

WISCASSET BOARD OF SELECTMEN,
BOARD OF ASSESSORS AND OVERSEERS OF THE POOR
JANUARY 15, 2013, 6 P.M.

Tape recorded meeting

Present: Judy Colby, Bill Curtis, Chair Pam Dunning, Vice Chair Ed Polewarczyk, Jeff Slack and
Town Manager Laurie Smith

1. 6 p.m. Call to Order

Pam Dunning called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America

3. Maine DOT Road Safety Audit Project Work Plan with Gerry Audibert

Gerry Audibert summarized the meetings with the selectmen and the work done by the DOT since June 4, 2012 developing alternatives that could be pursued with a benefit/cost ratio greater than 1.0. Recommendations include extending the sidewalk system from Lee Street/Bradford Road to the existing village sidewalk and provide a crossing from the County Seat to the Town Office; a traffic signal at Water Street and a pedestrian-activated warning light (flashing red) at Middle Street.

Also being considered is making Water Street one-way inbound (toward Route 1) and Middle Street one-way outbound. A signal at Route 27 in Edgecomb is also being considered with speed adjustments. Audibert said nothing is definite and from a realistic time frame aspect, he expects the sidewalks will be the first project. The intersections will require some discussion. A crosswalk on the south side of Water Street is also recommended as well as bumping out the sidewalks on Main Street to shorten the distance of the crosswalk.

The next step is to publish the work plan. Audibert was optimistic that the sidewalks would be done; the other improvements will depend upon funding.

Ed Polewarczyk moved to continue supporting the MDOT with potential traffic improvement projects in Wiscasset. Vote 5-0-0.

4. 6:30 p.m. Assessors' Workshop

No. 5 - Luis E. Serrano (U17-001, Acct #1769)

Mr. Serrano requested an abatement of his taxes based on similar properties being taxed less than his and the fact that he is not on a town road. Comparisons he cited were in different neighborhoods, had fewer square feet or were based on real estate listings. Sue Varney, Assessors' Agent explained the assessment is based on the neighborhood, square feet and features in the house such as bathrooms or finished basement and that unless Mr. Serrano's assessment was based on erroneous information, taxes could not be abated. She volunteered to visit the Serrano's house to determine if the assessment is correct.

No. 6 – William and Cheryl Thayer (R02-017-D, Acct. #215)

An abatement was requested because the square footage of the house and porch was incorrect and the assessment was based on the deck and gazebo which were not built as of April. Mr. Thayer said the garage did not have a second story, just pull-down stairs and a crawl space. Varney will recalculate the assessment with the corrected information. **Judy Colby moved to grant the abatement to the Thayers valued at \$68,600 resulting in a refund of \$1,090,74. Vote 4-1-0.**

10. Richard Thomas and Karen Dilley (R07-020-002, Acct. #924)

An abatement was requested because the assessment was high based on recent real estate listings in the area. Varney explained that listings cannot be used as comparables and unless there were statistical errors, an abatement could not be made. Mr. Thomas will review the data and if he needs Varney to do an inspection, he will contact her.

In response to Ed Polewarczyk's question, Varney said there have not been enough recent sales to use in revaluating properties in any part of town.

No. 1&2 – Martina and Terry Moore (U01-089, Acct. #1226 and U01-105, Acct. # 1243)

The request was based on the fact that assessed value was higher than the sales price. Varney said the data was correct and she recommended denying the abatement. **Judy Colby moved to deny abatement on properties 1 and 2 for lack of information. Vote 5-0-0.**

No. 3 – John G. Rafter, Jr. (U06-023-B, Acct. #2609)

Varney said an error was made in not considering the lack of Route 1 access and she recommended the abatement. **Ed Polewarczyk moved to approve the abatement. 5-0-0.**

No. 4 – Belinda Haggett (U09-010-001, Acct. # 1581)

Varney recommended abatement because the property was overvalued due to its age; the mobile home condition had deteriorated and the value should have reflected that fact. **Judy Colby moved to approve the abatement. Vote 5-0-0.**

No. 7 – Midcoast Properties, LLC (R03-033-001, Acct. # 353)

The owner is requesting an abatement of taxes paid by the previous owner. The property is valued at \$1.8 million and the new owner paid \$1.3million; however, the property is assessed less than the other three like businesses. Varney recommended not approving the abatement because no errors were provided by the owner and the current owner did not own the property on April 1. **Judy Colby moved to deny abatement No. 7. Vote 5-0-0.**

No. 8 – Walter Crossman (R03-069-015, Acct. #436)

Varney recommended approving the abatement as the property was assessed for a full basement when it has only a crawl space. **Judy Colby moved to approve the abatement. Vote 5-0-0.**

No. 9 – James and Elizabeth Hunton (R07-020-001, Act. #923)

Varney recommended not approving the abatement as there were no errors made in the data and the property is treated the same as other properties in the neighborhood. **Judy Colby moved to deny the abatement. Vote 5-0-0.**

No. 11 – George Wilson (R07-039-001)

The assessor was not aware that this mobile home was sold to Harold Ralph and moved out of town in October 2011. **Judy Colby moved to approve the abatement. Vote 5-0-0.**

No. 12 – Village Car Care (Personal Property #23)

This abatement is to clear the books for taxes owed by a previous owner which are uncollectable. The Treasurer recommended approving the abatement. **Judy Colby moved to approve the abatement. Vote 5-0-0.**

Discussion regarding Hale Pond Road

The residents of Hale Pond Road, a private road, have twice petitioned the Town to accept and take over the maintenance of the road as is. The residents have expressed the opinion that if they are not on a town-maintained road, that should be reflected in a reduction of taxes. Varney consulted with other assessors, reviewed the properties on Hale Pond Road as well as properties on other town roads, and reviewed sales on private roads for the past few years. The base home site unit value on eight private roads and on one public road was the same, indicating that the properties are treated the same whether on private or public roads.

A questionnaire sent by the assessors' agent to owners on private roads indicated that some owners thought it improved the value of their homes to be on a private road. Varney said that private roads do not take away value. Other towns do not give a reduction in value because the road is private. Fire, ambulance and police departments will respond and children in these neighborhoods attend schools and ride the buses. Varney did not recommend a reduction in value, as all area properties were treated the same. A property recently sold for 104% of assessed value in that neighborhood.

Monique McRae asked that the town take over the grading and maintenance of the road as is. She said not all the owners on the road now contribute to its upkeep. Joshua Andrei had been maintaining the road but only six or seven out of the 25 owners on the road have been paying for plowing. He said there would never be enough contributions to bring the road up to specs and he has ruined his equipment trying to maintain it. He said that soon emergency vehicles will not be able to get down the road, there will be no trash pickup, no cable, and no mail delivery and there won't be equal town services to the residents on Hale Pond Road.

Laurie Smith said many towns have the same problem. She said there were three issues: the perceived difference in valuation because the road is not paved, the fact that the town cannot maintain a road unless it is a public way, and currently the town has no road specifications other than those for roads in subdivisions and no specifications for a gravel road which could eventually be accepted as a town road. She said that what the town could conceivably want, in lieu of bringing a road up to the subdivision standards, was at the very least that the road base be elevated so there is good drainage and a top coat

put on so it can be maintained. If the board were in favor, the town could establish a bare minimum that a contractor could put a price on, but the selectmen would have to research what effect it would have on the town to maintain all private roads in town if they were brought up to that standard. Several board members asked that Greg Griffin, Road Commissioner, inspect the road and make a recommendation. The matter will be on the February 19 agenda.

13. Poverty abatement #979 (executive session)

Bill Curtis moved to go into executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. Section 405 (6)(A) to discuss a poverty abatement. Vote 5-0-0. The board entered executive session at 8:12 and exited at 8:40 p.m.
Judy Colby moved to award \$1,000 abatement off the 2012 taxes contingent upon his paying the remaining 2011 and 2012 tax bills. Vote 5-0-0.

The board entered executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. Section 405 (6)(E) for consultation with legal counsel. The board exited executive session at 9:12 p.m.

5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.