

GREENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

Regular Meeting Minutes

November 29, 2012

GCTV-15

7:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by President Singer.

President Singer stated this meeting was being recorded. If any other person present was doing the same, they must notify the chairperson at this time. It was noted the Town Council was audio recording and GCTV-15 was video recording the meeting for future broadcast.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS: Roll Call was taken. All Councilors were present.

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor William Martin; Director of Municipal Finance and Administration Marjorie L. Kelly; Town Clerk Maureen Winseck; Town Accountant Elizabeth Braccia; Chief Assessor Audrey Murphy; Assessors Scott Cote and Joseph Ruggeri; Franklin County Chamber of Commerce President Ann Hamilton, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce Chair Joan Kramer; business owners, George Gohl, Garden Cinemas; Kevin O'Neil, Wilson's; Van Wood, Smallcorp; Mark Abrahamson, Commercial Real Estate Agent; GCTV-15 staff; Chris Collins, *the Recorder*; and members of the public.

President Singer asked if anyone wished to speak under the "Public Comment" section of the agenda. Seeing none, the meeting would continue.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: Councilor Allis read the following notice: The Greenfield Town Council will hold a public hearing on Thur., Nov. 29, 2012, at 7:00 p.m., at GCTV-15 Studio, 393 Main St., to adopt a residential factor in accordance with the provisions of Mass. General Laws, Ch. 58, Sec. 1A, which shall be used by the Board of Assessors to determine the percentages of the local tax levy to be borne by each class of real and personal property for FY 2013. The Town Council will consider the same on Thur., Nov. 29, 2012, which begins at 7:00 p.m. at the GCTV-15 Studio, 393 Main Street. The Assessors shall provide all information and data relevant to making such determination and the fiscal effect of the available alternatives. The hearing is required under Sec. 56 of Ch. 40, Mass. General Laws.

President Singer opened the Public Hearing at 7:06 pm. He asked if anyone from the public wished to speak. Alfred Siano, 10 Meadow Wood Dr., spoke in favor of a split tax rate.

The following people spoke in favor of a single tax rate:

- Joseph Ruggeri, 21 Prospect Ave. Board of Assessor Member, resident and business owner
- George Gohl, 157 Montague City Road, business owner of Garden Theater and block, member of the GBA, GRA, GCTV Board and Republican Town Committee Chairman
- Van Wood, 40 Woodleigh Ave., owner of Smallcorp
- Mark Abrahamson, Bernardston resident and Real Estate agent
- Joan Kramer, Chair of the Chamber of Commerce
- James Hutchinson, 136 A Main Street, resident

President Singer closed the Public Hearing at 8:33 pm.

COMMUNICATIONS:

MAYOR: Ms. Kelly, briefed the council with a Power Point presentation with information, examples, and formulas for setting a tax rate. A lengthy question and answer period ensued regarding the following:

- The fundamental differences and determination of tax bill and tax rate information
- How Residential and Commercial values were determined
- Comparison of community and properties
- How it was determined how much needs to be raised, offsetting revenues, property values, and maximum allowable levy limits.

Ms. Kelly suggested a split tax rate would create a negative impact and discourages new business and growth within town. She further stated, the Board of Assessors voted to recommend a residential factor of one (1) with no small business or residential exemption.

In response to Councilor Renaud's inquiry, Ms. Murphy stated the Town did have a PILOT program where businesses were exempt from paying taxes. However, the town could not force businesses to participate. Further, businesses involved in the PILOT program do not normally use town services and if by chance they did, they were billed for the services used. Councilor Athey expressed concern regarding the impact on the residential community. Ms. Kelly announced a minor increase in property tax delinquency. She explained the process and procedures for tax title accounts. Ms. Murphy explained exemptions for elderly and hardship for residential homeowners.

President Singer closed the Public Hearing at 8:33pm.

SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT AND SCHOOL COMMITTEE: None.

TOWN OFFICERS: None.

MOTIONS, ORDERS, AND RESOLUTIONS

Order no. FY 13 -049 A

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Allis, second by Councilor Devlin, it was,

MOVED: THAT IT BE ORDERED THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL ADOPT A MINIMUM RESIDENTIAL FACTOR OF ONE (1) RESULTING IN AN EQUAL TAX RATE FOR ALL CLASSES OF PROPERTY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2013.

DISCUSSION: Chairman Allis stated the committee voted a positive recommendation with four (4) in favor and one (1) against a residential factor of one (1).

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Wisnewski, second by Councilor Hoffman, it was

MOVED: TO AMEND THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL ADOPTS A MINIMUM RESIDENTIAL FACTOR OF 1.01

DISCUSSION: Councilor Wisnewski expressed concern regarding burdens resulting in the rise of residential tax versus commercial tax. He further stated a .01% shift in commercial tax was a minimal amount for businesses. He suggested businesses have opportunity to take advantage of town and state tax benefits through PILOT programs, TIF Agreements, and Block grants. Councilor Wisnewski spoke against the argument that a split tax rate resulted in discouraging business; businesses being over charged for services; being anti-business; and destroying downtown businesses. Councilor Hoffman would vote in favor of the amendment of the split tax rate to help rebalance the town's tax policy. Councilor Ronhave would not support the amendment. Councilor Allis clarified the definition of a TIF agreement. He would not support a split tax rate. Councilor Kelner shared negative feedback received from business owners in town. Although she agreed with the rationale, timing and the struggling economy were a factor. She would

not support a split tax rate. Councilor Renaud suggested placing a question on the town election ballot to get resident feedback. Councilor Devlin thanked Councilor Wisnewski for his work in bringing forward the issue and stressed his concern with the timing. He would not support a split tax rate. Councilor Maloni held numerous conversations with both residents and business owners regarding this topic. He would not support a split tax rate as it wasn't a positive move for Greenfield at this time. Councilor Zaltzburg had conversations with residents and business owners and would not support a split tax rate at this time. Councilor Athey was concerned with the lack of participation from the residential community regarding the matter. He also agreed with placing a question on the ballot. Councilor Wisnewski would pursue the issue of putting a ballot question before the voters to get their input.

It was by majority (8 no and 3 yes),

DEFEATED: TO AMEND THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL ADOPTS A MINIMUM RESIDENTIAL FACTOR OF 1.01

President Singer stated the main motion would be now be voted on.

It was by majority (1 no),

VOTED: TO APPROVE ORDER NO. FY13-049A

Order no. FY 13 -049 B

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Allis, second by Councilor Devlin, it was unanimously,

VOTED: THAT IT BE ORDERED THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL VOTES THAT NO RESIDENTIAL EXEMPTION BE ADOPTED FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013.

Order no. FY 13 -049 C

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Allis, second by Councilor Devlin, it was unanimously,

VOTED: THAT IT BE ORDERED THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL VOTES THAT NO SMALL COMMERCIAL EXEMPTION BE ADOPTED FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013.

Order no. FY 13-050

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Athey, second by Councilor Wisnewski, it was unanimously,

TABLED: THAT THE GREENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL ACCEPTS THE ATTACHED RESOLUTION, SUBMITTED BY COUNCILOR ATHEY AT THE SEPTEMBER 19, 2012 TOWN COUNCIL MEETING, RELATING TO THE TOWN EXPENDITURE FOR SCHOOL CHOICE/CHARTER.

Submitted by Councilor Athey at the September 19, 2012 Town Council meeting

Proposed resolution for the Greenfield Town Council:

Whereas: The expenditure of Greenfield Taxpayer funds for School Choice/Charter in Fiscal Year 2013 is currently budgeted at \$3.5 Million Dollars, and;

Whereas: The taxpayers of Greenfield have funded similar amounts of money in each of the last several years, and;

Whereas: By comparison, the amounts expended on School Choice/Charter is considerably larger than annual expenditures for the Greenfield Police Department, and;

Whereas: Continued annual expenditures of this magnitude will have a destabilizing affect on the finances of the Town of Greenfield, it is,

Resolved: That it is a primary financial objective of the Town of Greenfield, that the total town expenditure for School Choice/Charter shall not exceed the amount received by the Greenfield School District for students Choicing into District schools. Or in other words “revenue neutrality.”

We further recommend that the Mayor of Greenfield, Greenfield Town Council, and the Greenfield School Committee jointly establish a working committee that is charged with understanding the underlying causes that are resulting in Greenfield parents choicing their children out of Greenfield Schools, and to recommend a course of action sufficient to achieve “revenue neutrality” in School choice by Fiscal Year 2017.

We anticipate that the working committee will utilize outside professional advisors to complete its charge, the cost of which shall be in addition to the existing Greenfield School budget.

We further anticipate the inclusion in the next Greenfield School Department budget of the financial requirements in support of the recommended action necessary to achieve “revenue neutrality” by Fiscal Year 2017.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS AND SIMILAR PAPERS None.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE – None

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – None

APPOINTMENTS AND ORDINANCE COMMITTEE- None

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE – None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: President Singer invited all Council members to attend the upcoming Committee Chairs meeting on December 3, 2012. Topics of discussion would include Zoning Amendments and purchase of the Lunt property.

MOTIONS FOR RECONSIDERATION: None.

PUBLIC FORUM: None

ADJOURNMENT: On a motion by Councilor Allis, second by Councilor Devlin, it was unanimously **VOTED: TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:42 P.M.**

A true copy,

Attest: _____
 Maureen T. Winseck, Town Clerk

GREENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS

November 29, 2012
 Tax Classification Meeting

	Amendment							
1. Kelner, Marian	P	N						
2. Zaltzberg, Keith	P	N						
3. Allis, Brickett	P	N						
4. Ronhave, Steven	P	N						
5. Singer, David	P	N						
6. Hoffman, Hillary	P	Y						
7. Renaud, Karen	P	N						
8. -----	---	---						
9. Hirschfeld, Norman	P	Y						
10. Athey, Dalton	P	N						
11. Wisnewski, Mark	P	Y						
12. Devlin, Patrick	P	N						
13. Maloni, Mark	P	N						

8 No
 3 No