



Select Board

21 State Line Road, West Stockbridge, Mass. 01266

Tel. (413) 232-0300 x319

Fax. (413) 232-7195

E-mail: admin@weststockbridge-ma.gov

Select Board Open Meeting Minutes January 22, 2024

Quorum present: Select Board Members; Kathleen Keresey, Chair, Andrew Krouss, Andrew Potter, and Town Administrator Marie Ryan.

Kathleen opened the meeting at 6 PM.

Citizen Speak:

None.

Senior Tax Abatement: Sheila Thunfors and Harold Schneid, Assessing Consultant

Sheila Thunfors requested that the Board add two warrant articles for the Annual Town Meeting. She and a group of concerned citizens have been researching exemptions for senior citizens to assist them with the increasing tax burden. They are asking that the Board place the following two articles on the warrant:

To see if the Town will vote to accept Chapter 41C ½, Section 5 of the Acts of Chapter 59 of the Massachusetts General Laws granting real estate property tax reductions to qualifying senior citizens, establishing the exemption amount of \$1000 and the requisite age eligibility to any person 65 and older.

And if the above article does not pass, then to vote on the following article;

To see if the Town will vote to increase the annual CPI for the requisite income eligibility level and exemption amount of \$1000 of Chapter 41C, Section 5 of the Acts of Chapter 59 of the Massachusetts General Laws granting real estate property tax reductions of qualifying senior citizens.

Sheila also mentioned that this would cost the Town approximately \$40,000 in loss revenue if their estimation is correct regarding the number of people who would qualify for this exemption.

Harold explained to the Board that the Board of Assessors have not yet been polled on this request but he feels confident they will agree and support this. He will discuss with them at their next meeting. The Board of Assessors have an overlay account that currently has a balance of approximately \$30,000. This money is used each year to cover loss revenue to the

Town due to statutory exemptions and abatements. He believes that if this article is adopted, that the cost to the Town would not be as much as \$40,000 because not everyone will file for this exemption. The money in the overlay account could assist in covering some of the loss revenue from these new exemptions. The State does reimburse the Town an average of \$500 per applicant towards the \$1000 exemption. Harold will provide Marie the language for the two warrant articles.

The Board agreed this was a great idea and thanked Sheila and her group for doing the research on this and providing the information to the Board. The Board will need to get communication out to the residents informing them there are exemptions to assist with their tax burden. Andy Potter will create a Frequently Asked Questions fact sheet for the community.

Room Rental Revenue Warrant Articles: Andy Potter

Andy Potter presented the following information and requested that the three articles be placed on the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting:

Room Rental Revenue Warrants

[Change is often the result of evolving circumstances, and our town is not immune to the shifts in economic dynamics. It has been nearly three decades since our room tax was last adjusted in 1994. During this time, the state legislature has revised the ceiling to 6%, positioning our town at a 4% rate. This proposed warrant falls under G.L. c. 64G, §3A, urging the community to consider raising the local room tax from 4% to 6%.]

Proposed Warrant article:

To see if the Town will vote pursuant to G.L. c. 64G, §3A to increase local excise upon the transfer of occupancy of a room in a bed and breakfast establishment, hotel, lodging house, short-term rental or motel located within the Town from 4% to 6%; or take any other action relating thereto.

STR Community Impact Fee

[Section 3D. (a) A city or town that accepts section 3A may, by a separate vote and in the same

manner of acceptance as set forth in said section 3A, impose a community impact fee of not more than 3 per cent of the total amount of rent upon each transfer of occupancy of a professionally managed unit that is located within that city or town.

(b) A city or town that votes to impose a community impact fee under subsection (a) may, by a separate additional vote and in the same manner of acceptance as set forth in section 3A, also impose the community impact fee upon each transfer of occupancy of a short-term rental unit that is located within a two-family or three-family dwelling that includes the operator's primary residence.

(c) An operator shall pay the community impact fees imposed under this section to the commissioner at the same time and in the same manner as the excise due to the commonwealth under section 3. All sums received by the commissioner under this section as excise, penalties or forfeitures, interest, costs of suit and fines shall, not less than quarterly, be distributed, credited and paid by the state treasurer upon certification of the commissioner to the

city or town. A city or town shall dedicate not less than 35 per cent of the community impact fees

collected under this section to affordable housing or local infrastructure projects.]

Proposed Warrant article:

Section 3D (a)

To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of Section 3D(a) of Chapter 64G of the General Laws allowing the Town to impose a community impact fee of not more than three percent (3%) of the total amount of rent upon each transfer of occupancy of a professionally managed short-term rental unit, which shall be assessed upon the transfer of 1 of 2 or more short-term rental units that are located in the same city or town, operated by the same operator and are not located within a single-family, two-family or three-family dwelling that includes the operator's primary residence, and which surcharge shall be in addition to other state and local excise taxes assessed upon the transfer of short-term rental units; or take any other action relating thereto. 50% of such fees collected will be dedicated to affordable housing or local infrastructure projects and 50% dedicated to senior tax relief.

Proposed Warrant article:

Section 3D (b)

To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of Section 3D(b) of Chapter 64G of the General Laws allowing the Town to impose the community impact fee upon each transfer of occupancy of a short-term rental unit that is located within a two-family or three-family dwelling that includes the operator's primary residence, and which impact fee shall be at that same rate as the rate charged for professionally managed short-term rental units and shall be in addition to other state and local excises taxes upon the transfer of short-term rental units; or take any other action relating thereto. 50% of such fees collected will be dedicated to affordable housing or local infrastructure projects and 50% dedicated to senior tax relief.

The Board agrees these articles were important and should be on the Annual Town Meeting warrant.

Select Board Speak:

The Board thanked Sheila and her group for all their research and hard work.

Kathleen made a motion, seconded by Andy Potter, to adjourn open session and enter into executive session and not to return to open session.

Anticipated executive session in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A Paragraph 21 (a)(2), to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel (Police Chief)

Roll Call vote to enter into executive session and not return into Open Session.

Kathleen Yes
Andy Potter Yes
Andy Krouss Yes

Open Meeting Adjourned at 6:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie y. Ryan

Marie Y. Ryan

Town Administrator