

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Norwich Board of Listers 15 October 2015, 12:30 pm, Tracy Hall**

Present: Liz Blum (Chair), Cheryl A. Lindberg, Lee Michaelides (Listers); Neil Fulton (Town Manager); Jonathan Bynum (Clerk & Scribe); Rosalyn Cook; Yvonne Cook; Suzanne Lupien

Blum called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm.

### **1. Review and Approval of Agenda**

Lindberg **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Michaelides) to approve the agenda as distributed. Motion **passed 3-0**.

### **2. Public Comments**

None. Blum suggested that, since Yvonne Cook was present, the Listers move directly to item 4.

### **4. Yvonne Cook, Appeal of Penalty for Late-Filing of Homestead Declaration**

Yvonne Cook submitted a letter containing new information obtained from H&R Block. Cook stated that she intends to file her homestead declaration on paper in future. After brief discussion, Lindberg **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Michaelides) to waive Yvonne Cook's penalty for late-filing of the 2015 Homestead Declaration. Motion **passed 3-0**.

### **3. Approval of Minutes of Lister Meeting of 14 September 2015**

Lindberg **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Michaelides) to approve the Minutes of the Lister Meeting of 14 September 2015 as distributed. Motion **passed 3-0**.

Lindberg asked about the status of the Listserve posting discussed at the last meeting that would communicate the timing of the downtown inspections this fall. The posting should mention that full, non-truncated AssessPro cards are available in the Office. Lindberg also suggested broader postings describing the process for the 2016 reappraisal. Bynum was to draft some postings and solicit Lister input.

### **5. Review of NEMC Proposal to Provide Assessing Services FY17 to FY19**

Lindberg expressed concerns that the proposal includes only 8 Office hours per week (whereas the Assessor job description specifies 24 hours on the job), that the proposal specifies that NEMC only guarantees attendance of Lister meetings 9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday, and that no NEMC representative was at the current meeting.

There was discussion of whether certain items like appraisal preparation and technical support provided outside of hours spent in Norwich was separately billed. Blum related that NEMC had been asked not to attend this meeting. Blum asked whether Fulton would come back to the Listers with the contract prior to signing. Fulton said he would not. Lindberg asked why. Fulton that he had not done so in the past, and that he had signing authority. Fulton acknowledged that the 3 year cyclic reinspection process is a bit behind schedule, but said that NEMC has a plan to finish this winter.

Lindberg pointed out that the 2011 Committee report that led to the reorganization of the Office recommended open communication and Lister feedback on the performance of the Assessor.

Michaelides asked whether NEMC's inflator from FY17 to FY19 was in line with other municipal services. Fulton said it was.

Lindberg spoke about the Reinspection list dated 10/13/15 submitted by NEMC. She felt that the process was moving too slowly, making it susceptible to a last-minute crunch and consequent errors. Lindberg read from The Final Report from the Committee to Review Real Property Assessment Functions, which asserted that "the Lister's Office should realize savings relative to current budget levels. Savings could grow over time as there is a learning curve associated with data gathering and assessing a town." Lindberg was concerned about the per parcel cost, and that the Town is not realizing the savings produced by the restructuring of the Office foreseen in the report. She anticipates in June of 2016 being again asked to sign a document of which she has very little understanding. Lindberg asked for greater inclusion in the process, and a greater understanding of the land tables and neighborhood designations and how they will be determined.

Fulton said that, in his view, the relevant quality indicators for NEMC's work-product were the CLA, the COD, the PRD and the number of appeals, both to the Listers and beyond. All of these indicators are promising.

Blum said that assessing is not an exact science, and commended NEMC's willingness to make corrections at informal grievance. She noted that the active real estate market makes for a greater challenge.

NEMC had submitted a list of properties, for which NEMC had never been able to perform an interior inspection. Fulton noted the difficulties of performing interior inspections in a community where houses often sit empty during the working day.

Lindberg expressed her concern over the number of parcels without interior inspections, and offered her services to perform occasional inspections outside business hours or when NEMC is unavailable. She stressed the need to get into as many homes as possible so as to make the reappraisal as accurate as possible.

## **6. Review of Draft FY17 Lister-Assessor Budget**

Lindberg expressed concern that the \$74,000 line item for Professional Services in the draft budget is a big number, and that the cost per parcel is getting higher and higher.

## **7. Any Other Business**

Bynum briefly updated the Listers on the continuing difficulties with the GIS software.

Michaelides then **moved** (2<sup>nd</sup> Blum) for adjournment. Motion **passed 3-0**. Meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Blum  
Chair, Norwich Board of Listers