

## **Minutes**

### **Property Tax Equity Review Committee (PTERC)**

**June 18, 2003**

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Present: Schwartz, Lubash, Levington, Meeks, Tyler, Darmer, Farrell, Nikula, Wishner, DuCros, Pakos, Sheehan, Goodrich, Cioffari, Brond, Pallone, Berry, Reed, Schlosser, Collins, Maloney, and Costello (joined late).

Meeting was called to order at 7:35 by Selectman Kirsten Roopenian. Ms. Roopenian welcomed Committee members, read the mission statement's first paragraph, and then asked Committee member to introduce themselves and talk about their expectations of this committee.

### **Ground Rules**

Town Manager Maureen Valente told the Committee that a Committee this big, addressing an issue this important, holding as many strongly held views, needs to agree on ground rules for Committee operation. She first presented the Committee with a list of her ground rules for the Committee, as follows:

#### Town Manager Ground Rules

1. All committee members must be sworn in and must sign the form indicating they have received and read the open meeting laws.
2. Requests for staff to undertake any kind of work related to this committee must be submitted to the Town Manager first. No PTERC committee member is authorized to ask a Town employee to perform any kind of work without prior approval of the Town Manager.
3. Committee business should not be conducted by committee members via e-mail. E-mail is to be used for administrative purposes only; for example, to notify members of meetings or other events or distribution of written materials electronically. Examples of poor use of e-mail include any kind of group decision-making or discussion of items that should be discussed in open meeting. Committee members should be aware that members of committees in other Towns have been required to produce the emails from their personal or business computers if it was used to receive or send e-mails on Town business.
4. This committee is created by Selectmen and needs to follow the Mission Statement of the Committee. Can't start investigating and recommending on other issues that are not relevant to the Committee's mission.

Ms. Valente then led the group through a discussion of proposed Committee ground rules. She explained these are rules the Committee will set for its own members, and the

Committee members must be willing to follow these and police each other for adherence to them. The following rules were proposed and discussed.

### Committee Ground Rules

1. Discussion rules.
  - a. There will be a reasonable limit on time for individual comments.
  - b. Members won't speak unless recognized by whoever is chairing the meeting.
  - c. Members will stick to matters on the agenda.
  - d. All members will speak up and project their voice so that other members can hear all of their comments.
  - e. Members will refrain from "me-too" comments, and speak only if they have something new to add to the discussion.
  - f. All Committee members will participate in discussions and work of the Committee to the extent possible. Committee members should avoid being passive observers.
  - g. All Committee members will be respectful of other members, and will remember to disagree without being disagreeable.
  - h. Committee members will ask direct questions or make direct comments and refrain from making speeches.
  - i. Everyone who wants to be heard will be allowed to speak before anyone is recognized to speak a second time on the same issue.
2. Decision making rules for the Full Committee
  - a. A quorum necessary to take up Committee business will be 16 of the 23 Committee members.
  - b. Except for the final report of the Committee, a 2/3 majority of those committee members present will be required for Committee approval
  - c. The Committee will consider at a later time the necessary vote for the final report. The Board of Selectmen will be asked for their input on this matter.
3. Rules for Members Absent from a Committee Meeting
  - a. The Committee will not re-take up an issue that has already been voted on for the purposes of allowing an absent members to be a part of the vote or discussion.
  - b. Members who miss a meeting should contact another Committee member to get a report on the Committee's activities. Committee members should refrain from asking the Town Manager or her staff for such information.
4. Rules for participation from the Public
  - a. The Committee will allow up to 10 minutes at the beginning of each meeting to hear from interested members of the public.
  - b. The Chair will read e-mails or letters from the public into the record at this time, as time permits.
5. Postponed for later discussion
  - a. Rules for formation and operation of subcommittees
  - b. Rules for how and when committee members should or should not speak on behalf of the work of the committee.

Ms. Valente reported she will summarize these ground rules in the Committee's minutes so that the PTERC can review, modify and vote on at their next meeting.

Ms. Valente reported that the next meeting of the Committee will be either June 30, July 1 or July 2. A notification and agenda will be sent to the Committee members. The agenda will likely include: approval of the ground rules, brainstorming of Committee work plan, and appointment of a steering committee. The meeting following that will be either July 7 or July 10, and will feature members of the State legislature to discuss state laws on property taxes. Ms. Valente said that she will be asking for volunteers for the steering committee for the PTERC. She also stated she is looking into obtaining the services of a facilitator for future meetings. Finally, time availability worksheets were distributed and Committee members were asked to return these to the Town Manager's office by Friday June 20 so that a long range calendar for meetings can be set.

The Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm