

**Newington Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes**

**September 30, 2002
NON-PUBLIC
Newington Town Hall
6:30 p.m.**

In attendance: Representing George E. Sansoucy: Charlene Genest, Philip Munck, and Justin Richardson, Esq. Representing the New Hampshire Department of Revenue: David M. Hynes, Mary J. Souther. Representing Corcoran Consulting Associates, Wil Corcoran Chairman of the Board of Selectmen Cosmas Iocovozzi, Selectman Jan Stuart, Selectman Jack O'Reilly and AA Cynthia L Gillespie.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the status of the ongoing revaluation project, conducted by George E. Sansoucy for the Town of Newington.

David Hynes from the State of New Hampshire Department of Revenue opened the meeting by referring to RSA 21J11. According to RSA 21J11 it is the Department of Revenue's duty to oversee any and all revaluations being conducted in the State of New Hampshire. The department also has the responsibility to assess how the revaluation is going and report its findings to the governing body of that community. Hynes also pointed out the 600 Rules that govern and regulate how a revaluation will be carried out. The 600 Rules state that a contract between the community and the revaluation company must be approved by the DRA. No assessing work may start prior to the DRA's approval of that contract. Upon the approval of the contract the revaluation company must provide the DRA with a bond of insurance and a list of all people employed by the company to work on the revaluation. Up until about one year ago the DRA had not received any of this. After several letters from the DRA to the Town, the DRA did receive several copies of contracts between Sansoucy and the Town of Newington. After several adjustments by the DRA a contract was approved by the DRA on May 3, 2002. Hynes also stated that it took over a year to get the approvals for the people that were working on the revaluation. Mr. Hynes stated that the current revaluation was started illegally. He realizes that the Town has gone through three Chairman of the Board of Selectmen and is now on its third Administrative Assistant since the revaluation started. He stated that because of all these changes, he could understand that there have been miscommunications. However, the contract gives the state guidance as to how the revaluation will be carried out.

The next step this to create a Time Line for the revaluation. This will tell the Department of Revenue what phase the revaluation is in. The Time Line is used in both the residential and commercial phases of the revaluation. This Time Line is used for reviewing, measuring and listing the properties in the community. The DRA will use the Time Line to take random test samples of the community to review for quality assurance. The DRA uses test samples of up to 10% of the community, depending on its findings. Mary Jane Souther of the DRA has currently tested 5% of Newington however because of the number of errors that were found she will be testing another 5%.

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Philip Munck of Sansoucy's office asked how many of the field cards that the DRA tested were in a final record format that had been proofed by Sansoucy's office. Haynes stated that he assumed that they all were because that was the way they were given to the department. Charlene Genest of Sansoucy's office said that that was not true. Genest stated that she was ordered to give the cards to Mary Jane or she would lose her license. Genest stated that she told Mary Jane that the cards had not been reviewed. Sansoucy had just got them back and had not had time to review them. Genest pointed out that there is a lot of data entry errors on the cards and Sansoucy's Company is finding more every day. Genest had given the cards in question to the Mary Jane on August 24th. Genest also stated that she gave Mary Jane more cards on Monday, September 30th, which are not in a final reviewed format either.

Justin Richardson, Esq. representing George Sansoucy asked Mr. Hynes, "At what point do you consider it appropriate to start doing these tests?" He pointed out that Sansoucy's company did not think that they were submitting material to the State for a final evaluation. Sansoucy is surprised that they are now being graded on the material that had not even gone through Sansoucy's final review.

Mr. Hynes explained the phases of a revaluation. He stated that it is the duty of the DRA to check a revaluation at several phases. The 1st of these phases is Data Collection. If the data collected is not accurate or the people collecting the data are not qualified, than the revaluation must be stopped at that point and corrections must be made. Justin Richardson asked how the data is checked. Mr. Hynes said that the DRA will take a copy of the property record card and go to the property and check it. Philip Munck asked how the DRA knows that a property record card is correct. Mr. Hynes said that Sansoucy should have provided the DRA a copy of their Field Report. He stated that the DRA had not received the field report yet. If the department had the report, it would check the report against the data entry on the property cards. Charlene Genest said that the DRA took a large sample of the field reports last year. Mary Jane said that she had them out in her car. She said that she was hoping for the final data entry. She stated that she told Genest that what she had received was very vague and that she was waiting for Genest's final report before she graded them. Genest agreed with Souther's statement. Souther stated that she could grade them now if Genest wanted her to.

Hynes state that the DRA can grade the cards after data collection, after data entry and after the final review. This way the DRA can tell where the errors are. He stated that the DRA has experienced a lack of cooperation from the Sansoucy Company from day one of this revaluation. He went on to say that, "right now the way we look at the data, the way it stands right now, this reval, if the new 600 Rules where in place, we would not let it go through." "We have a standard that eighty five percent of the data has to pass, 57% has passed." He points out that this is detrimental to the tax payers of this community.

Genest wanted to discuss the errors. She pointed out a card that failed because they had mistaken vinyl siding for aluminum siding. Hynes stated that it takes more than one error

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to fail a card. It takes seven points to fail a property. He points out that he reviewed cards with as much as twenty points on them. He addressed the Board of Selectmen by stating that he was just bringing this information to their attention.

Genest states that she had been bullied into giving the cards to the state. She said that she tried to explain that the cards were not done. Souther said that she came into the town office while Genest was printing cards a few weeks ago. She asked Genest for some cards to test and Genest said that she needed to look at them first. She stated that it took two weeks to get the cards and so she was under the assumption that Genest had reviewed the cards. Genest said that it was only two days later when she gave the cards to Souther and they had signed for the cards. Souther said that Genest was not concerned about the cards until Souther started to find the errors. Souther said she asked Genest if they were going to go back and review every single property and Genest said no. Genest said that she said they were going out for a field review but did not know about going to every single property. "If Skip Sansoucy wants every single property redone, then it will be done. It's up to Skip."

Philip Munck said that Sansoucy's company will go back and look at ten percent of the value of the town that is represented by these houses. He mentioned that the real value in the town is in the industrial and commercial and that was why no other company wanted to do the reval.

David Hynes stated that the DRA is not interested at this point in the values. The state is simply looking at data errors that will be reflected somewhere in the final value.

Jack O'Reilly asked if the Sansoucy company's review was still going on, during this process. Genest told him it was. He asked if Genest was going thru just the cards the State had returned with errors or if she was going through them all. Genest stated that she was going through them all.

Souther stated that she and Genest had sat down a week earlier and had gone over the errors on all the cards together. Genest agreed. O'Reilly asked if the errors could have now been fixed. Souther stated that was possible. Souther offered to review some new cards during the meeting that she had reviewed in the field on Monday. Genest stated that she did not have any field cards with her. Souther stated that she found a 20X40 in-ground pool missing on one property card. This pool had been installed in 1996.

Wil Corcoran addressed Mr. Hynes; he stated that it was his understanding that the DRA was informing the Board of Selectmen of the DRA's findings. Mr. Hynes agreed. Corcoran asked Hynes if the DRA was going to provide a written summary of the findings. Hynes stated that they would. Corcoran stated that from there it would be up to the town to take further action. Hynes agreed. Corcoran asked if the Hynes would make a recommendation in the report. Hynes stated he would give his opinion when Souther has finished the 10% review. He also stated that any property that Souther fails, he goes out does another review. He stated that there are several phases that the DRA goes

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through before they will say that a community is not getting a good job. Because Newington is getting close to delaying the MS1 report and use last years values to set the tax rate, Hynes felt the Board needed to be informed.

Richardson referred to the contract between Sansoucy and the Town of Newington, he pointed out different time lines in which each step of the reviews where to be completed. He shows that the dates where not followed because of uncontrollable delays in receiving State approvals and tax maps. He also stated that the contract provided for extensions in the case of such delays. He sums up by saying that the whole problem is that the State is putting the "cart before the horse", because it is grading material before it is ready to be graded. He expressed a need for better communication and a meeting of the minds, between the State and Sansoucy.

Hynes states that Sansoucy needs to tell the State where in the data collection phase they are and what has and has not been checked. Richardson agreed that this would be appropriate. Hynes points out that this is a long process and he will have to recommend to the finance department to not set a date to set the tax rate because the State does not know if the data that is being used is stable.

Selectmen O'Reilly asked Genest if the problem is with data entry. Genest stated that of the cards she has reviewed twenty five to third percent of them have data errors. Souther said that Sansoucy should take Mr. Corcoran up on his offer to have Susan do the data entry. She has seen Susan's work and Susan does excellent work.

Hynes pointed out that the State findings are on only five percent of the town. He stresses that there is another ninety five percent that has not been checked.

Chairman Iocovozzi asked what Sansoucy thought about the accusations the State was making. Genest stated that she wanted to sit down with Corcoran and go over the problems. Selectmen O'Reilly stated that the problem is that the tax bills have to go out by no later than the middle of November. Hynes said that the town can send tax bills out as late as March 1st. Chairman Iocovozzi asked Genest how fast Sansoucy could move the process along. Genest stated that they were trying. Munck stated that Skip Sansoucy was working on the industrials. Genest states that Skip needs to review all the commercial property. Chairman Iocovozzi stated that the Board of Selectmen hired professionals to do the job right and expect to use the information from that company. If the state has a problem with Sansoucy it needs to be rectified, immediately. He stressed the desire of the Board to have true valuation and the 100% ratio. He also stated that it is the Board's responsibility to look out for the best interest of the Town of Newington and its tax payers. Haynes stated that it is the DRA's responsibility to make sure that the Town gets a quality job. Iocovozzi assures Haynes that the Town will get a quality job, no matter what it takes. He assured Mr. Hynes that the Board is aware of the problems and is working on correcting them.

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Chairman, Iocovozzi asked if there is a solution to the conflict between the State and Sansoucy, and can the revaluation be moved along. Genest asked Souther when she needed more cards. Souther states that she will be back in Newington on Wednesday to check more cards. A Hynes point out that one problem with the cards is that the date of data collection on the cards is some where around September 2001. Genest said that that was an oversight and that the date is on the original cards. Hynes states that there must be accurate history information so that the state knows when the field work was done and by whom. Genest agrees.

Hynes points out that what the State needs is compliance with the contract, so that the State can do a proper job of quality assurance. Hynes stressed that what the DRA wants and needs is a clear, comprehensive Time Line on this revaluation. Munck assures Hynes that Sansoucy's people would go back to the office after the meeting and work on it. Genest agrees.

Wil Corcoran asked if there is a penalty if the Town goes beyond the October 15th extension for the MS1. Hynes stated that if the Town does not apply for an additional extension there is a fine of \$100.00 per day.

Selectmen, O'Reilly asked when the Town has to recertify with the State on property value. Souther said that Newington is on the schedule for 2005.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia L. Gillespie
Administrative Assistant