



City of Malden

Malden City Hall
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Meeting Minutes - Final Finance Committee

Councillor Murphy, Chair
Councillor Condon, Vice-Chair
Councillor-at-Large Karen Colon-Hayes
Councillor Jadeane Sica
Councillor Christopher Simonelli
Councillor Stephen Winslow

Tuesday, March 1, 2022

6:00 PM

City Hall-Room#105 Large Board Room
215 Pleasant Street

Roll Call

Councillor Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:03 P.M.

Present: 6 - Councillor Barbara Murphy, Councillor Paul Condon, Karen Colon Hayes, Jadeane Sica, Chris Simonelli and Stephen Winslow

Minutes to be Approved

[77-22](#)

Minutes of February 15, 2022 to be approved.

A motion was made by Councillor Simonelli, seconded by Councillor Sica, that the Committee Minutes of February 15, 2022 be tabled to the Finance Committee. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Business

[49-22](#)

Nate Cramer, the City Assessor, will appear before the committee to provide an update on the Assessor's Department.

Attachments: [Assessors Presentation 3122](#)

Councillor Murphy explained we had Nate in last year when he first started and he gave an update on changes in the Assessor's office. Nate came in with a fresh outlook and she is sure it has progressed even further and looks forward to hearing what's going on in the Assessor's Office.

Nate made a brief Power Point Presentation on 2021 Accomplishments and 2022 Goals. (see attached) The office consists of Nate, Director, Diane Mackin, Assistant Assessor, Elisabeth Dicko, Clerk Supervisor, Melissa Comita, Clerk and Joanne Settemio, Clerk. He explains the function of the Assessors Office and gathered numbers from IT to show how much volume he has in the office which gives a rundown of the incoming phone calls, emails and various forms and applications sent out by the office. There are three languages spoken in the office English, French and Wolof. Some of the goals and accomplishments in 2021 were the revamped process for Residential Exemptions and sales review available by MyMalden and automating the building permit process. The office has also significantly reduced use of paper and forms and application have been updated to be more user friendly and are available as PDF's on the website. The staff continues to attend trainings and work on the office procedures manual. He explained the goals for calendar 2022 as follows: upgrade Patriot Properties, continue to cross-train staff, continue to find educational opportunities, complete the office procedure manual

and continue to make the office more accessible for non-English speaking constituents.

Councillor Winslow asked if the number of abatements applications in F/Y22 can go up

Nate explained the deadline is February 21

Councillor Crowe asked if we know what the factor was in the drop is it better evaluation system

Nate said he feels because the market is depreciating so quickly in the coming years who knows if the market will drop he would expect an up tick. He feels in the 60's is a healthy number if they got two few he would be concerned or think our values are to low if no one was complaining

Councillor Condon asked about the 100 plus statutory exemption people just because of their age their income is taken into consideration also

Nate said for the senior exemption and also included in the statutory exemptions are the veterans exemptions

Councillor Condon asked about the 1500 Motor Vehicle exemption why is it so high and is it higher than normal

Nate said due to trading in their cars or getting new cars, moving to a new community

Councillor Winslow asked how does appraisal work for cars is it Kelley Blue Book

Nate explained those bills come from the registry they send a file the first year 10% of MSRP, second year 90% then gradually goes down and bottoms out around 35% of MSRP it has nothing to do with market value

Councillor Murphy asked about Appellate Tax Court

Nate explained if someone applies for an abatement they can appeal or deny. He doesn't like going there he will only go if it is black and white no gray area. If constituents feel their property is over valued and they apply for an abatement they can appeal our denial and bring us to court in Boston which is quasi judicial and each side has to present their case of what the value should be. He said historically none of the commissioners on the appellate tax boards were appraisers and assessors aren't required either but the decisions sometimes made no sense at all. He is an appraiser but it is unpredictable and he will only go to court if he is absolutely sure.

Councillor Murphy mentioned in our Management Letters there have been comments about Procedural Manuals and this was an ongoing process in all the offices to help procedures for everyone in the office

Chuck said we do have a procedural manual on the website which is a more global manual not as specific for an office procedural manual in each office

Nate explained if someone in the office retired anyone in the office would know how to do any job function in the office by looking at the manual and helps the office run more efficiently and broaden everyone in the offices background. He would like to complete the manual by 2022. He also mentions NearMap which is another software company which would be helpful in the Assessor's office. You can measure buildings on your computer by satellite view and have it within two inches of actual size. They do a fly over three times a year and he could compare the views and it would show if a pool or deck has been added. They are required to inspect every property every ten years.

Councillor Murphy asked Nate to go over the ten year re-evaluation and the process

Nate said the re-evaluations happen every five years and the inspections are every ten years. The office has to physically try to go to every property in the City in Malden every ten years which is done in house primarily with Diane and Melissa in the office. They also use MLS if they can't get into each home but do it virtually through this system.

Councillor Winslow asks if there are any other challenges in terms of Assessing you see in when mentioning utilities or we as Councillors should be aware of in the Assessing world

Nate said utilities is the biggest thing. He is aware of some of the dark stores where there are stores that are vacant for years. It is more profitable for big corporations for tax reasons to keep the buildings vacant but he says that has been going on for years. The Assessors are able now to assess them as they are being rented again. The evaluation

is based on the income. If they have no income, they file for an abatement and say they have no income and it's not worth anything now you can't do that.

Councillor Murphy asks if there is anything the Council can do to help the Assessors Office

Nate said he is really interested in NearMap which he said could be used citywide and he feels it is inexpensive and very helpful to Fire and Police also. He said Nelson, Bldg. Director is interested also. He also mentioned he does tons of abutters list most cities and towns charge for abutters lists and we do not. He has been talking with Greg Lucey, City Clerk about this.

Councillor Murphy thanked Nate for coming in before the committee.

Other Business

Tabled Papers

[462-21](#)

Commission on Energy Efficiency and Sustainability on "Electric Aggregation".

Sponsors: David Camell

[46-22](#)

Minutes of February 1, 2022 to be approved.

A motion was made by Councillor Condon and seconded by Councillor Winslow to take Paper #46-22 off the table. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

A motion was made by Councillor Winslow, seconded by Councillor Condon, that the Committee Minutes of February 1, 2022 be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Councillor Chris Simonelli, seconded by Councillor at Large Karen Colon Hayes, that this meeting be adjourned at 6:56 PM. The motion carried unanimously.