

February 25, 2014

The Pinellas County Value Adjustment Board (VAB) met in the County Commission Conference Room, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida, at 1:13 P.M. on this date with the following members present:

Norm Roche, County Commissioner, Chairman
Kenneth T. Welch, County Commissioner
Carol Cook, School Board Member
Michael A. J. Bindman, Citizen Appointee (School Board)
Robert P. Symanski, Citizen Appointee (Board of County Commissioners)

Also Present

Claretha N. Harris, Chief Deputy Director, Finance
Frederick L. Dean, Director, Finance
Stephen G. Watts, Esquire, VAB Counsel
Norman Loy, Manager, Board Records
Kevin Hayes, Property Appraiser's Office
Mark Sawyer, Property Appraiser's Office
Trudy Futch, Deputy Clerk, Board Reporter
Helen Groves, Deputy Clerk, Senior Board Reporter

AGENDA

- Item No. 1 Meeting Called to Order.
- Item No. 2 Select the Chairman for the 2014 VAB Cycle.
- Item No. 3 Citizens Who Wish to Comment on the VAB Process.
- Item No. 4 Approval of the Minutes of the October 8, 2013 Meeting.
- Item No. 5 Final Action on Recommendations of Special Magistrates.
- Item No. 6 Final Certification of the 2013 Tax Rolls.
- Item No. 7 Selection of Date to Hold Organization Meeting for 2014 VAB Cycle.
- Item No.8 Senate Bill 568 Introduced for 2014 Legislative Session.
- Item No. 9 Adjournment.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Chairman Roche called the meeting to order at 1:13 P.M.

COMMISSIONER ROCHE SELECTED AS CHAIRMAN FOR 2014

Commissioner Welch moved, seconded by Mr. Symanski and carried, that Commissioner Roche serve as Chairman for the 2014 VAB cycle.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

In response to the Chairman's call for citizens wishing to be heard, Terry W. Bryan, St. Petersburg, appeared and indicated that he had missed the deadline for filing for Homestead Exemption and had also missed his hearings. He discussed the extenuating circumstances, and stated that the Special Magistrate had ruled against him; whereupon, he requested that the Board reconsider the recommendation of the Special Magistrate.

Attorney Watts indicated that the Board is guided by statutes and rules; and that Mr. Bryan had not shown sufficient legal reason for the Board to overturn the legal finding of the Special Magistrate; whereupon, he ascertained that Mr. Bryan had filed for Homestead Exemption for 2014, and assured him that he would receive the exemption this year.

In response to query by Mr. Symanski, Attorney Watts indicated that Mr. Bryan could appeal the ruling in Circuit Court, but there would be a \$450 filing fee; whereupon, Mr. Loy agreed to provide Chairman Roche with Mr. Bryan's address for follow-up purposes.

MINUTES OF THE VAB MEETING HELD OCTOBER 8, 2013 – APPROVED

Upon motion by School Board Member Cook, seconded by Mr. Symanski and carried, the minutes of the meeting of October 8, 2013 were approved.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF SPECIAL MAGISTRATES – APPROVED

Mr. Loy indicated that approximately 1,460 petitions were filed, and 640 hearings were held, noting that the others were either withdrawn or an agreement was reached with the Property Appraiser's Office; and that all recommendations from the Special Magistrates have been received and are awaiting Board approval. In response to queries by Chairman Roche and Commissioner Welch, Mr. Loy explained that detailed worksheets are contained in the AXIA software program, and discussion ensued; whereupon, School Board Member Cook moved, seconded by Commissioner Welch and carried, that the final recommendations of the Special Magistrates be approved.

FINAL CERTIFICATION OF 2013 TAX ROLLS – APPROVED

Chairman Roche presented copies of the certification to the members, noting that the losses in both Tangibles and Real Property will be shown in parenthesis for clarification; whereupon, Mr. Bindman moved, seconded by Commissioner Welch and carried, that the final certification of the 2013 tax rolls be approved.

2014 ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING TO BE HELD JULY 15

At the suggestion of Chairman Roche and Mr. Loy, the members agreed to hold the Organizational Meeting on July 15, 2014; and following discussion, Mr. Loy agreed to verify the time of the meeting and follow up with the members.

SENATE BILL 568 FOR 2014 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

At the request of the Chairman, Attorney Watts discussed Florida Senate Bill 568 filed by Joseph Abruzzo, and related that the bill, if enacted, would replace the private counsel with a Presiding Magistrate appointed by the Department of Revenue (DOR), and the Presiding Magistrate would in turn appoint the Special Magistrates; whereupon, Chairman Roche suggested that passage of the bill would impact local control. During discussion, Mr. Loy pointed out that there is not as yet a companion House bill; Commissioner Welch stated that Pinellas County is not the target of the bill, but it is not uncommon for the legislators to use a broad-brush approach to correct problems unique to a particular area; Mr. Dean pointed out that the DOR could set the salary of the Special Magistrates; and Mr. Bindman stated that a VAB attorney could be appointed who

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does not live in Pinellas County, who could then appoint Special Magistrates not familiar with the local real estate market.

Thereupon, Commissioner Welch moved, seconded by Mr. Bindman and carried unanimously, that the VAB send a letter to the Pinellas County Delegation expressing the concerns of the Board and asking it to monitor the bill. School Board Member Cook suggested that the term “local authority” be used, as it seems to be better received than “local control”; and at the request of the Chairman, Mr. Loy agreed to coordinate the letter with the stakeholders who would be impacted by the bill, and Attorney Watts agreed to review the letter before it is sent to the Delegation.

MISCELLANEOUS

Commissioner Welch confirmed that he will be permanently replacing Commissioner Morrioni on the Board.

Mr. Hayes commented that for planning purposes for the next VAB cycle, the Property Appraiser is projecting tax increases, which could impact the number of petitions filed.

ADJOURNMENT

At this time, 1:40 P.M., Commissioner Welch moved, seconded by Mr. Bindman and carried, that the meeting be adjourned.

Chairman