

TOWN OF GOSHEN
EMERGENCY TOWN BOARD MEETING

March 14, 2012
MINUTES

An emergency meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Goshen was held on the 14th day of March, 2012 at the Town Hall located at 41 Webster Avenue, Village of Goshen, County of Orange, State of New York.

Present:	Douglas Bloomfield	Supervisor
	Philip Canterino	Councilman
	Louis Cappella	Councilman
	George Lyons	Councilman
	Kenneth Newbold	Councilman

Also Present:	Dennis Caplicki	Attorney for the Town
	Priscilla Gersbeck	Deputy Town Clerk

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Bloomfield at 3:30pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

This meeting was called “not because the subject matter is an emergency it’s because of the timing associated with this” stated **Supervisor Bloomfield**. He gave a brief background as to the re-valuation process. Two years ago, the Assessor requested to do a property re-valuation. The last property valuation was done in 1998 and is recommended to have one every decade. John McCarey’s group from the Orange County Office of Real Property has been assisting us and also helping to pay for the re-valuation. Working with the Assessor, JoAnn Soules, we hired a consultant, Robert Hilbert who has municipal experience in re-valuations.

The Board Members have received *numerous complaints* from property owners about their re-valuation. However, the Board Members are not in the position to represent property owners to the Assessor, who is an appointed position for six years. The Assessor’s office can be located anywhere within Goshen. The Board Members are the legislative body for the Town and are responsible for the Town. The Town funds the assessing portion and the re-valuation. Clarifying the Board Members position, “We do not get involved in the day-to-day activities of the assessing office” stated Supervisor Bloomfield.

After an *informational* meeting with Ms. Soules and the consultant yesterday, it was decided to call this public meeting today. We need to make a decision today to abort the re-val or to stay with it, because the tentative roll is due on May 1. The roll is going to reflect the new technology/methodology or remain the old way for another year. As a reminder, the Town represents around 10% of your tax bill, about 70% represents the schools and the remaining 20% encompasses the Village, County, Fire Departments and Library.

Supervisor Bloomfield called for comments from the Board Members.

Councilman Canterino noted that historically the state comes down with an equalization rate every year. This number represents the state or localities judgment of how closely assessed values match the true market values. Equalization rates are used to ensure that property taxes are assessed equally and in proportion to fair market value across the municipality. What has happened is that property values started to decline and people were questioning the values of their property and their taxes. Therefore, the amount of people filing for a reduction has dramatically increased. If the assessed value is reduced, then obviously the tax burden falls on the people who didn't file for a reduction. "What we really tried to do was to level the playing field and bring everything up to 100% of the value and stop all the litigation". It was decided that this was a good time to re-valuate, because many people are paying taxes for someone else and many may not be paying their fair share.

However: the Board Members just found out what the results were of the re-valuation. The Board and the Assessor has not had enough time to analyze the data, where it came from, the process that was used and the information that was put into the system. "The results are traumatic, the way I see it."

Some of the increases are unimaginable. He feels that we should back-off and take our time. The information collected and the data bases used should be checked to make sure that it's germane to us in Orange County and to our homes in Goshen.

There are so many things to be understood and at this particular time he has not had the opportunity to really understand the whole process and as whether it was a proper process. In addition, this will give our Assessor more time to clean up any of the loose ends. On a positive note, all of the data that was collected is still valid. We are not going to have to redo the whole process.

Councilman Lyons agreed with Councilman Canterino. He gave an example of a home in Harness Estates that was assessed differently from similar homes in that development. In this example, the home was assessed about \$100,000 over what the current selling price is. "At this particular stage, I am not comfortable at all with the information." He believes that at this point a number of the homes and assessments are essentially wrong. He feels that the Town should hold back to re-evaluate the re-val.

"I want to thank JoAnn and her staff. That report is quite thorough and is quite extensive, a lot of work" stated **Councilman Newbold**. He was even shocked when he opened his mail. "Yikes"! He feels that the extra time is necessary to gather more information.

Councilman Cappella has also received many calls complaining of the re-val assessments. In agreeing with Councilman Canterino, to see if the data is right -this is a two-way street. Each property owner should be responsible to check if their property data is correct. There were people who have recently gone for refinancing and discovered that the Assessor's figures were "right-on-the-money". On the other hand, some of the people ignored the data mailers that were sent out from the Assessor's office. Now we can see how important those mailers were. If there is a disagreement with the re-val assessment, then please make an appointment with the Assessor's office to recheck the data. In fact, he is going to have his property data rechecked. Secondly, he doesn't feel that this is not the right time to present the re-val. The Country is in a serious economic situation. "It's the pulse of the community, everything relates. When somebody goes into your pocket it's all relevant." Please make sure that you tell the Assessor's office if something is wrong with your re-valuation.

Supervisor Bloomfield summarized the consensus of the Board. It was expected that a certain number of people would be dissatisfied if there was an increase in their valuation. However, it should be defensible. It is NOT the responsibility of the Board to recheck all of the numbers in the re-val. It is the responsibility of the Assessor, her consultants and her staff to verify the systems, procedures, data base etc... If we were to go forward with this; there would be a three step process. First, to attend an informal assessment hearing. Secondly, if the issue wasn't resolved, then you would go to the Grievance Board

Of Assessment Review. If you are still dissatisfied, then you can file a Small Claims Assessment Review (SCAR) where you literally go before a Judge. He will decide your case.

At this time:

Supervisor Bloomfield made the motion to continue this re-valuation system for one more year to recheck the data for a better understanding and to continue with the current valuation system that has been in place. Councilman Canterino seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Councilman Canterino recognized the Assessor for she has the ultimate authority. She has also asked to use the year to tweak the system to make sure that everything is done correctly.

Councilman Lyons inquired if the interviews should be continued or temporarily put on hold. Answer: At this time the Assessor will be busy backing-out of the re-valuation. She is has to reconstruct the old values for the tentative roll due in May.

Councilman Lyons wanted to clarify the vote: if the vote is aye, that means to *extend* the re-valuation process for one more year.

Upon Roll Call Vote:

Supervisor, Douglas Bloomfield	<u>AYE</u>	Councilperson, Philip Canterino	<u>AYE</u>
Councilperson, Louis Cappella	<u>AYE</u>	Councilperson, Kenneth Newbold	<u>AYE</u>
Councilperson, George Lyons	<u>AYE</u>		

Vote: Resolution carried by a vote of 5 to 0.

Supervisor Bloomfield thanked everyone for coming out on such a short notice. He also thanked John McCarey from the Orange County Real Property Tax office, our consultant Robert Hilbert, our Assessor JoAnn Soules and her staff for all of the hours they have worked on this new system.

Councilman Newbold recognized the presence of Village Mayor Kyle Roddey representing the Village residents and the Superintendent of Schools Daniel Connor, also some firemen and library representatives for this impacts all of us.

Councilman Cappella made the motion to adjourn the emergency meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Newbold. Motion Carried.

ADJOURNMENT: 4:00 PM

Priscilla Gersbeck, Deputy Town Clerk