

January 20, 2016
Sussex County Board of Taxation
Regular Meeting
Minutes

Open Public Meetings Act Statement

The Regular Meeting of the Sussex County Board of Taxation was opened by President John Fierro; with a reading of the Open Public Meetings Act, at 9:08 AM.

Followed by: **Salute to the Flag**

Roll Call: Mr. George Conway, Present; Mr. Rich Ecke, will be late; Mr. John Fierro, Present.

Approval of Minutes - December 16, 2015 – Regular Meeting

President John Fierro introduced the Minutes from the December 16, 2015 - Regular Meeting of the Tax Board, and asked if everyone had had an opportunity to review the Minutes, Commissioner George Conway said he'd reviewed the minutes, had no changes and made a Motion accept the minutes. President Fierro seconded the Motion; all in favor.

OLD BUSINESS –

Resolution for Spending Cap (Office Reconstruction)

Melissa Rockwell, County Tax Administrator told the Board that she hadn't prepared a Resolution, as previously discussed; for the spending cap on the office reconstruction, but would have it for the February meeting.

As far as the office reconstruction, Facilities has been coming in regularly, checking outlets, and putting together material lists. Once they put the list together, they'll give Ms. Rockwell a copy so that she will have an idea of the costs; the Tax Board will be responsible for the Material, and the County will pay for the labor. We are close to appeal season, and Ms. Rockwell said she wouldn't be able to allow them to start the project at this time; so the project is going to have to be put on the "back-burner" for now.

Commissioner George Conway asked "who is our new liaison?" President John Fierro replied "Rich Vohden." Mr. Vohden was a good liaison a couple years back and showed some interest in our department; that's good for us.

At this time, President Fierro said, "for the record, Commissioner Rich Ecke has now joined us (9:36 AM)."

NEW BUSINESS –

Resignation Letter – Township of Walpack

County Tax Administrator Melissa Rockwell introduced a letter from Mr. Jason Laliker, resigning from his position as Tax Assessor, Township of Walpack. President Fierro asked how long Mr. Laliker had the Town of Walpack, to which Ms. Rockwell said, for one year.

New Tax Assessor/Township of Sandyston

Ms. Rockwell told the Board, Mrs. Kathy Kieb will replace Mr. Robert Pastor as the new Assessor in the Township of Sandyston, and that she (Ms. Rockwell), has received a Resolution in that regard.

2016 Commissioner's Conference

Ms. Rockwell provided the Board with some information about the upcoming Commissioners Conference on Wednesday – March 16, 2016, at “The Conference Center at Mercer” (West Windsor). Although the NJACTB (New Jersey Association of County Tax Boards) hasn't set up registration yet, Ms. Rockwell said they do have a tentative schedule as to what they're going to be discussing, and she went over some of the details with the Board.

2016 Regular Tax Appeals

The 2016 Regular Tax Appeal Packages have been sent out for printing; the package is also available at the County of Sussex Board of Taxation website.

Township of Vernon-Reassessment/Revaluation

The following representatives from the Township of Vernon, Lynne Schweighardt, Tax Assessor, and Council Women Jean Murphy and Sandra Ooms. The Board was informed the Mayor Shortway would not be attending the meeting.

Mr. Jack Flood, Vice President of Spatial Data Logic, (a registered engineering firm with the State of New Jersey; contracted with the Township of Vernon in 2013), and Mr. Rich Shultz, Surveyor, gave the Board an update on the Township's Maps. Mr. Flood told the Board they were basically getting to the end of the process of the actual drafting work; they believe they should have the maps ready for submittal to the State within the next month or two, or even three months. After that point, he would expect the State to do its review within three (3), to six (6) months' time to get it compiled. They (Spatial Data Logic) will be doing a re-numbering because they will be doing an entirely new layout of the maps; they will all be done to scale. A brief discussion ensued regarding Vernon Township's Tax Maps.

President Fierro explained to the Vernon Township representatives the importance of a Revaluation, and that the Township has had quite a large number appeals the past several years, and informed them that when the Township loses a single appeal, they are responsible for the refund 100%; so they are losing any county and school funding that may have come out of that tax bill. When you're talking about refunding \$300,000.00 or \$400,000.00 through appeals, some of that money is coming from the school fund and from the county fund, which obviously the municipality does not recoup. President Fierro discussed some other important statistical information concerning the importance of a municipal-wide Revaluation.

Melissa Rockwell, County Tax Administrator produced, and explained in detail, certain statistical data regarding the Township of Vernon, such as number of tax appeals in 2015 (422 appeals), and Coefficient of Deviation Market Data from 01/01/2015 to 01/19/2016; the data suggests where the “town” is headed; Commissioner Conway confirmed with the Vernon Township representatives, that the sales are coming in almost 11% lower than “assessed value.” Mrs. Lynne Schweighardt, Tax Assessor, Vernon Township, told Council Women Murphy and Ooms, that her job is to look at numbers, and the numbers do show that its really skewed in Vernon, and it hurts when you have so many property tax appeals, and your ratio goes against your “certified” January value. Discussion’s continued between the Board, and the Representatives from Vernon Township.

President John Fierro asked the Township Representatives if there were any thoughts or comments regarding the data that the County has provided in the discussions regarding the Township of Vernon; a great deal of additional details and ideas were exchanged.

President Fierro said he thought, realistically, he feels a Revaluation should be ordered for 2018; although if it looks like there is not enough time, it can be moved to 2019. President John Fierro made a Motion to Order the Revaluation to go on the books for 2018, Commissioner George Conway seconded the Motion; all in favor.

There being no further business to come before the Board, President John Fierro asked for a Motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:58AM, Commissioner George Conway seconded the motion; all in favor.

Respectfully submitted by,

Marylou Hennighan
County of Sussex
Board of Taxation