

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TOWN HALL BUILDING  
8 PARK STREET

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Monday, October 19, 2020, 5:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

**CALL TO ORDER:** On the above date the Board of Selectmen held a meeting on the first floor of Adams Town Hall. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Board of Selectmen Chairman Hoyt. Present were Vice Chairman Blanchard, Members Duval, Nowak, and Town Administrator Green. Attending remotely were Town Assessor MacDonald, Town Accountant Beverly. Tax Collector/Treasurer Rice joined remotely at 5:20 p.m.

**Chairman Hoyt** advised that “pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 *Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18*, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Adams Board of Selectmen is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A recording of this meeting is available for anyone who wishes. Rule of 10 in place according to Code Enforcement for the size of the room in accordance with the Governor’s order. All meetings have been uploaded to the Town’s YouTube site.

**PUBLIC CALL-IN:**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://zoom.us/j/95530487709?pwd=NGhZT0JQRDgzNUpoSIVYTHA2RDdEUT09>

Meeting ID: 955 3048 7709; Passcode: BOS1019

**Dial In:** (929) 436-2866 US (New York); Meeting ID: 955 3048 7709; Passcode: 7227001

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Tax Rate Classification Information & Data Review:** *Chairman Hoyt* reviewed that Town Assessor MacDonald had provided information to the Board Members last week and advised the classification hearing will be held on Wednesday. *Town Assessor MacDonald* explained the classifications. She noted that if a single tax rate was selected it would be 23.38 and since 1991 Adams has done the split rate. She advised that based on the numbers and valuation, the total was \$523,698,379. She pointed out that sales this summer were incredible but are not part of this configuration because the numbers are based on 2019 and next year we will see the sales in 2020. Numbers included in the 2019 calendar year were clarified and it was explained that in certain circumstances it had to go back to 2018. She noted the software conversion took place and due to the pandemic and going through the Division of Local Services (DLS) and the Department of Revenue (DOR) the department wasn’t able to have the documentation done until June 1, 2020 and it was submitted to the state the first week of June. As the state was backlogged approval was not received until September 1<sup>st</sup>. She advised that the auditor compared the new data with the old data and found that the values were comparable and all the data went over correctly. A couple of issues were noted but there was nothing that wasn’t able to be worked out. She reported that the conversion was difficult because the new software is not as good but the Assessors Office is working with it and it is expected to be good for the Town in the future. It was explained that Tyler software

was selected as it is part of Munis, so the two would work together. *Member Duval* advised of articles published regarding state budget process where the governor level funded budgets and inquired if it comes in level funded if the current funding goes into the General Fund or if the Town reopens and readjusts the tax rate. It was clarified that in August the Governor stated his intention was to level-fund general government aid at Fiscal Year 2020 numbers so there was a foundation to build the budget around. In the last couple weeks, the Fiscal Year 2021 state budget was worked on and the Cherry Sheets were issued last Thursday at slightly more than what was budgeted. It was noted that during the first quarter of the year if the receipts are not good the Governor could go back and cut funding. It was noted that if the Town receives additional money it will go into Free Cash. It was explained that it is anticipated the state budget will be in place in December and though it doesn't mean the Governor will cut local aid, it will be something to be aware of down the road. It was pointed out that the Governor said he may take money from the Rainy-Day Fund for the budget. Home sales in Adams were noted as being good over the three or four months and it is not clear whether the sales are for primary or second homes. The Assessor's Office will be sending out a questionnaire to everyone that bought a house this year to determine whether it is a secondary home or not. It was noted that there are unfamiliar names on the transactions and some people came from the city and are working remotely and considering this home their primary residence. It was pointed out that there were many apartment or duplex complexes sold but primarily single-family homes were purchased by current landlords in Adams and Pittsfield. It was noted that a number of new businesses have opened this year and the Town Clerk provides that information to the Assessor's Office on January 1<sup>st</sup> so they can send out a mailing to catch new businesses. It was explained that the gas line installations in progress on Summer Street and other locations will be reflected in next year's personal property numbers. Personal Property numbers reportedly had a new growth increase this year of \$1.5 Million, 90% of which was utilities. \$1.5 Million in new growth was also reported from residential properties. It was noted that next year will show more because the cutoff is June 30<sup>th</sup> and some of the houses going up now will be in next year's data. It was clarified that there were two new houses in 2019, and there are three or four already being built which will be in the 2020 numbers. Commercial and Industrial also showed \$500,000 in new growth this year. They were outlined as being a couple of new buildings on the Route 8 corridor. It was explained that the Town now has a very active building commissioner that is catching things, which has helped a lot. The increase in number of building permits was pointed out and has been a factor in some of the new growth. It was explained when houses go up for sale with brand new kitchens and bathrooms the values are off because they hadn't been caught by building permits but the current Building Commissioner is very active and looking at these. *Chairman Hoyt* asked for the commercial rate of neighboring communities and this will be researched for Wednesday's meeting. The options of the shift were reviewed and an inquiry was made if the Board of Assessors had any recommendations or comments. Their concern was noted as being a desire not to out-tax the small business people or Specialty Minerals as a big business. Caution was expressed about changing the shift to a stronger commercial side because what businesses are here are needed. It was pointed out that there are a lot of little stores with mixed use coming into play and 82% is residential so the Board needs to understand that there is a need to keep the community growing and keeping the commercial rate equitable is important. It was clarified that a 1.20 or 1.25 shift will affect commercial property more. It was noted that one year the Town was very close to having a single tax rate but it would have been too much of a jump. *Treasurer/Tax Collector Rice* was asked for her input and she advised she agrees that it would raise it way too high and would be hard on homeowners especially as some are in payment plans and keeping it split is ideal. She was asked to provide a list of properties that Town owns throughout the community and she advised she can get the list from Town Assessor MacDonald and go through them to decide if the Town wants to put them up for auction. It was noted that some of the parcels have to be determined for ownership, and tax record-keeping for acquired parcels needs to be looked at before they can be auctioned off. It was pointed out that the Town is asked frequently about selling one parcel but it is not Town owned. Another parcel once had developments planned, was subdivided and not built on because it was all ledge. *Member Duval* inquired about the East Street property that once housed the Youth Center, and the former Curtis Fine Paper. It was noted that the East Street property will be going out to bid again and Town Counsel St. John III will be asked about the status of Curtis Fine Paper. Memorial School is going out to bid and the Greylock Glen next. Curtis Fine Paper still tied up in land court due to Covid-19 and without it some land court processes continue going on for years.

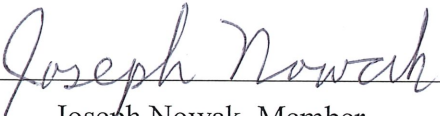
*Treasurer/Tax Collector Rice* advised if the Board votes on the Tax Classification on Wednesday night the tax bills will go out right away as she doesn't want to burden the taxpayers with paying taxes the week before Christmas. *Town Accountant Beverly* noted that the Town has been going with 15% shift for several years and it is a good place to stay because it would be lower than what is in the Finance Committee book. It was pointed out that it takes a couple of days because it is necessary to submit it to the state to get the tax rate finalized so the Tax Collector can get the tax bills out. The Tax Classification Hearing is scheduled for 7:20 pm on Wednesday, and everyone was thanked for reviewing the data in a workshop before the hearing and giving recommendations. It was explained that everyone was asked to attend by Zoom on Wednesday and Town Assessor MacDonald was asked to do another overview for residents and businesses. An inquiry was made about getting an average increase in tax assessment per household and it was noted there is a slight increase from 1% – 3.5%, which is very low this year for residential properties. Commercial and Industrial will be around 4%. Based on the Fiscal Year 2021 budget presentation, the average single-family household amount of \$3,368 would increase by \$147. If the base budget was estimated on a tax rate of a 15% shift it would be around \$22.62 if the vote on the shift passes. A request was made for the Town Assessor to come to the meeting in person if possible, and it was clarified that all attendees on the call were invited and given the option to come in person or attend via Zoom. A clarification was made on data options for classification data, and a clerical error will be rectified.

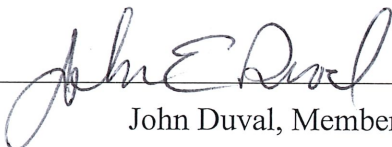
**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND GOOD OF THE ORDER:** *There were no announcements or comments made.*


**ADJOURNMENT:** *Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to adjourn the meeting, second by Member Duval. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 5:53 p.m.*

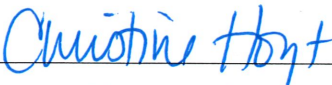
Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,

Recording Secretary

  
Joseph Nowak, Member

  
John Duval, Member

  
Richard Blanchard, Vice Chair

  
Christine Hoyt, Chairman