

**MINUTES
BOARD OF FINANCE
SPECIAL MEETING, OXFORD TOWN HALL
FEBRUARY 16, 2016 – 7:00 P.M.**

Present: Chairman Jack Kiley; Lila Ferrillo; Robert DeBisschop; Sue Arpin; Dana Flach. Also present: James Hliva, Finance Director. Absent: Tom Kelly

Also present was Sharon Scinto, Oxford Tax Collector.

This Special Meeting was originally scheduled for February 9, 2016 but due to the illness of Sharon Scinto, Oxford Tax Collector, the meeting was cancelled and rescheduled for February 16, 2016.

The Special Meeting was opened at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Jack Kiley. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Kiley explained the purpose of this meeting was to have a discussion with Ms. Scinto and the Board of Finance regarding policies, procedures and operations of the Oxford Tax Office. One of the issues to be discussed will be the percentage of tax collections as of this date. Also to be discussed is the necessity of hiring of a full-time person which has been suggested by the First Selectman.

Mr. Kiley began the discussion by asking Ms. Scinto what procedures she follows for delinquent tax collections. A lengthy discussion ensued with Ms. Scinto speaking to great detail with regard to how, when and how often she sends out notifications for delinquent collections. This includes all collections i.e., real estate, personal tax.

Ms. Scinto said she has been discouraged from using collection agencies or marshals for collections. She does use certified mail to send out notices. If the mail is returned and the parties cannot be found then she will use the marshal.

Ms. Flach, who is also Tax Collector for the Town of Seymour, offered several suggestions in line with what she uses for tax collecting in Seymour. She sends demand letters and offered to send a copy of the letter to Ms. Scinto as an aid for collection.

Mr. Kiley asked Ms. Scinto what procedure does she follow for collections over five (5) years and Ms. Scinto explained in intricate detail how she handles those collections.

Ms. Scinto said that if a new legislation (HB-50) goes through, the Town stands to lose approximately \$160,000 just on motor vehicles.

Mr. Hliva said delinquent bills go out in January. If she backs up to beginning of the year, what happens finish collecting in July, what happens from July to December? Ms. Scinto said motor vehicles are supposed to be flagged at DMV. Mr. Hliva said specifically with real estate bills, if bills go out in July and first payment is not made, what happens then? Ms. Scinto said a July late

payment notice would go out in August. The second half would go out in February. In May a notice is sent to lien. By June 30, a lien is placed on the property. If property is sold, Town gets their money first.

Ms. Flach interjected her suggestion based on how she pursues late payments in Seymour. She sends her notice of intent in March and then lien notices go on at end of April. More money is generated doing it that way. Doing it this way, takes it out of collections when bills are ready to mail.

Mr. Kiley said there should be some type of plan at five year mark. Ms. Scinto said there are demands up to 30 days. She said the marshal is supposed to be collecting the taxes.

Ms. Flach asked at what point does marshal report back to Tax Department and how far out is a tax sale set. Ms. Scinto said she needs to follow through more thoroughly with the marshal's demand letters. Ms. Flach said marshal can do the tax sale after two or three months. Ms. Scinto said that marshals and collection agencies are not reliable with collections.

Ms. Flach said marshals include their fees with their collection letter. She continued to describe the processes that her Tax Department follows. She said that the towns pay nothing except for legal notices in the newspapers.

Mr. Hliva said when he meets with delinquent taxpayers he tries to explain the benefit of making regular tax payments as opposed to incurring liens and possibly losing their property.

Mr. Kiley wants to come up with a list of real estate accounts delinquent for five years. The BOF will review the list and decide how to proceed. Board will look at how close to ten years some of the accounts are. He is not anxious to take properties. The list will consist of 2010 going back. Mr. Hliva and the rest of the Board are in agreement with this suggestion.

Ms. Flach said that once marshal letters are received for tax sale, people will react. Property owners have six months to redeem their property after a tax sale. People who purchase these properties at tax sales do not take ownership until after six months. Ms. Scinto said she has had property owners who do react to a tax sale letter and will set up payment schedules.

Ms. Ferrillo recommended a legal notice put into the newspaper notifying the public of tax collection process on delinquencies over five years. Ms. Flach suggested a memo from the Board of Finance to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Hliva commented on putting names of the delinquencies in the newspaper. This list will be will be for real estate only in the instant and will be presented at the next meeting of the Board of Finance (March 28, 2016). Mr. DeBisschop suggested that something be written up at the next Board of Finance meeting so that a policy will be put into place. A discussion began among the members of the Board regarding the detailed process that will be placed into the policy.

Ms. Scinto asked Mr. Hliva about the status of Mr. Bombaro's (sp?) property.

Mr. Hliva said another option is selling the lien to an outside concern, although he and the rest of the members of the Board are against this option.

The discussion then began regarding the amount of employees in the Tax Department. Ms. Scinto said she is overwhelmed at the present time. She is concerned that she will fall behind with processing mail, billing, etc. She is considering the option of a lock box. Ms. Flach said a lock box will save the department a lot of time because they open and process the mail. Mr. Hliva asked what bank Ms. Flach uses. Ms. Flach explained how the lock box works. As far as she knows, there is no charge. There was a one-time set up fee. This is a less expensive way than hiring an additional employee.

An in-depth discussion was held among the Board members regarding the lock box system. This would be a tremendous help to the Tax Department and eliminate the need for a full-time person. Ms. Scinto said if she had a third person she could possibly delegate different responsibilities in the department.

Mr. Kiley would possibly agree to a part-time person during the busy season (January and July) but would be hard-pressed to agree to a full-time person.

At the next meeting, Ms. Scinto will attend and provide up-to-date real estate collections. She did say the tax department is balancing and reconciling. Mr. Hliva recommended having Sandy Welwood come back in to see exactly where the tax collections are. Mr. Kiley said to hold off on involving Ms. Welwood.

Ms. Flach said the tax collection rate for Oxford is good.

A discussion was held regarding WPCA charges, possible sewer charges, water bills.

There being no further discussion, motion was made to adjourn by Ms. Ferrillo, and seconded by Mr. DeBisschop. Meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

The next Board of Finance meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 28, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,



Lynnette Steeves
Clerk

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TOWN OF OXFORD, CT
Margaret A. West
TOWN CLERK