

## May 14, 2025 Board of Assessors VIRTUAL Meeting Minutes

**Board Members Present:** Chairman Howard Shpetner and Members: J. April Stein and George Arvanitis.

**Also present:** Administrative Assessor David Burgess, and Assessors' Clerk Leslie Bracebridge.

**Guests:** None

**1. Chairman Howard Shpetner opened the meeting at 6:37 PM** online using ZOOM Meeting ID: 839 2926 0805, Phone: 1.929.205.6099. Howard identified all people present and announced that the meeting was being recorded.

**2. A motion was made and seconded to approve the April 16 and May 6, 2025 meeting minutes:** No changes were offered. Both minutes approved as written: Arvanitis - aye, Stein - aye, Shpetner - aye.

**3. Old Business Updates:** This is a new agenda item, intended to provide a place for Assessors to follow-up with questions or further information concerning topics discussed in previous meetings. It can be passed over at meetings when there are no updates.

**4. Approve/deny Motor Vehicle Excise Tax Abatements:** Leslie reported that the Board last authorized Assessors' office staff to use the Board members' signature stamps on routine motor vehicle abatement paperwork in February of 2024. Leslie requested the Board consider updating that authorization. **A motion was made, seconded and voted to approve continued use of Assessors' signature stamps for routine motor vehicle abatement applications:** Arvanitis - aye, Stein - aye, Shpetner - aye.

**5. A motion was made and seconded to approve for signature stamps the following Accountant reports:**

- Motor Vehicle Exemptions and Abatements:**

<u>Commit. Year</u>	<u>Report Date</u>	<u>Total Amount Abated</u>
2024	April (2025)	\$321.31
2025	April (2025)	\$617.86

Explanation: MGL 178 of the Acts of 2024 (HERO Act) included the full exemption of 1 vehicle for recipients of MGL Ch. 60A §1 Cl 22E starting in September of 2024. Applications and explanations were sent to the recipients, and 1 person has responded so far. There is a 3-year window during which vehicle owners can apply for motor vehicle abatements/exemptions. No changes were offered. Both reports were approved as provided: Arvanitis - aye, Stein - aye, Shpetner - aye.

**6. Agenda item 6 was passed over because no May motor vehicle commitment has come in from the Registry of Motor Vehicles.**

**7. Agenda item 7 was passed over because there were no Ch. 61, 61A or 61B updates.**

**8. Assessors made wording, punctuation and formatting suggestions to the DRAFT annual town meeting handout, regarding the "HERO Act" warrant articles as requested by the Select Board on May 6.** Leslie will incorporate the suggestions into a final draft, send it to the

Assessors to review independently, and coordinate the handout's printing and availability at Town Meeting with Administrative Assistant Brennan Mailloux.

**9. A motion was made and seconded to recommend to the Select Board that the Roy Bishop Associates contract related to the annual services provided in preparation for and actual setting of the tax rate.:** Many of the tasks listed in the contract describe similar and related day-to-day tasks in the Assessors' office, the contract specifically applies to those tasks directly conducted when setting the tax rate each fall including valuing the major utilities.: Arvanitis - aye, Stein – aye, Shpetner – aye.

**10. A motion was made and seconded to recommend to the Select Board that an advertisement be posted for a 20-hour per week benefitted Administrative Assessor and a search committee be appointed.** David Burgess notified the Board in March, that he would be leaving his position on June 30, 2025. Assessors have been meeting together, with the Personnel Board, the new Town Administrative staff, and the Select Board, to plan future Assessing department staffing.

There was confusion at the May 6 Select Board meeting because the Bishop contract for setting the FY 26 interim tax rate (only) had similar wording for some of the tasks that should be more fully conducted in the office throughout the year. The contract's listed tasks did not cover all of the Administrative Assessors' office tasks.

As the department approaches its fiscal year 2028 revaluation, cyclical inspections must be brought up to Department of Revenue standards. The Assessors' Clerk has been learning and doing many of the day-to-day tasks that a 20-hour/week Administrative Assessor would be doing. As the Assessors' Clerk, Leslie emphasized that Shutesbury must be searching for and hiring either an individual or a provider to be oriented and trained to assume those tasks, so that Leslie can resume the clerk's tasks only. Once a 20-hour per week person is settled-in, an evaluation should be made of when a replacement be sought for the Assessors' Clerk's position. Perhaps a company will cover all Assessors' office functions. It is Leslie's opinion that for the well-being of the town, the Assessing office should not be simultaneously vacated of both the 20-hour/week Administrative Assessor and the 12-hour/week Assessors' Clerk structure that it has been operating under for decades without some evaluation of who will provide what services, and corresponding orientation.

David Burgess offered to remain as a consultant through July 2025, if an experienced Assessor is not hired by June 30. Assessors agreed to continue the search for either an Administrative Assessor, or a firm that will handle all of the tasks that an Administrative Assessor historically filled.

**Assessors voted to continue the search for an Administrative Assessor as moved and seconded: Arvanitis - aye, Stein – aye, Shpetner – aye.**

In anticipation of potential delays in getting the Administrative Assessors' office functions filled and operational by June 30, **a motion was made and seconded to request the Town Clerk add Leslie to password-protected status in the DOR Gateway, so the office has someone to attend to functions that an Administrative Assessor would handle, if there is no one hired to assume those tasks upon David's departure: Arvanitis - aye, Stein – aye, Shpetner – aye.**

**11. A motion was made and seconded to respond to a May 7 email from the Administrative Assistant** inquiring if George would continue as an Assessor for another 3-year term, and if Leslie would continue as an Assessors' Clerk for another 1-year term. Both George and Leslie expressed an interest in serving again, if recommended and appointed. **Assessors voted to recommend George and Leslie to the Select Board to continue to serve in their respective capacities: Arvanitis - aye, Stein – aye, Shpetner – aye.**

**12. Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting:**

1. The Franklin County Assessors' Association will hold a Spring Roundtable event on Thursday, June 12 at 10:00 AM at the Erving Town Hall. Reservations to be made no later than June 10. Leslie will attend. She encouraged Assessors to attend for general interest and for purposes of net-working.

**Schedule Next Meeting:** A motion was made and seconded for the next meeting to be on **Wednesday June 4, 2025 at 6:30 PM:** Arvanitis - aye, Stein – aye, Shpetner – aye.

**A motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 8:25 PM:** Arvanitis - aye, Stein – aye, Shpetner – aye.

**Respectfully submitted, as approved on June 4, 2025,**

**Leslie Bracebridge**  
Assessors' Clerk

**List of Documents used at the meeting:**

1. May 14, 2025 meeting agenda.
2. April 16, and May 14, 2025 draft meeting minutes.
3. Summaries to Accountant as detailed in minutes.
4. DRAFT Annual Town Meeting handout.
5. Roy Bishop Associates Interim Year FY 2026 Assessing Services contract.
6. Administrative Assistant's email request for department reappointment recommendations.
7. Franklin County Assessors' Association Spring Event.
8. Administrative Assessor Job Description.