

July 21, 2009

The Pinellas County Value Adjustment Board (VAB) met in the County Commission Assembly Room, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida, at 2:00 p.m. on this date with the following members present:

Susan Latvala, County Commissioner, Chairman
Calvin D. Harris, County Commissioner
Robin Wikle, School Board Member
Robert P. Symanski, Citizen Appointee, Board of County Commissioners
Earnest Williams, Citizen Appointee (School Board)

Also Present:

Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court
Claretha N. Harris, Chief Deputy Clerk, Finance
Frederick L. Dean, Director, Finance
Stephen G. Watts, Esquire, VAB Counsel
Cynthia N. Haumann, Manager, Board Records
Other Interested Individuals
Helen Groves, Board Reporter

A G E N D A

1. Approval of Minutes of Meeting of February 3, 2009
2. Approval of 2009 Contract for VAB Counsel
3. Appointment of Special Magistrates (Attorneys)
4. Appointment of Special Magistrates (Appraisers)
5. Authorization to Hold an Orientation Meeting for Special Magistrates
6. Confirmation of Board Policies
 - a. Letters to petitioners regarding scheduling
 - b. Letter for incomplete petition
 - c. Notice of rescheduled hearing
 - d. Process for handling of duplicate petitions
 - e. Process for handling late filed petitions and good cause determinations
 - f. Process for handling remanded petitions
 - g. Compensation for Special Magistrates
7. Authorization to Hire Temporary Help
8. Calendar
9. Axia VAB Software Program

10. Miscellaneous
 - a. VAB statistics – last three years
 - b. Status of pending litigation
 - c. Summary of new legislation and DOR rule changes
11. Adjournment

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Chairman Latvala called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

MINUTES OF MEETING OF FEBRUARY 3, 2009 - APPROVED

Upon motion by Commissioner Harris, seconded by School Board Member Wikle and carried, the minutes of the meeting of February 3, 2009 were approved.

2009 CONTRACT FOR VAB COUNSEL - APPROVED

Mr. Watts confirmed that there were no changes to the contract; whereupon, Chairman Harris moved, seconded by School Board Member Wikle and carried, that the 2009 contract for the VAB Counsel be approved.

ATTORNEYS DAVID GRUSKIN, HERBERT E. LANGFORD, JR., BELINDA B. LAZZARA, STEWART O. OLSON, RINKY S. PARWANI, LORI L. RUTLAND, AND CHARLES M. SAMAHA SELECTED AS SPECIAL MAGISTRATES FOR EXEMPTIONS

Chairman Latvala referred to the selection of Special Magistrates for exemptions; whereupon, School Board Member Wikle moved, seconded by Commissioner Harris and carried, that attorneys David Gruskin, Herbert E. Langford, Jr., Belinda B. Lazzara, Stewart O. Olson, Rinky S. Parwani, Lori L. Rutland, and Charles M. Samaha be selected as the Special Magistrates for exemptions.

TWENTY-EIGHT APPRAISERS SELECTED TO SERVE AS SPECIAL MAGISTRATES

Chairman Latvala referred to the selection of appraiser applicants to serve as Special Magistrates; whereupon, School Board Member Wikle moved, seconded by Commissioner Harris and carried, that the 28 appraiser applicants as outlined in the agenda information packet, which has been filed and made a part of the record, be approved as Special Magistrates.

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AUTHORIZATION GRANTED TO SCHEDULE SPECIAL MAGISTRATE ORIENTATION

Chairman Latvala referred to a Special Magistrate orientation to be held Friday, September 25, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.; whereupon, Commissioner Harris moved, seconded by Mr. Symanski and carried, that authorization for the orientation be granted.

NOTICE TO PETITIONERS REGARDING SCHEDULING - APPROVED

Chairman Latvala referred to the notice to petitioners regarding scheduling of hearings; whereupon, Commissioner Harris moved, seconded by Mr. Williams and carried, that the notice be approved.

VARIOUS BOARD POLICIES – CONFIRMED

Commissioner Harris moved, seconded by School Board Member Wikle and carried, that the following Board policies be confirmed:

- a. Notice to petitioners regarding scheduling.
- b. Letter for incomplete petitions.
- c. Notice of rescheduled hearing.
- d. Process for handling duplicate petitions.
- e. Process for handling late filed petitions and good cause determinations.
- f. Process for handling remanded petitions.
- g. Compensation for Special Magistrates.

AUTHORIZATION GRANTED TO HIRE TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES FOR THE VAB PROCESS

School Board Member Wikle moved, seconded by Commissioner Harris and carried, that authorization be granted to hire temporary employees for the VAB process.

VAB CALENDAR – APPROVED

Chairman Latvala indicated that the first Final Value Adjustment Board Meeting has been tentatively scheduled for October 6, 2009 at 8:15 a.m.; and that the second meeting will be held after the hearings have been completed; whereupon, in response to query by Clerk Burke, School Board Member Wikle confirmed that a School Board member will be present.

Thereupon, Mr. Symanski moved, seconded by Mr. Williams and carried, that the VAB Calendar be approved.

AXIA VAB SOFTWARE PROGRAM

Ms. Haumann described the Axia VAB software program, noting that it was developed by the Pioneer Technology Group and has been used in several counties, both large and small. She indicated that the software will allow petitioners to file petitions on line, pay the filing fees on line, and follow the petitions throughout the process; that the Special Magistrates will be able to complete and file their recommendations on line; and that the Property Appraiser's Office and the VAB attorney will be able to access the information. Ms. Haumann indicated that the Pioneer Technology Group is proactive in updating the software with any Department of Revenue or legislature changes; and that the Axia software will streamline the VAB process, making it essentially paperless.

During discussion, with input by Clerk Burke and Ms. Haumann, Ms. Harris indicated that the initial cost of the software is \$35,000; and that there will be training and installation costs for the first year; whereupon she discussed the annual maintenance fee.

During discussion, Clerk Burke indicated that a user fee cannot be charged; and that no action by the VAB is necessary as the Clerk's Office has already purchased the software; and Mr. Dean offered a scenario in response to query by Mr. Williams regarding the cost of transaction and savings based upon the software.

Clerk Burke paid tribute to the Pinellas County Property Appraiser's Office for its work with the citizens both before and after petitions are filed, noting that fewer petitions are filed in Pinellas County than in any other comparable county; whereupon, Mr. Watts stated for the record that staff from the Property Appraiser's Office are in attendance at today's meeting, but are here only for information and are not participating in the meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS

a. VAB Statistics – Last Three Years

VAB statistics for the previous three years were provided to the members.

b. Status of Pending Litigation

Attorney Watts provided an update regarding the CVS litigation; and indicated that getting information out to the citizens and affected parties regarding the VAB remains an issue; whereupon, Ms Haumann described the way meetings are noticed, indicating that a notice is placed in the *St. Petersburg Times* 15 days prior to a meeting and is also published on line on the county calendar.

Some of the suggestions discussed on how to keep the citizens and their representatives informed were:

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- ✓ Put the minutes on the Clerk's website.
- ✓ Include notice with the TRIM notice.
- ✓ Do a separate mailing.
- ✓ Send public service announcements to the newspapers.
- ✓ Work with the Communication Department.
- ✓ Announce on the County television station.
- ✓ Place highlights on the website as the start of the hearings approach.
- ✓ Put a directional sign in the lobby of the courthouse.
- ✓ Send notices to the representative of the petitioners.
- ✓ Extend notice out to 30 or 45 days.

Clerk Burke indicated that the VAB minutes for the previous five years would be put on the Clerk's website; that the right to have a hearing is already on the TRIM notice; and that a stand would be put in the lobby with a VAB directional sign; whereupon, he noted that the use of the new software will assist in the notification of the citizens.

c. Summary of New Legislation and DOR Rule Changes

Ms. Haumann indicated that the Department of Revenue is still holding workshops on the new rules; whereupon, Mr. Watts indicated that he would keep the members informed of the changes.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Latvala adjourned the meeting at 2:29 p.m.

Chairman