

Bradley Lake from page 4

questions, or report problems. Dana will be working to develop the long term procedures.

- There is interest in forming a Bradley Lake Protective Association, and anyone interested should contact Dana as soon as possible.

Quite a few handouts were available including:

- DES rules
- state laws on lakes in general
- summary of Comprehensive Shoreland Protection requirements
- Shoreland permit applications
- Do's and Don'ts to Protect Drinking Water Supplies

• how to protect loons and their ability to successfully reproduce
Copies of these handouts are available at the Town Office.

Conservation Easements

The second section of the meeting was a presentation by Brian Hotz of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) and Beth McGuinn of Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust (ASLPT). They described the importance of protecting land around Bradley Lake as a means of protecting water quality and, on a larger scale, as a portion of protection efforts for an important wildlife and natural resource corridor that runs from Cardigan Mountain to the Quabbin Reservoir in Massachusetts. Points

made included:

- A conservation easement does not change who owns the land or take land off the town's tax rolls.
- Landowners can have input into the easement restrictions, such as designating a house lot for children to use in the future and specifying what portion will be harvested for timber.
- Conservation easements are forever and are monitored by the organization that holds the easement (such as SPNHF and ASLPT).
- There are federal tax benefits and a way to plan for inheritance associated with conservation easements.
- The best way to see if land meets the requirements for conserving and if an easement is the right way to proceed is to call Beth at 526-6555 or Brian at 224-9945.

Thanks go to: Deb Brower for donating the use of the Bluewater Lodge; Larry Chase for his help in all aspects of bringing about the meeting; Nancy Teach for help with publicity and refreshments, Dana Hadley, Reggie Roy, Mike Vercellotti, and Mark Cowdrey for their participation; Pat Moyer for coordinating refreshments; the Andover Conservation Commission for their efforts in planning the meeting; and to our speakers, who will now be our contacts and advice-givers in the future.

Revaluation from page 1

each of four years – which would mean something would be going on in each year of the five-year cycle.)

2011: The 2011-2015 cycle begins, with an assessor visiting one third (or one fourth) of the properties in town to ensure that the physical data on file for each property is accurate.

Clearly this is too big a job, and requires too much expertise, to be handled by Dana Hadley, Andover's town administrator, and his staff. So the Town has hired Avitar Associates of New England do the work. According to Dana, "They're very competent doing assessment updates, and they're very familiar with Andover. They did the revaluations of all Andover properties in 1992 and 2004, and we are very fortunate that Mark Stetson, Andover's former Town Administrator, is now a key part of their assessing team."

2009 Revaluation

This year is the year that all Andover properties must be revalued. To that end, the Avitar team started with a database of current real estate sales data. Their goal was to establish the market value of each property as of April 1, 2009.

To be sure that they have good comparable data, they've visited every house that sold since April 1, 2007 and checked to be sure that the Town's property description matched exactly the actual property at the time it sold.

Then they adjusted the land and building values of those properties that sold to bring the assessments close to the selling price. These same adjustments were then applied consistently to every property in Andover.

In addition, Avitar assessors have also driven by every property in town to be sure that the property seems to match the physical data on file in the Town Office. If there appeared to be a significant discrepancy – a new addition, for example – they've corrected the data for that property so all the Town property records are up to date.

Late last month, a Notice of Preliminary Value was mailed to every Andover property owner. The notice contained three important pieces of information:

- The preliminary land, improvements (buildings and the like), and

total assessments.

- The address of Avitar's Andover database on the Web where any Andover property owner can examine everything Avitar knows about any property in Andover. The letter also includes a user name and password so Andover property owners can search the database by name, address, etc., making it easy to compare your property to your neighbor's property or any other property in town.

- Instructions for setting up a one-on-one appointment with an Avitar assessor. If you spot an error in your property records, call 735-6975 between 8:30 AM and 4 PM any weekday from Tuesday, September 8, through Monday, September 14, to schedule an appointment. Avitar will have a runner on hand during your appointment to visit your property right away and correct the data if necessary.

If the one-on-one meeting with Avitar leaves a property owner still feeling their new assessment is inaccurate, there's an appeals process they can pursue through the Selectmen and, if necessary, through the New Hampshire Board of Tax and Land Appeals in Concord, or even through the county Superior Court. That process, too, is outlined in the Notice of Preliminary Value.

Impact On Taxes

I asked Dana whether a property's assessment going up (or down) as the result of the revaluation means the property owner will pay more (or less) in property taxes. He replied:

"Not necessarily. If your assessment changes in line with the rest of the properties in town, then your share of the total town budget will be the same.

"But if your assessment changes by a lot more (or less) than other properties – the market value of lakefront property, for example, tends to move differently than the rest of the market – then your share of the town budget could be higher (or lower) than it was before the revaluation.

"There's no question that there can be some shifting of the tax burden as a result of an assessment update. You'll see some tax burden shifting away from 'average' houses and to property that's more sought-after. But that's exactly what you'd expect when you base the assessment on fair market value."



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