

Tax Fairness Committee
January 20, 2017
Minutes

The Tax Fairness Committee met on January 20, 2017 at 8:00 am in the Town House Hearing Room. Present were members Reinier Beeuwkes, Walter Birge, Nancy Cronin, Jonathan Keyes, and James Phelps. Also present was Richard Jamison, liaison from the Finance Committee.

The minutes of the December 16, 2016 meeting were approved.

The Committee members expressed gratitude that the Town's petition to the legislature for a senior means-tested property tax exemption which was passed by the 2016 Town Meeting was passed and signed by the Governor as Chapter 374 of the Acts of 2016. Then the Committee reviewed the final version of its 2017 Town Meeting warrant article which reflects the wording of that Act.

Richard Jamison stated that the Assessors were concerned about staffing that they might need in order to administer the 2017 warrant article if approved. They were concerned about reviewing the number of potential applicants whose property value is above the value set by the state income tax circuit breaker. It was suggested that Town Assessor Lane Partridge and liaison Jerry Vigneron be invited to the next TFC meeting on February 3. Jim Phelps will invite Lane Partridge and Reinier will invite Jerry Vigneron. Jonathan Keyes will invite the new Finance Director Kerry LaFleur to the meeting.

The Committee discussed the substance of the presentation that will be made. The following points were suggested:

1. The 2016 Town meeting passed nearly unanimously the TFC petition requesting the legislature to allow the town to have the senior means-tested property tax exemption. The legislature passed our petition on December 28, 2016 and it was signed by the Governor as Chapter 374 of the Acts of 2016.
2. If the 2017 article is passed, it must be voted on by a subsequent Town Election,

3. The cost of senior means-tested tax exemption cannot be more than ½ of 1% of the Town's tax levy; in contrast, the Community Preservation Act can cost up to 1.5% of the levy.
4. Include an answer to the objection to the exemption that older people have a major asset in their homes, and they could harvest that asset and move from their homes.
5. Indicate that the exemption will be paid for by an increase in the residential property tax, and give an estimated cost for the average taxpayer.

Reinier Beeuwkes agreed to make the presentation to the Finance Committee at their hearing on February 27 and at the Town Meeting. Jonathan and Walter will work with him to refine the presentation.

The following assignments were made to publicize the TFC warrant article:

Get the numbers of Concord residents getting heating assistance from the COA (Nancy) and CMLP assistance from the Light Plant (Reinier)

Include information about the warrant article in the COA newsletter and ask the COA board and the Friends of the COA to speak in favor of the warrant article. Jonathan Keyes and Nancy Cronin will speak to the COA board.

Nancy Cronin will ask the Tax Relief Committee and the Hugh Cargill Trust to speak in favor of the article, as well as the Concord Housing Foundation (Charles Phillips).

Jonathan Keyes and Nancy Cronin will write and submit a Guest Commentary to the Concord Journal.

Nancy Cronin will get data from the Tax Relief Committee and Hugh Cargill Trust about the numbers of recipients of their funds.

Walter will post information on Facebook.

Request support at Town Meeting from the following residents:
Dinny McIntyre (J. Keyes), Sally Schnitzer (Walter), Terry Rothermel
and the chair of the Tax Relief Committee (Walter), League of
Women Voters (Nancy), Select Board (J. Keyes), Wendy Rovelli, Fin
Com. Chair (Walter), Town Manager (J.Keyes).

The next meeting will be held on Friday, February 3.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Cronin, Clerk