



Board of Selectmen Joint Meeting with Board of Assessors

Date of Meeting: Monday, November 21st, 2022
Time: 6:30 PM – 8:25 PM
Members Present: Chair Seth Ridinger and Selectmen Matt Mecum and Jamie Underwood;
April Steward, Town Administrator, Town Council Stephen Madaus, and
the Board of Assessors

The meeting commenced at 6:30 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

6:30 PM Tax Classification Hearing: Joint Hearing with Board of Assessors:

Amy Evanowski, Assessor for Boylston read off the information for the Tax Classification hearing.

- Tax Levy - \$16,633,378.15 – The amount that the property tax needs to be raised. The levy amount is determined by the budget, the total amount approved budget, less revenues from other sources such as motor vehicles, municipal fees and state aids.
- Levy Ceiling – 2.5%
- New Growth Revenue - \$801,628
- Levy Limit - \$17,965,394

Valuations for the Class:

- Residential Property Class - \$960,096,775 – 83% of 100% of overall taxes
- Commercial - \$118,374,980 - 10.25%
- Industrial - \$53,095,200 – 4.5%
- Personnel Property - \$23,555,750 – 2.3%

Tax Impacts:

Actual Property tax impact will vary from property to property. FY23 tax rate is an estimate only and may change by the Department of Revenue revue. In FY22, the average single-family home was \$457,255 times the tax rate of \$15.84 = average residential tax bill of \$7,242.76. FY23, proposed property tax rate is \$14.40. The average single family class home is \$535,927 times \$14.40 = \$7,717.35. This is an increase of \$479.00 over last year's bill.

The Board of Assessors recommends that the Board of Selectmen adopt a single rate to be applied to all the taxes of property in Boylston.

Seth mentioned that we recently adopted a bylaw that allows us to begin to assess property taxes on a lot of commercial developments before they are brought to completion and asked how much

of that has been factored into this new construction. Amy stated that she goes out monthly and whatever progress they have completed, she adds a percentage to that amount.

Matt added that it's important that we bring in the tax revenue to the town from these commercial developments but wants to make sure that we are not setting a tone that is going to be construed as anti-business. We have spent a lot of time and effort trying to get businesses to come to town. A lot of these businesses contribute a lot to the town while we significantly use a lot less resources; sports leagues are made up of volunteers, but they are funded by businesses. As a business owner if he sees his taxes going up \$5,000-\$10,000, he would cut his spending somewhere else and they need to be cautious about putting this out there and scaring businesses.

Resident Arlene Murphy asked if there is a point as residents they might begin to see some relief due to the big business that has started to come into town. Jamie responded that we see it in kind of an indirect way; If we did not have the \$118,000,000 valuation of the commercial property, our tax rate would be much higher. Discussion continued, commercial property in town.

At 6:47 PM Jamie Underwood made a motion to close the tax classification hearing, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.

Jamie Underwood made a motion to approve the single tax rate as proposed by the Board of Assessors, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.

Building Inspector Report to the BoS:

Tony met with Amy Evanowski to review ARCO at 80 Pine Hill to get a good idea of what is going on. FedEx is adding another conveyor belt and bringing more people to work since getting rid of another location. There isn't a tenant for 80 Pine Hill yet and it looks like it will be done within the next few weeks. Rand Whitney – The bigger building is preparing the inside right now for equipment. The smaller building was going to be used but they decided not to. They are now going to the Planning Board and looking to cut the two properties in half. Tony okayed it to go to the Planning Board. He does not believe there is a tenant for that building either. Homes are still being built at Barnard Hill. The 40B on the corner of Sewell and 140 coming in. They came in for another A&R lot on the corner of Sewell – a little section there that's going to be a commercial lot that is not a part of the 40B. Tony approved that to go to in front of the Planning Board. Nothing has slowed down.

Final Review of Special Town Meeting Warrant with Finance Committee:

Article 1: \$1,300,000 for Radio Communication Project.

Article 2: \$1,300 – Previous years bill

Article 3: Transfer of Funds from Fire Department – Ambulance Funds

Article 4: Community Preservation bylaw adoption

- Matt Mecum stated that the Town Administrator and Town Clerk are both apprehensive to put this forward at the Special Town Meeting.
- Town Council stated that his concern was who is deciding if its five, seven, or nine members, and if its more than five members, who is the appointing authority and if they

are going to be appointed, or are they going to be elected, or is it going to be some combination.

- How do you want the makeup of the committee to be in the bylaw
- Jamie stated that he would like to give the community a little more time to voice their opinion than present this at the STM in less than two weeks. The funds will not be available until the end of 2023.
- Seth mentioned that if we did not put it on this STM, it would push it back six months to a year. The earliest we would be able to access the money is the end of fiscal 2023; we need the bylaw to be approved. At the next annual Town Meeting we would need the plan to be approved (assess the needs of the community), and only after those two things take place can you begin to propose specific projects. A minimum of three town meetings before you can use that money. If we were to do it now, the earliest they would be able to access that money would be the end of fiscal year 2023, if we were to push it back, then they wouldn't be able to access the money until the following year.
- April asked if we did the adoption of the bylaw in the 2023 meeting, and the next year we had the plan, would we be able to do the plan and the proposals at the same meeting, just separate articles.

Resident Comments:

- Arlene Murphy – Resident - Asked if the BoS received the timeline and was able to read them and the reasons behind why they are asking for this to go on the STM. Seth responded yes. Arlene mentioned that she had been working with Elaine on this project and as Elaine was not able to make this meeting Arlene wanted to make sure some points got across.
 - State requires a minimum of 5 and no more than 9. The Community Preservation Coalition is recommending nine because the at large members would compensate the people who currently serve on boards. That would give this community an opportunity to participate.
 - The second issue is the length of service. The CPC is recommending that the at large members be staggered. Two at one and a half years and two at three years.
 - Would the Board be appointed or elected? Elaine found out that 95% of the communities in Massachusetts appoint their members.
 - Regarding the bylaw language – they have two copies of a bylaw and are suggesting that as a small community we use Whitmans bylaw. Stewart Sagamore, Director of the CPC, gave some suggestions for the language of the bylaw.
 - 5% of the money would be able to be used for administrative purposes. They believe that in order to produce the plan, they will need money; produce copies, hold hearing and other things. With pushing this off, it just elongates the entire process.
 - The Community Preservation Coalition has been meeting weekly. They would like to keep this momentum going. Having to wait could potentially dishearten the momentum.

Jamie stated that his main problem is setting a precedent of creating a bylaw at a Special Town Meeting opposed to a regular Town meeting with a quorum so low, you are asking not even one

tenth of the community to come in and make a change in such a short timeframe. We have never done bylaws at a Special Town Meeting previously.

- Gerry Quam – Resident – A citizen can offer a petition at any town meeting. Also, as Seth mentioned, you are not really setting a precedent, as it still requires Board approval.

Jamie added that they have tried to not have expenditures at a Special Town Meeting that would affect the budget. We have also tried to make STM anything that on a larger scale that would affect the community held at the Annual Town Meeting where your quorum rate is higher and percentage rate is higher.

- Gerry Quam – Resident – The Town wants this. He does not really understand the delay. The overwhelming vote at the election shows that.
- Resident – Why are we going to continue to wait when there is explosive growth in our town. The community came out to the election and showed that they are in favor of this. This should have been done 20 years ago, and we are just continuing to miss out and it's way overdue.

Matt Mecum added that even though the town wants this, they still have a responsibility to make sure that it is being done correctly. If they don't do it correctly, in a year, they will have a room full of other people asking why it was done incorrectly. Matt is all for it but wants to make sure it is done correctly in this timeframe.

April wanted to shed some light on the administrative aspect of this. When it passed at Town Meeting, there was a 76 page document from DLS that advises the community how to process and what needs to be done on the back end of things. We have already been in discussion with the assessor's office, treasurer/collector has already been working on the trusts, and we are doing everything administratively on our end to make sure we hit the ground running. The surcharge cannot go into effect until the end of 2023 and we have to go through an entire fiscal year before the state funds will match. The state fund match will not close until June 30th, 2024, and then we will not see that money roll into the community until November of 2024. April stated that she does not feel that anyone here is trying to stop the bylaw, for her personally, she has a problem rubberstamping what another community did as each community should have the opportunity to make sure what you are adopting as a bylaw and setting up as a committee is exactly what you want it to be. She would like the information to be on the warrant so the community has the information in front of them prior to coming to the meeting and the answers before them instead of showing up at the meeting with lots of questions.

- Gerry Quam – Resident – Questioned if the biggest issue is the makeup of how many people will be on the committee.

Seth responded, yes. Gerry stated that as Arlene mentioned, overwhelmingly the towns that adopted the CPA opted for nine members and thinks everyone in this room would probably agree with an option of a nine-member board. Jamie added that there are a lot of moving parts that need to be figured out. Discussion continued.

- Mark Anttila – Resident – Once this thing is in place and we get the momentum going, it can also help us with grants. The longer we take to get this in place, the longer its going to get allow us to go for some of the grants.
- Nel Lazour – Resident – We have got a lot of participation from people who have worked hard on this to make this happen, we have gotten a lot of momentum and have people willing to serve. Most towns are choosing to appoint. Why would we go down the election road when all these other towns are appointing. We have enthusiastic individuals who will step right up to the plate; they are excited and enthusiastic to do this. She doesn't feel that any reason given isn't good enough to not put this on the warrant.

Matt stated that not good enough is his point. If you want to lose momentum, put a bylaw through that will have to go back in May because it wasn't done properly. If someone can tell him, they can get it done by December 12th to get it on the warrant then let's do it.

Stephen added that it is statutory, it's the make up of five to nine members and who is deciding that. Stephen stated that he can draft anything if he is told to do so but has not been told to do so yet. At some point, through some process, someone needs to decide what the makeup of this bylaw is going to be. We are going to have this bylaw; it's just that someone needs to make these decisions. Those residents that take the time to come out to the December meeting, he would like for them to have some information in front of them. He would like the warrant to read, as shown on a document filed in the Town Clerks office, so people are able to see what it is they are voting on. He isn't sure that we would have that since the warrant goes out tomorrow. If people are okay with having a handout of the bylaw at the meeting and having residents read about it at the meeting. Being able to use funds for administrative purposes is not going to be able to happen until Town Meeting 2024 unless we have a STM prior to the ATM.

In order of coming to a compromise tonight, Matt mentioned that we can leave it on the warrant, we can give it our best to get a bylaw done in time, we need to meet one more time to discuss everything, and if we can't or if something changes, we can always strike the article by vote at Town Meeting. Matt stated that he would be happy tonight with committing to work on it, leave it on the warrant and see if it can be done. The Board decided to leave it on there and come to the next meeting with he plans of finalizing everything.

Article 5: Facility Assessment \$35,000:

Carol Costello, Superintendent, came with Meghan Grill and Lori Hart from the School Committee. Looking to get a facility assessment for Boylston Elementary School to determine what their key issues are and what needs to happen first.

Jamie mentioned that he again does not like financial requests at Special Town Meetings. April stated that Finance Committee came before the Board of Selectmen about three years prior and requested that we do not put free cash articles on Special Town Meeting because of the low quorum, and that they would like free cash articles approved at Annual Town Meetings, so they said they would not recommend approval of free cash articles at the Special Town Meeting. Seth asked if they specifically addressed this article and April responded yes, that they stated they would not be supporting this article at the upcoming Special Town Meeting.

Megan Grill stated that they are hoping to get this study done so that they can appropriately budget, so that when they go to town meeting in May to ask for money, they can have this study as the recommendation. Seth stated that he does appreciate the sense of planning.

Gerry Quam – Resident – If the Finance Committee does not recommend this, what are the chances that it doesn't get approved at the STM. Jamie responded that it will most likely pass as it's for the school and parents will come out to vote.

Kathy Richard – Resident – That school has had problems since day one and if we can get an overall plan to see what needs to be done, I think it is money well spent.

Seth stated that he is okay with leaving this on the warrant. Matt and Jamie agreed.

Jamie Underwood made a motion to approve the Special Town Meeting Warrant for December 2022, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.

Town Administrators Report to the BoS:

1. *Feasibility Study Committee:* The Feasibility Study Committee was able to meet with John Catlin from Catlin Architectures on Thursday, November 10th. The meeting went well and everyone on the committee is excited to move forward. I have sent John a copy of the contract for the project. Once he has signed the contract, I will put it before the board for execution.
2. *Worcester Regional Retirement System Benefit Seminar:* Michael Sacco from the WRRS came to host a benefits seminar to all employees who were interested in how the pension system works and to answer any questions employees may have about the process. The presentation can be found here if anyone is interested in the member information that was presented.
3. *Subsidized Housing Inventory List:* I received notification from the state that they were in receipt of the Town's HPP Certification Request, however, DHCD's Legal Department and the units for the Trailside Apartments development are not on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)- aka 10% list. I have submitted the form requesting new units to the state along with a copy of the Trailside Apartments Comprehensive Permit. This should resolve the issue and allow the units to be added to the 10% list.

Review and approval of Joslin's Lot RFP:

Stephen Madaus reminded the Board that the evaluation of this parcel is below the price threshold for public solicitations, but we are issuing it anyway. The threshold is \$35,000. Stephen explained the process the Board went through regarding selling this parcel as well as the conservation restriction attached to it.

Matt Mecum made a motion to approve Joslin's Lot RFP, Jamie Underwood seconded. Voted all in favor.

Vote to approve Winter Parking Ban:

Matt Mecum made a motion to approve the Winter Parking Ban for 2022-2023, Jamie Underwood seconded. Voted all in favor.

Selectmen's Miscellaneous:

Jamie Underwood stated that it's been brought to his attention that the Wachusett Recycling that Boylston is apart of offers money back to the town, but Boylston is not apart of it because "the paperwork is too much". Jamie stated we need to find out who is responsible for this and to get this done.

Jamie stated that he was approached by a few people regarding the heavily attended elections and asked residents to keep spots in front of the Town Hall available; posting no parking signs for these spots during elections. April stated that she will speak with Bob to get these spots reserved.

Citizens Comments:

Gerry Quam – Resident – Speed bumps on Sewell Street. Gerry left his house and drove towards the school, came upon the curve and there were two people jogging on the left side and as he was passing them a black pick-up truck came in the opposite direction. He was forced to go up onto the lawn. It's only a matter of time before something happens here. He brought up a speed bump that Berlin put down that is fifteen feet long and asked if this is something the Board would look into. Gerry requested that the Highway Department pave across from his driveway in a little cutout so that he can pull into his driveway. He stated it would take the plow guy 12-15 seconds, but they declined to do it. Seth stated that it is something they will bring up to the Highway Superintendent.

At 8:25 PM Matt Mecum made a motion to go into Executive Session for:

EXECUTIVE SESSION (closed to the public): ***Per MGL c.30A, §21, (3): To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares. – Police and Dispatchers Union***

Will not return to open session. Jamie Underwood seconded. Voted all in favor.

Roll call vote: Matt Mecum: Yes, Jamie Underwood: Yes, and Seth Ridinger: Yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Mack, Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

Meeting Materials

Agenda	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Local IQ Proof of Publication	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
STM December 12 th , 2022 Warrant	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Community Preservation Act Article	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Community Preservation Committee Bylaw	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office

Community Preservation Act Timeline
Request for Proposals – Joslin’s Lot
Boylston Winter Parking Ban
Building Inspectors Report
Town Administrators Report

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