



Town of Groton  
**Board of Assessors**  
173 Main Street  
Groton, MA 01450  
978-448-1127

## **Meeting Minutes** **June 1, 2005**

### **Board Attendees:**

Edward J. Kopec, Member  
Hugh McLaughlin, Chairman  
Sylvia Sangiolo, Clerk

### **Other Attendees:**

Rena E. Swezey, Assistant Assessor  
Rebecca Scribner, Assessors Clerk

Mr. Kopec opened the meeting at 3:05pm.

### **Old Business**

1. Meeting minutes from April 6<sup>th</sup> were accepted.
2. Another letter from Mr. Edward Cutler, 271 Hill Road was received. He sent a picture of his property showing the flooded areas. We show that someone else owns the property, however, Ms. Swezey found out that he does own the land and a deed from 1977 was never recorded. Mr. McLaughlin wants to check the flood zone for that area. Ms. Swezey informed everyone that there is significant reduction for wetland on the property now and that the Building Inspector and Board of Health would have to write letters to the BOA regarding the disposition of the ability to build on the land or not. Discussion was tabled until the next meeting.
3. Vision Appraisal
  - a. Vision contacted Ms. Swezey to find out if the Board would like a representative to come in and meet with them. The Board would like to review the budget and fees at the next meeting to see if it would even be feasible to look at a new system.

## **New Business**

1. Reorganization of the Board
  - a. Mr. McLaughlin expressed a desire to be chairman. The Board has not rotated positions for many years. Mr. Kopec made a motion to nominate Mr. McLaughlin as chairman, Ms. Sangiolo seconded, and the vote was unanimous.
  - b. Mr. McLaughlin made a motion for Ms. Sangiolo to be clerk, Mr. Kopec seconded, and the vote was unanimous.
2. Agenda changes
  - a. Mr. McLaughlin suggested making changes to the meeting agenda to include long-term issues/projects for the board and the office. He will confer with Ms. Swezey and will present the new agenda format at the next meeting.
3. The Board signed and approved the following documents:
  - a. Motor Vehicle
    1. MV Log 2005 - \$1,820.22
    2. Commitment #3 of 2005 - \$106,895.97
    3. Commitment #9 of 2004 - \$3,831.62
  - b. Telephone Bill - \$51.95
  - c. Abatement from Christine Collins in the Tax Department
    1. M. Hicks, Inc. - 2005 - \$23.83
  - d. Habitat for Humanity house abatement
    1. Roy - \$454.22
  - d. Land of Low Value documents for DOR were signed.
4. The board approved the following:
  - a. Small copy machine for the office
  - b. Attendance to the Patriot Properties User Forum June 20<sup>th</sup> for Ms. Swezey, Ms. Scribner, and Ms. Miller
  - c. Attendance to the MAAO Summer Conference June 21-24<sup>th</sup> for Ms. Swezey.
  - d. Attendance to UMASS MAAO school in August for Ms. Scribner and Ms. Miller. Ms. Swezey will be there as co-chair of the MAAO Education Committee.
5. Preliminary Tax Bills
  - a. Patriot Properties will be in telephone communication with Ms. Swezey this coming week in order to walk her through the steps to send a Patriot file to Point Software for the Preliminary Tax Bills. Mr. McLaughlin informed Ms. Swezey that if she had any problem with Patriot not responding, than to let him know. Ms. Swezey said that it should not be a problem because she will be working with the support personnel.
6. Animal Personal Property taxation
  - a. Discussion ensued on the letter from Mike Cahill of the Division of Animal Health in the Department of Agricultural Resources of Massachusetts. His department's position on our Animal Inspector's list of animals is that it is NOT public information and has not been since September 11, 2001.

- b. Mr. McLaughlin wondered if the BOA would like to do more to explain why all animals should be registered, such as dogs are. Dogs are registered to track rabies however many other animals are susceptible to that and other diseases.
  - c. Ms. Sangiolo offered that we don't have the time or money to capture animal and boat information, however, if we collected the taxes as the law says to, we could pay for the additional hours in the Assessors' Office requested to, but denied by, the Finance Committee. A lot of the revenue is not received anymore because of the vote at Town Meeting to put a limit of \$10,000 for the Personal Property exemption level. Ms. Sangiolo said that we don't need to go to Town Meeting in order to change that exemption level. Ms. Swezey spoke to Gary Blau, DOR lawyer, at the April Clerk's meeting and asked about that. Mr. Blau said that it must go before Town Meeting for a vote for any change in the exemption levels.
  - d. Mr. McLaughlin has initiated a phone call to Alan Hoch in response to his request for a list of all horses in Groton. Mr. McLaughlin wants Mr. Hoch to see the letter from the Department of Animal Resources (DOAR). The DOAR asked to be informed of anyone who requests the town's animal information. The BOA needs to know why Mr. Hoch wants the information.
7. Board Issues
- a. Discussion was held regarding Open Meeting Law. Mr. Kopec noted that Littleton and Ayer have been under siege with allegations and wants to make sure that the Groton board is aware of the seriousness of the issues.
  - b. Concerns that Selectmen and other departments go directly to Ms. Swezey with issues that should go to the BOA. Of note, the situation with the Selectmen, Mr. Hargraves – State Representative and the Groton School and Lawrence Academy issues.
  - c. Mr. McLaughlin expressed that his major concern is what would happen to the office if and when Ms. Swezey decided to retire. He would like to see a transition plan put into place.
  - d. Training for office personnel is a high priority to the Board.
8. Personal Property – Livestock for 2006
- a. There are two cases which have gone to the Appellate Tax Board for the tax on horses. Discussion was moved to the next meeting.
9. Feedback to Finance Chairman - Steve Webber
- a. Mr. McLaughlin will give that feedback on behalf of the Board and report back to the BOA.
10. Extra hours situation for Part-time position
- a. Ms. Swezey checked with the Town Accountant and found out that as long as it did not go over 40 hours per week, flex time is applicable for Ms. Miller's part-time position. She checked with Ms. Miller who said she relied on a steady paycheck coming with her standard hours and did not want to get into a situation where she conceivably could end up taking the summer off or some other situation due to flex time.
  - b. Ms. Swezey suggested that we contract Ms. Miller for the field work time.

There is a GMAC meeting regarding growth issues next Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm.  
There is a Town Website Committee meeting next Thursday, June 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm.  
The next BOA meeting will be Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup> at 3pm.

Mr. Kopec made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Sangiolo seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. The meeting was ended at 5:12pm by Mr. McLaughlin.