



TOWN OF ROCHESTER

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BOARD OF ASSESSMENT REVIEW Report on Grievance Day 2018

The Board of Assessment Review (“BAR”) held its annual Grievance Day on Thursday, May 24, 2018 during the hours of 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The BAR deliberated on the two grievances received and reached consensus on both.

Initial BAR meeting with the Assessor

After electing a Board chair (Margaret Bonner) and swearing in Assessor Michael Dunham and his assistant, Angie Hasbrouck, the Board asked Mr. Dunham to update the Board Members on any issues pertinent to the review or upcoming events which would impact on the Board.

Mr. Dunham provided an overview of the housing market and informed us of the planned 2019 revaluation for the Town and the Town Board’s approval of this undertaking. We were pleased to hear of this impending action, having called for such in our past reports. We urged Mr. Dunham to hold town-wide meetings prior to the revaluation in order to educate and help stem fears of modification in valuations which are likely to occur.

Complaints and Reviews

There were only two grievances presented during Grievance Day, with one couple choosing to appear in person. The couple provided some interesting points about their property, which were not part of the submitted materials and which significantly helped their case. The reduction in assessments, from the tentative role, totaled \$55,400 for these two cases.

In addition to the 2 complaints submitted, the BAR ratified 12 stipulations and 3 corrections. The number of complaints and stipulations filed was lower than last year; the number of corrections was the same. The combined stipulation reductions totaled \$661,800 and the increase, due to corrections was \$6000.

As in prior years, in making its grievance determinations, the BAR studied materials submitted by complainants and consulted reference documents provided by the Assessor such as “land tables” (which show geographic, hydrological and topological characteristics in different areas of the Town) and valuations by housing type. This information, as well as a summarized cover sheet for each parcel, made it easier to review the grievances and the stipulations. The Assessor responded to questions about

the properties and provided assistance to the BAR as needed in interpreting the tables. The BAR greatly appreciates these extra efforts made by the Assessor and his assistant.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The BAR continues to strongly urge property owners to make appointments to discuss potential errors as well as personal dissatisfaction with their tentative assessments as soon after publication of the Tentative Assessment roll on May 1 as possible. (Perhaps mention of the availability of this link, at the May Town Board meeting, would highlight the resource for Town residents.) Such discussions often lead to a stipulated resolution with the Assessor and, in any case will enable the property owner to be as effective as possible in supporting a grievance should he or she decide to file one.

As noted previously, the BAR strongly urges the holding of Town-wide meetings, as has been done in the past, to inform residents of the upcoming revaluation. The BAR believes there is lack of understanding on the part of many of our residents as to how assessed values relate to their tax bill. It is a difficult concept and anything the Assessor can do, prior to the revaluation, to better inform the Town, the less angst there is likely to be.

In addition to these meetings, we recommend that the Town website provide information on the upcoming revaluation which would include an explanation of what the revaluation entails, its relationship to property taxes and a schedule of Town-wide meetings.

In conclusion, the BAR feels the low level of grievances is a reflection of the high level of expertise and service that the current Assessor and his assistant are providing to the citizens and taxpayers of the Town of Rochester. We appreciate the services they provide to the BAR, while still being mindful of our responsibility as a review board.

This report was adopted unanimously by the members of the Board of Assessment Review.

Margaret Bonner
Elaine Laflamme
Ron Lapp
Claude Suhl
Martha Tardibuono