

Real Property Tax Committee Minutes
October 7, 2019 – 2:30 p.m.

Present: Chairman Dan Pemrick; Committee Members Tara Gaston, Scott Ostrander, Tom Richardson; Supervisor Ed Kinowski; Chad Cooke, County Administrator; Steve Dorsey, County Attorney; Anna Stanko, Real Property Tax; Chris Schall, Auditor; Cindy Baker, Terri Wrisley, Treasurer.

Chairman Pemrick called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Ms. Gaston, seconded by Mr. Ostrander, the minutes of the September 9, 2019 meeting were approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Mr. Richardson, seconded by Ms. Gaston, to authorize the cancellation of 2019 taxes on a parcel in the Town of Moreau. Unanimous.

Ms. Stanko distributed a handout detailing the tax correction. Ms. Stanko said that NYS OPRHP purchased the property in the Town of Moreau in July and filed the deed in October. They are immediately exempt from property taxes, the assessor did a divided assessment and the cancellation amount is \$170.73

A motion was made by Mr. Ostrander, seconded by Mr. Richardson, accepting the Auditors Quarterly Report. Unanimous.

Mr. Schall distributed his third quarter report. There were 17 refunds totaling \$1,355.50.

Mr. Kinowski addressed the committee and said that there are a number of properties in the county, two in particular in the Town of Stillwater, that are delinquent in taxes however the County does not take ownership of these properties due to the fact that the property could be hazardous and would cause a liability for the County. Mr. Kinowski said that the County continues to make the town whole however these properties will continue to accumulate back taxes. One property is on Route 4 in the village, was formerly a gas station and the owner has back taxes in excess of \$170K, the owner continues to operate out of the property without paying taxes. Another property is a large building complex and the owner has not paid property tax for over 3 years. This property was formerly an old paint facility. Mr. Kinowski said that it becomes insurmountable for someone to purchase this property unless they get some type of relief. Mr. Kinowski is questioning if there is a way to forgive the taxes if someone was willing to purchase the property, and then begin to pay the taxes from purchase date forward. Mr. Kinowski said that there is some funding available for clean-up of these sites, however this takes a long time. Mr. Dorsey said that he has had discussions with Gary Bowich regarding the property on Route 4. Mr. Dorsey said that they would like to get temporary incidences of ownership on the property which will allow the county to conduct testing to see how contaminated it is. A Phase 1 environmental study would show this. Mr. Dorsey said that the State does have funds available for remediation of properties that are petroleum contaminated. Mr. Kinowski said that there is an interested buyer in the other paint property however they would need to invest over \$1M plus the back taxes to clean up the property.

Mr. Dorsey said that if the county takes ownership, the County would then be liable for the clean-up of the property. If someone purchases the property they would be liable for the clean-up and also for the back taxes due. Mr. Kinowski questioned if a county policy or law could be passed to entertain canceling taxes on these properties. Mr. Dorsey said that taxes cannot be cancelled until the County takes ownership. Mr. Kinowski said that he is trying to find out a way to address these properties proactively rather than reactively. Mr. Dorsey said that he has requested funds be placed in his 2020 budget to start conducting environmental studies on some of these properties to see how contaminated they are.

On a motion made by Ms. Gaston, seconded by Mr. Richardson, the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board