

Real Property Tax Committee Minutes
October 5, 2020 – 2:30 p.m.

Present: Chairwoman Sandra Winney; Committee Members Tara Gaston, John Lant, Tom Wood, Benny Zlotnick; Supervisor Todd Kusnierz; Chad Cooke, County Administrator; Chris Schall, Auditor; Anna Stanko, Real Property Tax; Andrew Jarosh, Terri Wrisley, Treasurer.

Chairwoman Winney called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Mr. Lant, seconded by Mr. Zlotnick, the minutes of the September 1, 2020 meeting were approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Ms. Gaston, seconded by Mr. Lant, to approve the Auditor's 2020 Third Quarter Report. Unanimous.

Mr. Schall distributed a handout detailing the Q3 adjustments. There were 5 refunds totaling \$3,236.28 and 1 credit for \$1,109.26.

A motion was made by Mr. Zlotnick, seconded by Ms. Gaston, to eliminate the in-person bidding at the November Saratoga County property auction, leaving the bidding period open and concluding the auction on December 2nd. Unanimous.

Mr. Dorsey said that there are currently 46 parcels scheduled for auction. The auction date is currently set for November 17th. Mr. Dorsey said that he has been meeting with the Treasurer and Real Property Departments as well as members of the IT Department to try to put some terms and conditions together for the auction. Last Friday the first Zoom meeting with the Auctioneer from Auctions International was held. Mr. Dorsey said that some of the preconceptions that they had as to how the auction would run have changed in light of this Zoom meeting. The County had been planning on an in-person component to the online bidding. At maximum the room would accommodate approximately 12 in-person bidders. Auctions International is recommending against in-person bidding for a variety of reasons. Safety being the primary one. Mr. Dorsey said that Auctions International have a method by which people who don't have online access can still bid. An absentee bidder packet, which can be provided for pick up in the Treasurer's office, can be filled out and notarized. This form is essentially a Power of Attorney that allows Auctions International to bid on the bidders behalf up to a maximum bid set by the bidder. Another item they talked about is that their typical online auction goes from 10 days to 2 weeks. They typically do not do a one night auction. The earliest they can start the auction would be November 17th, and if it was run for 2 weeks, this would run us into the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The Treasurer's office has requested to extend the auction to December 2nd because December 1st is a very busy day for them. Another complication is that the Governor recently extended his order prohibiting evictions of tenants until January 1st. When the County sells properties, it's part of the terms and conditions that the purchaser is responsible for evicting any people still living in the home. Mr. Dorsey said that it's possible that the Governor may extend that January 1st deadline. Therefore, people may be purchasing properties with tenants they may not be able to evict. Ms. Stanko said that 18 of the properties are currently classified as a private home or mobile home.

They have verified that all are unoccupied except for two properties. One in the Town of Greenfield, they can't get to as it is fenced all around, one in the Town of Wilton that Ms. Stanko believes is a rental as the tax bills are not going to that property address. Ms. Stanko added that she has been involved in several different aspects of the auction process since 1988 and believes that going with Auctions International is the best way to go. Ms. Stanko also added that she and Ms. Wrisley are new in their roles regarding the auction and very much need the expertise of the County Attorney to walk them through their first timeline. The in-rem procedure is complicated and this first year will be a big learning curve for both of them, as well as using the new auction company. Therefore, she would not be comfortable pushing the auction off to next year. Ms. Winney asked the committee how they felt about the 2 week period, all were fine with it. Ms. Gaston said that removing the in-person component makes it easier all around, and believes Public Health would also be happy with this. Ms. Gaston said that she is fine with the 2 week period and confirmed that the County would not be evicting anyone, whoever purchases the property would purchase it with the knowledge that the moratorium is in effect. Mr. Jarosh also said that the auction results are not approved until the December Board meeting. Mr. Dorsey said that the moratorium details are also placed in the terms and conditions and also said that the Board meeting in December is scheduled for the 15th, the winning purchasers would have until 30 days after December 15th to pay the balance that they owe. Ms. Gaston asked if would be preferred to have the auction now or in the Spring from both a personnel and monetary standpoint. From a personnel standpoint, Ms. Stanko said now. From a monetary standpoint, Mr. Jarosh said that he would prefer to have some revenue come in this year. Mr. Dorsey said that based on the decisions made today, they will need to go back and put together a final version of the Terms and Conditions which the Committee will need to approve prior to going on the website. This may require a special meeting of the Committee before the end of the month.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board