

**ROXBURY BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING**

**September 3, 2008
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

Barbara Henry, First Selectman, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Present: Barbara Henry, First Selectman; Robert Lowe and Russell Dirienzo, Selectmen; Patricia Braislin, Assessor; Members of the Public

Meeting with Assessor to Discuss Open Space Values

Patricia Braislin explained to the Board the Master Plan of Development determines what acres qualify for Open Space assessment and approximately one-half of the towns in Litchfield County have Open Space for assessment purposes. She explained that in Roxbury, the base value of excess acreage is \$25,000 and if a resident applies for classification as Open Space, the properties are valued at 20 percent of the base value or \$5,000 per acre. She noted that various factors may affect the base value. The final impact of the Open Space valuation was not fully known until the figures were finalized for the 2007 Grand List. Prior to the 2007 revaluation an acre was assessed at 7 percent of the base value or at \$1,000 per acre. Ms. Braislin reported that presently a total of 1308 acres are classified as Open Space for assessment purposes affecting 131 parcels, totaling a tax savings of \$138,000. Not many individuals own more than one parcel.

Robert Lowe questioned whether an adjustment is made of the space if it is not usable, as in the case of wetlands. Ms. Braislin explained that there is currently not an adjustment. Mass appraisal is different than an individual appraisal. However, if a study was professionally done and brought to the Assessor's attention, issues such as these would be addressed on a case by case basis.

Mr. Dirienzo noted that the complaint of some residents was that this was a 400 percent increase on unimproved land which did not increase in value. Ms. Braislin noted that because the prior value was so low any increase would cause a large percentage increase. However, both farm and forest stayed the same. Robert Lowe added that the complaints had a lot to do with shock value.

Ms. Braislin explained that she would have no problem with a change; however, she explained that the valuation was not out of line with the other Litchfield County Towns that have Open Space for assessment purposes. She explained that State Statute would not allow a change until next year. She encouraged that Open Space for assessment purposes be reviewed in the upcoming Master Plan of Development in light of the recent zone acreage change and perhaps include some guidance for valuation in the future.

Russell Dirienzo noted that he would support splitting the open space value in half to \$2,500 per acre. He explained that the goal is to encourage more open space. Although the \$5,000 can be justified, it does not make it fair. He felt that the jump was unfair. He suggested that a minimum on the excess acres might be considered because owners can no longer subdivide without 4 acres.

Barbara Henry noted that she was not opposed to reducing the open space value to \$2,500 per acre but also noted that many people have enjoyed open space as an asset to their property for a long time at a significant savings compared to full value.

Motion was made by Russell Dirienzo to lower Open Space value from \$5,000 to \$2,500 effective October 1, 2008. This will not be retroactive. Seconded by Robert Lowe and carried.

Barbara Henry acknowledged the concerns and complaints raised to Patricia Braislin over this change and commended her on the way she handled everything. She noted that Ms. Braislin has the support and appreciation of the Selectmen.

Motion by Russell Dirienzo to adjourn at 7:34 PM. The motion was seconded by Robert Lowe and carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Tai Kern

Tai Kern,
Secretary

These minutes are not considered official until approved at the next Regular Meeting of the Roxbury Board of Selectmen.