant from the Fall meeting and made some suggestions about resident awareness for the next Town meeting.

On a McNulty/Martinis motion, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Hilarie J Allie".

Hilarie J Allie

Administrative Assistant