

Williamson Central Appraisal District

Board of Directors Meeting

Minutes of November 12, 2014

Harry Gibbs, chairman, called the regular meeting of the Williamson Central Appraisal District Board of Directors to order Wednesday, November 12, 2014 at 8:33 a.m. Board members present: Harry Gibbs, Deborah Hunt, Rufus Honeycutt and Charles Chadwell. Quorum declared. Cecilia Crowley was absent.

Receipt of Public Comments

No public comments.

Taxpayer Liaison Officer's Report

Report on Property Owner Contacts

Charley Rouse, the District's Taxpayer Liaison Officer, was present to report on the status of his contact with property owners. Rouse indicated he had nothing to report since the last Board meeting.

Update on Appointment of ARB by Administrative Law Judge

Rouse also provided an update regarding the appointment of the Appraisal Review Board (ARB) by the Administrative Law Judge. He indicated that, along with appointing the regular members, it had been requested that the judge also name two alternates. Rouse felt that the commission had done an outstanding job; indicating that former ARB member, Don McAlister, was the head of the commission. A letter, received from the judge, was distributed to the Board members. This letter indicated the following appointments to the ARB: Joe Taylor, James Hedges, Charles Akey, Ron Brandon, Wesley Horton and David Paul.

Consider approval of minutes of the Board of Directors for the regular meeting – October 10, 2014.

Honeycutt moved for approval of the minutes as presented. Chadwell seconded. Discussion followed. Chadwell expressed his appreciation for clarification on the acronyms referenced in the Board minutes. The motion carried.

Consideration of Monthly Financials and Quarterly Investment Report

The September 2014 financials and expenditures were reviewed and filed for audit.

Lankford discussed the ARB budget category, calling attention to the contract labor portion of this budget. He indicated that this category was overdrawn due to the increased number of ARB hearings and hearing days. Lankford reminded the members that adjustments in the budget would need to be made which would require Board consideration and approval.

The quarterly investment report was also reviewed and filed. Kimberly Gamboa, the District's Business & HR Manager, confirmed that the District's Certificates of Deposit (CD's) remain at Union State Bank.

Board Policy Update

Lankford reminded the Board members of their previous request to revise the annual financial audit portion of the Board Policy. He read the amended portion aloud and reminded members that the policy update was to ensure alternating of financial auditors.

Hunt moved for approval of the Board Policy update as presented. Honeycutt seconded. The motion carried.

Business Personal Property Rendition Project Reserve Expenditure

Lankford reminded the Board of the Business Personal Property (BPP) rendition project which had been discussed at a previous meeting. He indicated there to be two parts to this project. The first part included the ability to receive personal property renditions online with access for property owners of their confidential prior filings. The second piece involves streamlining of the rendition entry workflow.

Lankford reported that the District had previously been working on more efficient ways to process homesteads and is now working with renditions. He explained the process and expressed the District's goal is to give property owners the ability to fill out renditions online; which would also allow property owners access of their digital information. The mailed forms would incorporate an optical character recognition (OCR) format allowing them to be scanned using the District's OCR software. The District hopes to eventually load these renditions directly in the Orion appraisal software. Lankford explained the entry workflow.

Lankford informed the Board that each BPP account is reviewed in the field each year; unless the account has been active in the same location for a number of years. It is then compared and contrasted between the other businesses that have rendered. The District uses a valuation and depreciation schedule along with contacting other appraisals districts in Texas to gather additional information. Pam Metcalfe, the District's BPP Manager, was also present to report. Lankford informed the Board that businesses are required to render their furniture, fixtures and equipment, etc.; if they do not, they receive a ten percent penalty. He indicated the District's goal to receive rendition information in a streamlined format to benefit both the District as well as the property owner. The penalty is assigned to those that do not render and is collected by the tax office and then split with the appraisal district. Lankford reported the project to require assistance from the District's consultant/programmer, Tim Tisdell, along with a few employees. He felt the cost of \$15,000 for the programming would provide a positive return on investment. Gamboa reported the rendition penalty income to be over \$11,000.

Chadwell made a motion to transfer \$15,000 out of the technology reserve account for the Business Personal Property rendition project. Hunt seconded. Discussion followed. The motion carried.

Pictometry Change Finder Contract

Lankford informed the Board members that the annual Pictometry Change Finder contract was up for renewal.

Honeycutt made a motion to approve the Pictometry Change Finder contract. Chadwell seconded. The motion carried.

Appointment of ARB Executive Members

Lankford announced that information received from individual ARB candidates had been forwarded to the Board members. Cherie Dunham, of Round Rock, had sent a letter requesting consideration to be appointed as chair. Letters of recommendation were also received for Dunham from Gail Sullivan, Kay Kirby and Ernest Rector, who were all in support of Dunham.

Hunt made a motion to appoint Cherie Dunham as the new chairman for the ARB. Chadwell seconded. Discussion followed. It was discussed that Judy Porkorny also showed interest in the chair position. The motion carried.

Joe Taylor and David Ciambone were considered for the secretary position. In lieu of any additional information, Honeycutt made a motion to appoint David Ciambone as secretary for the ARB. Hunt seconded.

Chadwell asked that, in the future, a biography letter be requested from the ARB chairman for each interested candidate. Gibbs mentioned including this as a requirement in the Board of Directors Policy. It was discussed that the Board could ask questions of the candidates. The Board mentioned reviewing this process with the new ARB chairman in January; after Dunham takes office. The motion carried.

Chief Appraiser Review

Executive session began at 9:18 a.m. and ended at 11:06 a.m.

Chief Appraiser Compensation

Executive session began at 11:07 a.m. and ended at 11:08 a.m.

The Board recessed at 11:08 a.m. and returned to open session at 11:10 a.m.

Consideration and possible action on items discussed in executive session

Chief Appraiser Review

Gibbs announced that a review of the Chief Appraiser had been conducted. No motion was necessary.

Chief Appraiser Compensation

Honeycutt made a motion to increase the Chief Appraiser base pay by 4.5%. Chadwell seconded. This new pay rate will be effective as of Monday, November 10, 2014. The Board mentioned changing Lankford's evaluation to be conducted annually in October with the pay level being effective as of November 1st. Discussion followed. The motion carried.

Chief Appraiser's Report

2015 WCAD Goals

Chris Connelly, the District's Deputy Chief Appraiser, presented the District's 2015 goals:

Office 2013 – Connelly reported the District to be working to integrate and begin using Office 2013. He informed the Board that personnel have been working with this software currently and are testing for implementation to other staff.

Queue – Connelly also reported on the additions to the queue system; which were suggested by staff. He indicated that these changes pertain mostly during the appraisal protest phase. Connelly expressed that these ideas had been discussed during the annual Planning Session. He felt that the updated queue would give property owners a better understanding of the process while improving the District's efficiency.

eForms – Connelly mentioned both the processing of the BPP renditions as well as the homestead exemptions through the District's electronic forms; which are both currently being worked on. The District is attempting to funnel as much information as possible through electronic means in order to improve its processes. Connelly mentioned that Tyler Technologies, the District's appraisal software vendor, has helped to develop electronic forms.

Customer Communications – Connelly also mentioned the District goal of improved customer communications. He indicated that online services for the scheduling and rescheduling of protests were currently being worked on and that property owners would be able to schedule or reschedule their own appraisal appointments; which is currently done by District staff. Connelly also discussed the equity grids being sent with the property owner notice of hearing letters. The District is also working towards providing comparison photos with online protests; this will provide more transparency into the sales. Additionally, he mentioned the District's plans to update information on its website during the protest season; indicating the attempt to broaden its transparency. The updated website videos were also mentioned.

Connelly indicated the District's intention to implement the aforementioned goals by the time appraisal notices are sent. It was also announced that each of these goals very heavily involves the District's technology department.

Attendance Policy

Lankford reviewed the proposed employee attendance policy with the Board members; indicating this to be a goal in helping with the District's overall attendance.

Lankford announced that scheduled and unscheduled vacation and sick leave; along with tardy occurrences, were being considered in the District employee's evaluations. Accountability within evaluations is important to maintain staffing levels during peak periods. The District is now looking to transition its sick and vacation leave into paid time off. Lankford explained that time would be divided into scheduled and unscheduled leave and indicated this to be a benefit to employees; making their time easier to utilize.

Lankford indicated that he had reviewed the liability this would cause to the District; announcing it to equate to basically the same obligation. He mentioned that the District had consulted with other appraisal district's who had also transitioned as well as with its human resources attorney. Lankford explained that employee's who currently had sick leave hours to use, would still have those hours and would utilize them first. He indicated that the new policy would go into effect as of January 1, 2015.

Lankford informed the members that since there would be no increase in liability to the District; this was an administration change of which he wanted to make the Board aware. He reviewed the parameters and mentioned this methodology to be widely used throughout other districts. Chadwell expressed positive comments about the policy.

Gibbs left the meeting at 11:43 a.m. Hunt acted as chairman for the remainder of the meeting.

Lawsuit, Arbitration and SOAH Reports

Lankford reviewed the lawsuit, arbitration and SOAH (State Office of Administrative Hearings) reports. He mentioned a few lawsuits that have depleted the District's litigation reserve monies. Lankford indicated that the District's philosophy regarding lawsuits would be discussed at a future meeting. He informed the members that he had communicated with the entities that were involved regarding these lawsuits.

Lankford mentioned that all remaining arbitrations were represented by one tax agent firm and all involved issues with time adjustments. He indicated that the District would have more accounts go to arbitration than was typical.

Lankford informed the Board that the District had its first SOAH hearing this year and indicated that he would notify them of the outcome.

2015 TAAD Conference

Lankford announced the TAAD (Texas Association of Appraisal Districts) Conference to be scheduled for February 15-18, 2015 in Austin. He asked that Board members notify the District as soon as possible if they were interested in attending.

WCAD Christmas Celebration

Lankford reminded the Board members of the District's Christmas party scheduled for Friday, December 5th at 6:00 p.m. at Mel's Lone Star Lanes in Georgetown and hoped all could attend.

Board Agenda Additions for Future Meeting

- Review of the Chief Appraiser Evaluation
- Review of the ARB executive member process

Board Announcements

There were no Board announcements.

The next meeting date was set for January 8, 2015 at 9:00 a.m. If this date will not work for all members, an alternate date of January 15, 2015 at 9:00 a.m. was discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 11:54 a.m.

Respectfully,


Deborah Hunt, Vice Chairman


Rufus Honeycutt, Member