

BOROUGH OF MEDFORD LAKES
SPECIAL MEETING – REVALUATION INFORMATION SESSION
August 18, 2009

A Special Meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Medford Lakes, New Jersey, was held on the above date in Oaks Hall at Municipal Cabin, 1 Cabin Circle, Medford Lakes, NJ 08055 beginning at 7:00pm. Following the pledge of allegiance and moment of silence (Council and the public observed a moment of silence to honor service men and women defending our country), Clerk McIntosh read the Statement of Compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act: this is to announce that adequate notice had been provided to allow publication 48hours in advance and was (1) posted on the Administration Building bulletin board, (2) emailed to The Central Record, Medford, NJ, (3) emailed to the Burlington County Times, Willingboro, NJ, (4) emailed to the Courier Post, (5) posted on the Borough Web Site and (6) filed with the Municipal Clerk. Advance written notice of this meeting was mailed or emailed to all persons who requested such notice according to the Clerk of the Municipality. Publication of notice was made on August 13, 2009 in the Central Record.

ROLL CALL

Clerk McIntosh called roll. Mayor Paul G. Weiss, Esq., Councilman Timothy S. Casey and Councilman Gregory C. Lackey answered in attendance. Also present were Manager Geoffrey D. Urbanik, Tax Assessor Douglas Koltan, representatives of Appraisal Systems, Inc. and Deputy Manager/Acting Clerk Mark J. McIntosh.

PRESENTATION

Mayor Weiss introduced Borough Tax Assessor Douglas Koltan

Mr. Koltan explained why a revaluation had been ordered by the Burlington County Tax Board citing that in 2005 the borough assessment was at 63% but had dropped in 2009 to 47.28% (less than ½ market value). He stated that the goal is to be at 100% market value. Mr. Koltan explained that Appraisal Systems, Inc. had been awarded a contract by Borough Council and that all questions regarding the process should be directed to them or by calling the Borough Assessor's office.

Mr. Koltan introduced Ernest Del Guercio, CEO and Brett Trout, Vice President of Appraisal Systems, Inc.

Mr. Del Guercio stated the purpose of the presentation is to walk through the revaluation process, explain statutory scheme, methodology of the process, the appeal process and provide a question and answer session with the residents.

Mr. Del Guercio began showing a PowerPoint presentation that in summary explained that all inspectors will register with the police department and they will carry identification. He reviewed the positives and negatives of how surrounding areas, towns, etc. play into the assessed value. It should take five (5) to fifteen (15) minutes for interior inspections. Mr. Del Guercio explained that objective and subjective data is obtained by the inspectors. He explained that a yellow card would be left at any residences if no one is home and the inspector is unable to gain access. If during a second visit no access is available the inspector will leave an estimate card. Any appeals will be based on the following deadlines:

- May 1, 2010 for newly revalued properties
- April 1, 2010 for all others

Mr. Del Guercio concluded the presentation with the phone number for Appraisal Systems, Inc., 1-800-994-1999 and their company's web site, www.asinj.com

Mayor Weiss thanked them for their presentation and opened the meeting for public comment

PUBLIC COMMENT (in bullets)

Al Borrell, 169 Algonquin Trail:

- What percentage of the previous assessment is considered?

Appraisal Systems stated that no attention is given to previous assessments.

Robert Hanold, 45 Natchez Trail:

- From the presentation it sounds like a fair assessment will be conducted.
- Are different home styles being investigated?
- Some owners have made upgrades yet the neighborhood hasn't changed.

Appraisal Systems stated that some improvements might not yield a return as high as the owner anticipated.

Phyllis Greever, 149 Algonquin Trail:

- Seems like a strange time to do a revaluation.

Appraisal Systems stated that they are looking for a snap-shot in time and the housing market is always going up or down.

Sam Beamer, 69 Kosoto Trail:

- Will inspectors walk around property?

Appraisal Systems stated that inspectors will walk around property during exterior inspections and will show respect to the property owners.

Jack, 141 Atsion Road:

- Comparative house sales are only from Medford Lakes and not from other towns?

Appraisal Systems stated only Medford Lakes sales.

Joe Aromando, 285 Shingowack Trail:

- Will the PowerPoint be made available to the public?

Appraisal Systems stated it would be available on their website.

Councilman Casey stated that he would create a link to the Borough's web site.

- What if sales are not well documented?

Appraisal Systems stated that they will broaden the sales area search.

- How do you determine highest and reasonable potential?

Appraisal Systems stated that reasonable assumptions would be made.

- The timeline for the borough wide appraisal is all blown to hell; the original proposal was for a four month time frame. Will the timetable still be kept too?

Appraisal Systems stated that the intent was to increase the amount of inspectors to meet the timetable.

Ed, 16 Cochise Circle:

- How long does the entire revaluation process take?

Appraisal Systems stated approximately one (1) year.

Jane Berezow, 171 Migazee Trail:

- If the property was recently appraised does that count?

Appraisal Systems stated that recent appraisals are not really counted but they do recognize them to assist with determining fair market value.

Jeanie Watters, 269 Chicagami Trail:

- No two log cabins are the same.
- Log cabins have unique features.
- Are the inspectors checking for log conditions?

Appraisal Systems stated that they would be evaluating conditions of the logs as part of the inspection.

Bob McGowan, 18 Cochise Circle:

- Do master deeds apply to this process?

Appraisal Systems stated that they apply to townhouses.

- Should we send information to you regarding our property?

Appraisal Systems stated yes, if it helps identify unseen conditions.

Councilman Casey asked that if a homeowner knows of problems within the dwelling should it be forwarded to the inspector?

Appraisal Systems stated that they evaluate based on market value not on full disclosure.

Ron Kyle, 26 Shinnecock Trail:

- The Borough is a very unique town and that should be taken into consideration.

Nate Wimmer, 38 Algonquin Trail:

- Will inspectors be bonded and insured?

Appraisal Systems stated yes they would be through their company as employees/agents.

- Is the data base available for viewing? Is there any confidentiality to the data? Does Appraisal Systems sell any data to outside vendors?

Appraisal Systems stated that all data is given back to borough and would fall under the Open Public Records Act as to what is allowable to the public.

Mark Franken, 131 Stokes Road:

- The recent storm caused extensive damage and requires extensive repairs at some properties.
- Is it a good idea to hold off on repairs until after the inspector comes through?

Appraisal Systems stated that the improvements that they are looking for are major not minor improvements (i.e. a finished basement vs. painting a room or installing a vegetable garden).

Councilman Lackey stated that the PowerPoint presentation showed overall condition as a consideration.

Appraisal Systems stated that normal maintenance is neither a pro nor a con.

Joanne Tragressor, 6 Minnetonka Trail:

- With all of the data on the web, will they show median values, etc?

Appraisal Systems stated yes, through numerous spreadsheets

Manager Urbanik asked how long the actual inspections will take.

Appraisal Systems stated several months possibly three (3) or so.

Dave Wasson, 97 Wabun Trail:

- How does the equalization formula work?

Appraisal Systems stated the purpose is not to raise the assessment of all properties but certain individual ones.

Ron Kyle, 26 Shinecock Trail:

- Glad to hear that they are starting from scratch.
- Only been maintaining the house for the last twenty-five (25) years.

Appraisal Systems stated that it is not important to know what the 1929 conditions were.

Claire Carlyle, 250 Shingowack Trail:

- No townhouses in Medford Lakes
- Have you inspected similar towns?

Appraisal Systems stated no, they had not, but they had inspected log cabins in Highland Lakes, NJ and they did recognize Medford Lakes as a unique town.

Councilman Lackey stated that past experience inspecting towns with lakes and cabins was built into the bid specifications.

Susan Huckaby, 43 Manhasset Trail:

- Medford Lakes is a very diverse community, not the average homes

Appraisal Systems stated that they don't come up with averages, each home is individually assessed.

Phyllis Greever, 149 Algonquin Trail:

- What comparable sales time is used?

Appraisal Systems stated that the sales closest to October 1st (three year average)

Bob Hanold, 45 Natchez Trail:

- Many senior citizens are on vacation.

Appraisal Systems stated that if a property owner is going away they can call ahead for an appointment.

Al Borrell, 169 Algonquin Trail:

- How do you determine which properties are inspected first and which ones are last?

Appraisal Systems stated they go in order of block and lot from the tax maps.

Joe Aromando, 285 Shingowack Trail:

- Starting from scratch, you don't go by property records on file?

Appraisal Systems stated that they do not assess using existing property records.

- How many comparable sales are statistically acceptable?

Appraisal Systems stated they use a three-year average.

- How does lot size get figured?

Appraisal Systems stated they work from the NJ State okayed tax map. The presumption is that the tax maps are correct.

Mayor Weiss closed public comment

COMMENTS FROM COUNCIL

Councilman Casey stated that the whole process has nothing to do with the overall tax burden but just a process to have property owners pay their fair share.

Councilman Lackey said that he heard a lot of concerns from tonight as to the uniqueness of Medford Lakes and asked if the appraisers are well versed in the Boroughs characteristics?

Appraisal Systems stated that they will be loading a bus with the team of inspectors, the Borough Assessor, the Borough Manager and together would inspect all parts of the town. They agreed that it is not an exact science.

Mayor Weiss thanked Appraisal Systems for their presentation and motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilman Casey.

VOTE TO ADJOURN SPECIAL MEETING

Ayes: Weiss, Casey, Lackey

Nays: None

Motion carries, meeting adjourned.