HARTFORD BOARD OF ABATEMENT
Thursday, June 5, 2025
Hartford Town Hall, Room 2
171 Bridge Street, White River Jct., VT 05001

MINUTES (DRAFT)

Members present: Jo Alexander; Ashley Andreas; Sara Blood; Pat Cook; Mary Erdei; Don Foster; Ida Griesemer; Nancy Howe; Sue Kirincich; Erik Krauss; Brett Mayfield; Mark McNamee; Linda Miller; Lisa O'Neil, Town Clerk; Adam Ricker; Rick Vincent, Assessor; Ryan Walther; Rebecca White.

5:31pm: Nancy Howe, Chair, called the meeting to order. She provided an overview of the Abatement process and the Rules of Procedure.

Hearing #1: Jon & Lynda Christensen
Property Location: 2243 Quechee Main Street
Parcel ID # 12-1309 /SPAN #285-090- 10894

The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. Jon Christensen was present and affirmed the oath & acknowledged he had received a copy of the Rules of Procedure. The applicant is requesting a $200 abatement for water charges from 2022. Mr. Christensen explained they spend winters in Florida and that no one uses the home while they are away. In April 2022, the bill was about $475 (use of 3000 units); he indicated they do not use that amount in a year. At the time, the Department of Public Works switched out the meter. The applicants did not request an adjustment at that time. This year they received a bill for over $95,000. According to the applicant this erroneous charge was resolved. This issue prompted the applicant to revisit the issue from 2022 through the abatement process. The Chair closed the hearing.

The Chair noted the meeting was running ahead of schedule and some applicants for scheduled later were present, so the agenda was re-ordered.

Hearing #2: Dennis & Melissa Burnham
Property Location: 25 Winter Street
Parcel ID # 45-255-25 /SPAN #285-090- 10340

The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. Dennis and Melissa Burnham were present and affirmed the oath & acknowledged they had received a copy of the Rules of Procedure. Mr. Burnham explained that Mrs. Burnham has cancer and is unable to work; she collects social security which they use to pay the mobile home park rent. Mr. Burnham works and is the primary income earner. They have established a payment plan for the delinquent taxes; they pay $100 per week. Lisa noted they are being taxed at the non-homestead rate; she suggested they look into filing the Homestead Declaration to be taxed at the homestead rate and for the State to determine if they qualify for a state payment toward their property taxes. The Burnhams indicated they were unaware of the Homestead Declaration filing requirement & process. They received a Tax Sale Notice recently. Sue Kirincich asked what monthly expenses they have. Mr. Burnham explained they have a car payment which is paid weekly to get to the total monthly amount due; utilities; medical bills not covered by insurance (they are trying to establish a payment arrangement for those costs); and park rent. The Chair closed the hearing.

Hearing #3: Marjorie Holmes Estate, Terri Sexton, Executor
Property Location: 149 Willow Circle
Parcel ID #13-43-97/SPAN #285-090-10492

The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. Terri Sexton, Executor, was present and affirmed the oath & acknowledged she had received a copy of the Rules of Procedure. Ms. Sexton stated she is unable to pay the delinquent taxes; she just received a tax sale notice. She is requesting abatement of the full delinquent amount due. Ms. Sexton indicated she moved to VT from NC to care for her ailing Mother who had dementia. She said her condition took work away from her mother who worked into her seventies. Ms. Sexton worked part-time when she first moved here but eventually had to stop working because her mother required significant care before her death. The home is the only asset and it was left to Ms. Sexton and her brother after Mrs. Holmes' passing. She also cared for her brother who had a traumatic brain injury before he passed. She plans to stay in the area and is looking for employment. She indicated she was unaware of the Homestead Declaration but will look into it. She stated her Social Security check is small; her monthly expenses take most of it. Nancy Howe noted Mrs. Holmes had lived in the home since 2003 and had consistently paid her taxes until 2020/2021. Nancy asked if Ms. Sexton had set up a payment plan; Ms. Sexton stated she had not. The Chair closed the hearing.

Hearing #4: Town of Hartford (French Property)
<u>Property Location:</u> 24 Winter Street
Parcel ID #45-255-24/SPAN #285-090-11783

The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. John Haverstock, Town Manager/Delinquent Tax Collector, was present and affirmed the oath & acknowledged he had received a copy of the Rules of Procedure. Brett Mayfield acknowledged he was involved with the family at one point in his role as Health Officer, but did not feel there was a conflict of interest. Mr. Haverstock indicated the taxes have been delinquent since 2014. The Town of Hartford has determined two of the property owners are deceased. They are unable to determine the status or location of the remaining owner. Ashley Andreas asked if the park owner bears responsibility for unpaid taxes. The park owner is responsible for the taxes on the land only, but not on the structure. The park owner had the home demolished for health & safety reasons. Brett confirmed the owners vacated the property at some point during the pandemic. He stated the house was a health hazard and it was a liability for the park owner. Nancy Howe noted the memo Mr. Haverstock submitted with the Request Form included a request to "(a) abate all pending taxes, penalties and interest accrued on this account…" and "(b) remove the mobile home from the tax rolls." She commented she does not believe the Board of Abatement has the authority to remove property from the "tax rolls". Mr. Haverstock indicated he would work with other departments to determine the way forward regarding the request outlined in part (b). The Chair closed the hearing.

Hearing #5: Derek Platts & Audrey Morissette
<u>Property Location:</u> 1421 Maple St
Parcel ID #31-93/SPAN #285-090- 16092

The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. The applicants were not present. The Chair indicated the application is a request to abate water/sewer charges in the amount of $3,218.24. She noted from the application that during a particular billing period there was excessive usage. The property is a rental property. The Department of Public works provided information that DPW left a notice at the property after the high usage was detected from the meter reading. The owner indicated on the application the tenants did not provide them with that notice. The owners provided several invoices showing the work done by Simple Energy in an effort to identify and address the usage increase. The Chair closed the hearing.

Hearing #6: Edmund "Gill" Woods, Jr.
<u>Property Location:</u> 222 Royall Tyler Road
Parcel ID #7-5372/SPAN #285-090- 12159

The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. Edmund "Gill" Woods, Jr. was present and affirmed the oath & acknowledged he had received a copy of the Rules of Procedure. Mr. Woods said he and his wife had been looking for a retirement home in 2007 and ultimately chose this property. They used it part-time for the first 5-6 years, then retired to their Quechee home. He had an accident that significantly impacted his mobility. His wife was an RN and was his primary caregiver; Mrs. Woods passed away in January 2025. He stated he has had to hire outside assistance care at a rate of $700/week. One of his sons has loaned him the money to pay for the care he is receiving. He indicated he receives $3,000/month from Social Security and has a small savings account. His wife had some stocks. He said he does not have a mortgage, but the taxes are over $20,000. He expressed concern about paying taxes going forward. He has considered selling the property, but he was recently diagnosed with a recurrence of cancer. He said he is awaiting further results to determine the full extent of the level of treatment and surgery that will be needed. Adam Ricker asked if Mr. Woods has looked into getting a home equity loan. Mr. Woods said he would not qualify due to his income, and he is not comfortable with the way reverse mortgages work; he noted the application fees and stipulations make it “not a good deal”. Brett Mayfield asked the status of his annual Quechee Lakes Landowners’ Association dues; Mr. Woods indicated the QLLA fees are current and they run about $7600. Nancy Howe noted there is a second lot owned by Mr. Woods and asked if he had considered selling the lot. He said if he sold the lot any driveway built to access the lot would go across his home lot and he sees that as a detriment to future owners. Lisa O’Neil pointed out to Mr. Woods that the property was taxed as “non-homestead” in tax years 2023 & 2025. He may want to look into filing the Homestead Declaration, since the Woods received a state payment toward their taxes in 2022 & 2024. The Chair closed the hearing.

The Board of Abatement entered into deliberative session.

The Meeting adjourned at 8:20pm.

Submitted By Lisa O’Neil, Town Clerk