

Student Government Day

On Monday, March 15th I, along with seventeen other students, was invited to the Acushnet Town Hall in order to participate in Student Government Day. This was a very important event for our town for many reasons; some being that Student Government Day hadn't taken place in our town in years and our town had just recently celebrated 150 years as a community. These eighteen students went to school, like any other day, but no more than an hour later they piled onto a school bus and set route for Town Hall.

Inside the Town Hall we sat and waited for Acushnet's Town Officials. When they came we were all sworn in as town representatives by fellow student Kellie Ruccolo, Town Clerk for the day. Soon after that, each group of students gathered with their assigned officials and followed them to their offices. My group of three followed Matthew Lopes to the town Assessors' office. Once inside Meagan, Amanda, and myself were introduced to Kelly Koska, Acting Principle Assessor, and Suzanne Picard, Senior Clerk. Kelly then gave us a basic overview of the assessors' job and told us how their job plays a major role in the way our town is run. The assessors of Acushnet's job are to assess real estate and personal property taxes. We also learned that Acushnet is about ninety-two percent residential; therefore, the taxes on local homes are the chief revenue for our town. We were told that all estimated valuations are based on fair cash value. Fair cash value is the amount of money a buyer is willing to give a seller on the open market. In addition to that, we learned that assessors calculate the annual new growth increase of our town. New Growth is an additional amount based on the estimated value of new construction and other growth in the tax base. Once we all understood the basic overview of an assessor's job we got to move onto finding information about our homes on the computers.

It was my turn on the computer first and I learned things about my house that I had never known. There was information about what materials were used to build the interior and exterior parts of my house. I also saw a grid of my house, and I learned the value of and other information concerning each floor in my house. I even got to see a picture of my house from when my parents first bought it. The page had everything that you would need to know about a house, including the types of heating, electricity, and the insulation that are in a home. When I finished Meagan and Amanda got to look up the same type of information about their own homes. I also learned that there are many types of homes but the ones that we talked most about were called: Colonials, Capes, and Ranches. A Colonial is the type of house I live in and it was named that because it is similar to the types of homes the original colonists lived in. Cape homes were given that name because they look similar to homes that can be found on Cape Cod, and Ranch homes were given that name because they look like houses that are usually found on ranches or large plots of land. Kelly then talked to us about tax exemptions and abatements. Tax exemptions can reduce taxes that are owed if the taxpayer meets certain criteria set forth by the Massachusetts General Law, and tax abatements are filed if the

value the taxpayer is taxed on is incorrect. I personally got to understand more about abatements when I was allowed to change information about my house on the computer that was wrong. After everyone had a turn on the computer we got to look at the section of map our house was located on in Acushnet and we got to see the exact lot our homes were on. Once we had finished everything that was planned we got to go around to meet the other town officials.

As we walked around to the other offices we got to see the Town Clerk, the Board of Selectman, the Town Administrator, the Town Treasurer, and all of the other officials that were in that day. When each group finished we all met in the back room. Once all the students and participating officials were there they began to give out official citations congratulating us on our participation in Student Government Day. After each certificate was given out everyone got ready to leave for lunch at the Century House. While at lunch Miss Acushnet, Phoebe Laplante, talked to us about how we must maintain leadership and responsibility in high school. Following our lunch, we went back to school to finish off the day. Overall I believe that this has been a great experience. I am sure that everyone who participated learned a lot and understands how important our town officials really are. Before Student Government Day I didn't even know what an assessor was but now I not only know but I know that they play a significant role in our community.

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