

ASSESSING STANDARDS BOARD
Public Forum - Notes

DATE: November 17, 2021

TIME: 10:30 a.m.

LOCATION: Manchester City Hall, 1 City Hall Plaza, Manchester

BOARD MEMBERS

(E) Excused absence

Senator James Gray (E)

Senator Kevin Cavanaugh (E)

Representative Peter Schmidt

Representative Tony Piemonte (E)

Betsey Patten, Public Member, Chair

Robert Gagne, NHAAO, City Official

James Gerry, NHDRA

Jim Wheeler, Municipal Official, City (E)

Paul Brown, Municipal Official, Towns >3,000 (E)

Vacant, Municipal Official, <3,000

David Marazoff, NHAAO, At-Large Member

Loren Martin, NHAAO, Towns, <3,000

Joe Lessard, NHAAO, Towns >3,000

Vacant, Public Member

Thomas Thomson, Public Member (E)

MEMBERS of the PUBLIC

Scott Bartlett, Goffstown

Laurie Ortolano

Laura Colquhoun

Lee Ann Provencher, Manchester

Vice-Chair Gagne convened the public forum at 10:30 a.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

Introduction of Board and public members followed.

Ms. Martin summarized Asb rule changes that have been in process for some time that were adopted in October, 2021, including adding and clarifying definitions, the allowance of on-line and self-study courses for qualifying and continuing education, increase in training and changes to qualifying and continuing education requirements, addition of an exam requirement for the supervisor level, and addition of a conditional approval process for out-of-state assessors to work in NH.

Mr. Gagne briefly explained circumstances that led to proposed legislative changes. It has been the intent of the ASB that the assessing and certification processes be transparent including the discipline records of assessors. It came the Board's attention that the certification records of assessors are not open to the public due to statutory requirements of the DRA. The first proposed change is to add an exception to allow these records to become public which the DRA supports. The second proposed change is to remove the certification process from DRA and the ASB and place it with a new, separate board under the Office of Professional Licensure and Certification (OPLC). The ASB would continue as a board for assessing issues but would not participate in the rules, certification of or complaints against assessors.

One other change relates to changing a property value after a revaluation. Previous language in RSA 75:8 allowed annual data corrections, if found, which could change a property's value; current language does not. In order to maintain proportionality, it is important that all information and values are correct.

Public Comment

Laurie Ortolano expressed support for the change to RSA 75:8 but expressed concern with the abatement process and a brief discussion followed.

Mr. Bartlett asked if both proposals relating to transparency, opening DRA records and the new board, are meant to pass or if it was one or the other. It was stated that the new board, if it passed, would not be in existence until 2024 and the transparency is desired before then. Mr. Bartlett, a former ASB member during the creation of the certification rules, stated the rules were modeled after the Real Estate Appraisal Board and how it was run and he reiterated that it was the intent of the Board that the records be open to the public so he was surprised to hear that they were not. Some discussion followed. Mr. Gerry added the DRA generally remains neutral with legislation. For the new board, they are awaiting the final language to support the move or not; with regards to making the certification records public, the DRA supports and will testify in favor for that change.

Ms. Ortolano expressed continued frustration with the City of Nashua and their lack of transparency. She described confusion about the prior and current contracts relating to the verification of sales and who was responsible for the work; the surprise at the change in number of employees from 10 to 4; the lack of public attendance at a meeting she has asked for relating to the current revaluation and the lack of clarity, push back and valid response about whether or not the Board of Assessors in Nashua reviews abatement applications. She also expressed concern about the current update and the bad data that is still being used.

With regards to the lack of public involvement on the board, one of the public positions has been vacant going on 4-years, a position she applied for and never received any kind of response for from the Governor's office. She feels there is a need for citizen voices on this board and expressed reservations about the public membership on the proposed new board. If the ASB cannot fill public member seats, how will the new board?

Next meeting

December 10, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. at DRA.

Chair Patten adjourned the public forum at 1:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Stephanie Martel
NH Department of Revenue Administration – Municipal and Property Division

Documentation relative to the Assessing Standards Board may be submitted, requested or reviewed by:

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