



SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

NOVEMBER 25, 2024

7:15 PM

ACTON BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

36 CHARTER ROAD

Present: Fran Arsenault, Dean Charter, Alissa Nicol, David Martin

Additional Attendees: Town Manager John Mangiaratti, Assistant Town Manager Thom Begin, and Lisa Tomy, Executive Assistant

Ms. Arsenault called the meeting to order at 7:15 PM

I. Public Hearing

1. 7:15 PM Tax Classification Hearing

Ms. Arsenault read the public hearing notice. Principal Assessor CJ Carroll presented the recommended Tax Classifications on behalf of the Board of Assessors. The Select Board must vote on whether to adopt 1) an open space discount, 2) a small commercial exemption, 3) a residential factor (single or split tax rate), and 4) a residential exemption. The four classes of property are residential, commercial, industrial, and personal property. The FY25 recommended tax rate for residential single family homes has increased to \$17.15 from \$16.67 in FY24 due to the override approved at the 2024 Annual Town Meeting.

- Open space discount – Acton has no parcels classified as open space.
- Small commercial exemption – reduces the taxable value of eligible businesses by up to 10% - determined by the Department of Workforce Development
- Adopt a residential factor – CIP shift (commercial, industrial, and personal property) – Acton could shift up to 50% additional taxes to the CIP class
- Adopt a residential exemption – reduces taxable value of the principal residence by certain percentage of the average residential value

Mr. Martin remarked that the tax rate increase is larger than last year's increase – Mr. Carroll responded that the increase from the override is applied to the coming fiscal year. Ms. Nicol asked at what ratio residential:commercial properties do communities adopt a separate residential and commercial rate – Mr. Carroll noted that typically when the ration is 80:20, and none at 90:10 like Acton have adopted separate rates.

Terra, Mass Ave – asked about a residential exemption tax rate and owner-occupied properties – Mr. Carroll noted that if wanted to qualify for the residential exemption the property would need to be owner-occupied; speaker was in favor of residential exemption for owner-occupied properties, small business exemptions and a shift of the tax burden to large international businesses.

Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Ms. Nicol to not adopt an open space discount and approved unanimously 4-0-0

Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Mr. Charter to not adopt a small commercial exemption and approved 4-0-0

Ms. Nicol moved, seconded by Mr. Martin to adopt a residential factor of 1 and approved unanimously 4-0-0

Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Ms. Nicol to not adopt a residential exemption and approved unanimously 4-0-0

II. New/Special Business

2. Discussion of ALG Plan

Mr. Mangiaratti noted that the actions of the Special Town Meeting held earlier in the evening will require an update to the ALG model, and asked for feedback in 3 key areas; excess levy capacity is set at \$1.2 million, but there is a surplus due to changes in the school assessments, free cash use currently at \$1.25 million which matches the capital plan, and preliminary level service estimates presented at the November 18 Board meeting that represent needs identified by departments, not recommendations; this will be shaped by the input from the Board in terms of an increase. Mr. Martin suggested keeping the surplus in place, increasing the untaxed levy to \$1.4 million, and noted free cash came back higher than expected this year, suggesting spending more than the current model, up to ~\$1.7 million to bring the floor back to the 3% that the Finance Committee prefers. Mr. Charter suggested moving the surplus \$200K into capital stabilization instead of leaving it as untaxed levy capacity: agreed with using free cash for capital projects, suggested moving town CPC requests to free cash. Ms. Nicol agreed with increasing the unused levy capacity, and wouldn't oppose putting it into capital stabilization, increasing free cash, and using toward town projects to free up CPC funding, and asked what moving the town operating budget closer to the the level of the previous presentation to the Board means. Mr. Mangiaratti noted the operating budget would be at a 3.78% increase, including capital but not excluded debt. Ms. Nicol is not ready to move from the position taken by the board previously to keep the level of increase where it is in the model. Mr. Martin agreed with leaving the total municipal operations presented in the ALG model at \$40.44 million, but suggested using more free cash spending to address capital needs. Mr. Charter noted he is in favor of keeping \$200K surplus in the untaxed levy capacity. Mr. Martin asked about a reduction in the surplus to account for the two collective bargaining agreements approved by Special Town Meeting earlier in the evening. Mr. Mangiaratti recommended reducing the surplus from \$200K to \$143,000, and updating the model for the November 27 ALG meeting.

III. Consent Items

Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Ms. Nicol to approve consent items 3-5 and approved unanimously 4-0-0.

Mr. Charter moved, seconded by Mr. Martin to adjourn and approved unanimously 4-0-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM.