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**Town of Swampscott
Board of Assessors
Open Session Meeting Minutes
Monday, January 8, 2024**

BOARD OF ASSESSORS MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Tasia Vasiliou (TV), Vice Chair Neil Sheehan (NS), Secretary Lara Goodman (LG)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT: Director of Assessment Cheryl Moschella (CM), Select Board Liaison Mary Ellen Fletcher (MF), Acting Human Resources Director Peter Kane (PK)

OPEN SESSION: Convened at: 11:48 am

Minutes:

Motion to approve Open Session Meeting Minutes from 11/16/2023 and 12/7/2023.

Motion: NS

Second: LG

Rollcall Vote: UNANIMOUS

Discussion: Policy and goals were discussed as follows:

Assessing Office Staffing:

- NS expressed concerns about the Assessing Department being staffed on a part-time basis and recommended full-time staffing. TV agreed and said that this was previously discussed with the Town Administrator. The Board will submit a letter to the Town requesting the office be staffed full-time.

Value Approvals:

- Date for receipt of values: The Board agreed that the completed values for each fiscal year need to be submitted to the Board by October 1st. CM will reach out to Patriot Properties to discuss/confirm this date.
- The Board requested that this date be worked into the contract with Patriot Properties. The date is not included in the three-year contract currently in place. CM will inquire whether or not the contract can be amended. She will also check with Finance and the Treasurer's Office to see when the completed values are needed for setting the tax rate. The Board will discuss with MF what information the Select Board needs from the Board of Assessors (BOA) for the classification hearing.

Policy/Goals:

- Review/Follow-up: The Board stressed that the Board, Assessing Department, and Patriot Properties need to be proactive throughout the year regarding issues that need to be reviewed and/or resolved include 109 properties, golf course properties, ocean front values, neighborhood codes, and town properties.

The Board requested a list of current ATB matters be provided to the Board on a monthly basis, together with a list of closed ATB matters reflecting the status of closure.

- The office annual report was discussed. PK clarified that boards and departments are responsible for their own separate annual reports to the Town Clerk. The Board requested that a copy of the Assessing Department's annual report be provided to the Board. PK said that while the Board would not review the department's report prior to approval, the Assessing Department could share it after approval.
- Needed signatures from the Board were discussed. An in-person quarterly meeting may be put in place to address this.

Other Business: LG questioned why letters enclosing abatement applications that the Board voted to send to residents in specific neighborhoods around the school were not mailed. CM said that there was no concrete direction provided as to who would be mailing these letters, that it was her understanding that the Board voted for the Board to send the letters. She added that she discussed this with the Town Administrator and PK who stressed that specific audiences cannot be targeted for providing abatement applications, they would need to be sent to the entire town.

(LG recused herself from the discussion and left the meeting at 12:53 pm)

TV questioned why it was not communicated to the Board that the letters would not be sent. PK said that the Board would need to talk with Sean Fitzgerald regarding this concern, but that feedback should have been provided to the Board.

There was discussion regarding who the Assessing Office reports to and communication procedures. PK clarified that all staff reports to the Town Administrator, with the exception of the Town Administrator who reports to the Select Board. It was previously misunderstood that staff reports to boards. He further stated that there is a town organization chart on the town website. PK added that while it is great that the Board is putting together policy but to ensure that they are not in conflict with the Board and Committee Handbook. There is no policy on communication in place.

(LG rejoined the meeting at 1:06 pm)

CM said that she would like the Board/Assessing relationship to be collaborative. She also said that she does not agree that full-time is needed but does feel that more than 15 hours is needed for her position. At this point the Board voted to enter into Executive Session.

Executive Session:

Motion to enter and into and not return from Executive Session for purpose 3 and 7.

1. Executive Session – Pursuant to G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(7) (“Purpose 7”), the Board will meet in executive session to discuss, comply with, and/or act under the authority of G.L. c.59, §60 and related privacy laws; votes may be taken.
2. Executive Session – Pursuant to G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3) (“Purpose 3”), the Board will meet in executive session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.

Motion: NS

Second: LG

Rollcall Vote: UNANIMOUS

Adjourned at: 1:09 pm