HARTFORD BOARD OF ABATEMENT
Thursday, July 15, 2025
Hartford Town Hall, Room 2
171 Bridge Street, White River Jct., VT 05001

MINUTES (DRAFT)

Members present: Jo Alexander; Sara Blood, Vice-Chair; Lynn Bohi; Pat Cook; Miranda Dupre; Scott Farnsworth; Ida Griesemer; Jen Horn; Nancy Howe, Chair; Erik Krauss; Joe Major, Treasurer; Brett Mayfield; Linda Miller; Lisa O'Neil, Town Clerk; and Brandon Smith.

5:32pm: Nancy Howe, Chair, called the meeting to order. She provided an overview of the Rules of Procedure.

Hearing #1: Carol Olwert
Property Location: 133 Colonial Drive, Unit 205
Parcel ID #20-25-OKN-205/SPAN #285-090-17026

The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. Carol Olwert was present and affirmed the oath & acknowledged she had received a copy of the Rules of Procedure. The applicant is requesting a $4,344.00 abatement due to a fire on February 25, 2025. Ms. Olwert explained the fire was devastating and the condo has been uninhabitable since the night of the fire. Two other units were also impacted. It took nearly two months to get everything cleaned out so renovations could proceed. She stated her contractor hoped to have everything completed by the end of September. Ms. Olwert contacted the Assessor after the fire; the assessment has since been reduced. She has not yet received the new tax bill, and she did not request an abatement for Water/sewer because she did not know that was an option. Nancy said the BoA can only abate taxes through current year and noted Ms. Olwert can submit another abatement request in the future after receiving the new tax bill and viewing water sewer bill. She was encouraged to contact the Finance Department to obtain copies. Erik Krauss noted the amount requested reflected the full year taxes although the unit was unoccupied for only a portion of the year. Ms. Olwert stated her taxes are paid automatically through escrow with the mortgage lender. The Chair closed the hearing.

Hearing #2: Vahe Mkrtchyan & Armine Hovhannisyan
Property Location: 1163 Baker Turn, 2D
Parcel ID #7-8071-KWC-2D/SPAN #285-09010419

The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. The applicants were not present. The Chair noted the applicant wrote they purchased the property in August 2024. They were unsure about the property tax payment process and how to obtain a copy of the bill. The previous owner had paid the first half of the FY 25 taxes. The applicants did not receive notice for the second installment due in February 2025. Nancy Howe noted property tax details are typically handled during the closing. The applicants subsequently paid the taxes and are requesting abatement of the interest and penalty of $99.90. The Chair closed the hearing.

Hearing #3: Lani & Kathleen Janisse
Property Locations (3):
1625 Maple St.
Parcel ID #9-158/SPAN #285-090-12661

1661 Maple St.
Parcel ID #9-156/SPAN #285-090-13458

0 Orchard Hill
Parcel ID #9-158-2/SPAN #285-090-12663

The Chair opened the hearings for the three properties and identified each property. Kathleen Janisse was present and affirmed the oath & acknowledged she had received a copy of the Rules of Procedure. Mrs. Janisse explained she and her husband have experienced extreme hardship in the last year due to her rare cancer diagnosis and extensive treatment regimen; she noted the treatments were not covered by insurance. Her husband had massive heart attack in February 2025 involving a lengthy stay in ICU; he is slowly recovering. Both have been unable to work for periods of time and are slowly trying to get back to work. She explained Mr. Janisse handled the finances and she only realized taxes had not been paid after receiving the delinquent tax notice. Their savings had dwindled because Mr. Janisse had used the account to make payments on medical treatments insurance did not cover. Mrs. Janisse brought additional financial and medical documents for the Board to review during the hearing, but due to sensitive nature of the information she did not submit copies for file. She explained they are looking for help with the property tax debt and hope to be able to pay their obligations going forward as they get back on their feet. Linda Miller asked if they would sell the two vacant lots. Mrs. Janisse said they are discussing that with their family to see what would be best. They do not currently have a property tax payment plan in place with the Town. The applicants requested a combined total abatement in the amount of $17,957.99 (to include:1625 Maple St-$15,666.82; 1661 Maple St-$836.85; 0 Orchard Hill- $1,454.32). The Chair closed the hearing.

Hearing #4: Praise Chapel, Inc.
<u>Property Location:</u> 14 Elk Street
Parcel ID #31-70/SPAN #285-090-11530

The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. Kathy Janisse was present and affirmed the oath & acknowledged she had received a copy of the Rules of Procedure. Mrs. Janisse explained Praise Chapel, Inc. is their primary work. They established the church in 1989. They established an independent school that once went through high school. They have expanded the community outreach services the organization provides since then. They purchased the former Elks building in December 2019 to address their need for additional space. She explained soon after they were impacted by the pandemic restrictions, although the State asked them to provide care for children of essential workers and provide food for those in need. According to Mrs. Janisse, they have been unable to keep up with taxes due to their health issues (they provided a written timeline) and their inability to generate consistent income from this property. She explained fundraising is a component of the income stream and she typically spearheads those efforts. They have discussed with the Praise Chapel, Inc. Executive Board how to move forward. They did recently apply for and were granted Tax Exempt status for the next ensuing years, although a portion of the property is not included in the exemption. She explained they are requesting some assistance to start fresh. The abatement request amount is $11,652.30 based on the delinquent tax notice. Scott Farnsworth asked if any of the entities using the Cornerstone building at 14 Elks St. pay rental fees. Mrs. Janisse said some do and others are charged at a reduced rate. The Chair closed the hearing.

Hearing #5: Tamara Emmons (fka Tamara Race)
<u>Property Location:</u> 64 Spring Circle
Parcel ID #45-255-64/SPAN #285-090-14873

The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. The applicant was not present. The Clerk had spoken to Ms. Emmons prior to the hearing, and she had indicated she was unable to attend. She shared she does not currently have a payment plan with the Town, but she could possibly establish one after August 3rd. She also indicated the primary source of income is her Social Security in the amount just over $1200/month. The Chair noted the property is currently on the tax sale list. The tax amount owed is $2,480.99. Scott Farnsworth asked if an abatement is granted would a tax sale continue. The Chair indicated she had spoken with the Town Manager's Office regarding the process. They said the tax sale would not proceed if the outstanding taxes are paid in full. The tax sale is scheduled for August 14, 2025. The Chair closed the hearing.

Hearing #6: **Jennifer Provost & Michael Blow**
<u>Property Location:</u> 187 Tall Timbers Drive
Parcel ID #13-43-26/SPAN #285-090-12989

The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. The applicants were not present. The Chair indicated the applicants have made an effort to pay the taxes from 2021-2023 and they have established a payment plan with the Town. The applicant requested an abatement in the amount of "$3,000 or any". The Clerk noted the current amount due based on the Finance Department statement is $2,988.47. The Chair closed the hearing.

Decisions:

Hearing #1 (Olwert): Sara Blood moved to grant an abatement in the amount of **$1500.00.** Joe Major seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with one abstention (Brett Mayfield).
Hearing #2 (Mkrtchyan & Hovhannisyan): Brett Mayfield made a motion to deny the abatement request. Jo Alexander seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
Hearing #3 (Janisse-3 properties):

> **<u>1625 Maple Street:</u>** Brett Mayfield made a motion to grant an abatement in the amount of **$8,000.00**. Sara Blood seconded the motion. Jo Alexander moved to amend the motion to grant an abatement in the amount of $10,000. Miranda Dupre seconded the amendment. The amendment motion failed (5 in favor; 10 opposed). The original motion to abate $8,000.00 passed unanimously.
> **<u>1661 Maple Street:</u>** Scott Farnsworth made a motion to deny the request for abatement. Brett Mayfield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
> **<u>0 Orchard Hill:</u>** Linda Miller made a motion to deny the request for abatement. Miranda Dupre seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Hearing #4 (Praise Chapel, Inc.): Pat Cook made a motion to deny the request for abatement. Jo Alexander seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
Hearing #5 (Emmons fka Race): Miranda Dupre made a motion to grant an abatement in the amount of $2, 480.99. Erik Krauss seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
Hearing #6 (Provost & Blow): Sara Blood made a motion to grant an abatement in the amount of $2,988.47. Linda Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business: The Clerk outlined the process for the upcoming Property Assessment Tax Appeal process, and she sent an e-mail to Board of Civil Authority members on July 15, 2025, with possible dates for the hearings.

Erik Krauss moved to adjourn. The motion carried.