

**Minutes  
Town of Skowhegan  
Joint Meeting  
Selectmen and Board of Assessors  
4:30 PM  
Tuesday, March 22, 2016  
Council Room**

All of the following were present at the meeting.

**Board of Selectmen:**

Donald Skillings, Chairman  
Paul York, Vice Chairman  
Betty Austin  
Darla Pickett  
Soren Siren

**Town Manager:**

Christine Almand

**Executive Secretary:**

Cara Mason

**Board of Assessors:**

Ronald Blaisdell, Chairman  
David Summers, Vice Chairman  
John Grohs

**Assessor:**

William "Bill" Van Tuinen

**Assistant Assessor:**

Leisa D. Emery

**Others Present:**

David Silk, Attorney for the Board of Assessors

**1. Call Meeting to order.**

Donald Skillings called the meeting to order at 4:46 PM, the meeting was turned over to the Board of Assessors at this time.

Ronald Blaisdell called for a motion to go in to executive session.

## **2. Executive Session:**

Executive session in accordance with M.R.S.A. Title 1 Section 405 (6) (E) to discuss pending litigation.

John Grohs made a motion to go in to executive session according to MRSA Title 1, Section 405 (6) (E), seconded by David Summers. – Vote 3 yes – 0 no

Entered Executive Session at 4:47 PM

Ronald Blaisdell made a motion to exit executive session, seconded by John Grohs. – Vote 3 yes – 0 no

Exited Executive Session at 5:33 PM

The public, department heads, budget committee, and Doug Harlow from the Morning Sentinel entered the room at this time.

Donald Skillings brought the meeting back in to order.

Donald Skillings stated the Board of Assessors would make a statement at this time.

Ronald Blaisdell asked Bill Van Tuinen to make the statement for the Board of Assessors.

Bill Van Tuinen stated the Board of Assessors firmly believes we are right on the edge of making an agreement to settle the ongoing abatement issues with S D Warren. We are still trying to finalize an agreement that everyone feels comfortable signing, but I think everybody thinks it is okay at this point to give a general outline of the agreement conceptually as it is. That agreement would be the pending appeal at the State Board of Property Tax Review for 2014 taxes would be withdrawn. Recently the Town received an abatement request in the amount of \$171 million dollars reduction in value for 2015, which would be withdrawn. There would be a reduction in the valuation of S.D. Warren going forward. That reduction in value for the 2016 fiscal year that the Town will be entering soon, would be a reduction in value, to a value of \$380 million dollars. That is a reduction in value of approximately \$64 million dollars from the previous year's taxable valuation. In the next two years the valuation of the mill would not exceed \$380 million dollars. The valuation would be \$380 million dollars or less with typical depreciation and maintenance of the assessed valuation. All we can give anybody at this time is a conceptual agreement. Very specific language is being worked on, we expect that will be completed in the not very distant future. When it is completed, it will be signed and it will be a public document. At this stage it is not, but it is working its way to become that. That is all we can say at this time.

Donald Skillings thanked Bill Van Tuinen.

The question was asked what exactly that would do to the mill rate.

Bill Van Tuinen stated that everyone intuitively knows the more value you have the lower your tax rate is. This is a real reduction in valuation of \$64 million dollars it's going to have the effect, unless spending is proportionately decreased, of increasing the tax rate. Specifically how much, has not been calculated at this time.

It was asked, if there was any idea by how much?

Donald Skillings said an exact number could be given as to what the amount of tax would be on the \$64 million dollars times the current mill rate. It would be roughly \$1.2 million dollars in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, we will receive municipally, the school, county and town, \$1.2 million dollars less than we received last year.

Bill Van Tuinen asked to follow up on a question. S.D. Warren at \$380 million dollars in value is still by far the largest taxpayer in town. So when it's said the \$1.2 million dollars would be made up by the other taxpayers in town that really is not true. The biggest taxpayer in town will be paying more of that increase than anybody else. They are still the largest taxpayer in town by a factor of many times.

Mr. Goff asked how the school budget and the county going up would affect the bottom line cost for the Town of Skowhegan.

Donald Skillings stated that question could not be answered tonight. Don stated this is going to be a three pronged approach as we look to budget, budgeting from the county, budgeting from the school and budgeting from the Town.

Donald Skillings said first of all he would like to thank our Assessor Bill Van Tuinen, our Attorney David Silk, the Board of Assessor Chairman Ronald Blaisdell, and Christine Almand. Everyone has worked diligently to come to a solution that would be acceptable to the Town of Skowhegan and acceptable to Sappi. We have to remember that our neighbors recently lost 200 plus jobs and as bad as we feel for them and as much as we want to help them, to the best of our abilities we need to try and limit that exposure here. Don said he thinks we have come to a mutual understanding and a place that is reasonable for all parties to come to, to enable Sappi to operate and to enable our town to operate. The town will look at making prudent cuts from the municipal side that is all the town can promise the taxpayers. The taxpayers will need to be active in the school budgeting process and the county budgeting process. Don stated that a bigger part of the picture is the loss due to the school funding formula. If you count the

reduction of \$100 million dollars that was already given to Sappi last year, we are in excess of \$5.7 million dollars of unrealized funding from the State of Maine in regards to education on where we should be based on our values, because the State of Maine and the Legislature had put in a new formula. We are going to talk to our representatives and have a meeting with the people that need to hear this in the very near future to have these discussions. Don said they are all very willing to have these discussions. Governor, Representatives, Senators; all of them have been willing to have the conversations and we thank them for that, and we will take them up on their offers in the very near future.

There were no other questions or comments.

**3. Adjourn Meeting:**

Ronald Blaisdell made a motion to adjourn this meeting, seconded by John Grohs.  
– Vote 3 yes – 0 no

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM

The Skowhegan Board of Assessors

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Ronald Blaisdell, Chairman

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David Summers, Vice Chairman

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John F. Grohs

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