HARTFORD BOARD OF ABATEMENT
Wednesday, November 19 , 2025
Hartford Town Hall, Room 1
171 Bridge Street, White River Jct., VT 05001

MINUTES (DRAFT)

Members present: Jo Alexander; Sara Blood, Vice-Chair; Lynn Bohi; Pat Cook; Scott Farnsworth; Don Foster; Jen Horn; Nancy Howe, Chair; Joe Major, Treasurer; Mark McNamee; Linda Miller; Lisa O'Neil, Town Clerk; Adam Ricker; and Rebecca White.

5:31pm: Nancy Howe, Chair, called the meeting to order. She provided an overview of the scope of the Board of Abatement and the Rules of Procedure. The BoA moved the Pierce hearing up because the Dowds had not yet arrived.

Hearing #1: May Pierce
Property Location: 276 Tall Timbers Drive
Parcel ID # 13-43-49 /SPAN #285-090- 13062

5:35pm: The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. May Pierce and her daughter, Jennifer Towne, were present and affirmed the oath & acknowledged they had received a copy of the Rules of Procedure. Ms. Towne noted that after the reassessment the taxes have gone up significantly and HS-122 (homestead exemption) is based on the previous year's assessment. This year, the State payment amount was considerably less. She said, in the past the State payment covered all or the majority of the taxes. Ms. Towne said her mother lives on her monthly social security in the amount of $1600. She provided copies of many monthly expenses, not including food. After these expenses Ms. Pierce is left with about $530 per month to cover food and other incidentals. She shared other recent expenses with the BoA for dental & medical bills not covered by insurance and car registration & maintenance. Ms. Towne loaned her mother the money to pay for the first property tax installment that was due in August. Ms. Pierce has made a payment arrangement for fuel with her provider; they are hoping she will be eligible for fuel assistance. Ms. Towne indicated they anticipate, based on Ms. Pierce's income, the State will cover the property taxes in the future. Ms. Towne stated they did not receive the assessment notice that outlined the grievance process. The Chair told her they could grieve next year, and she was referred to the Assessor's Office to determine the timeline for doing so. The Chair closed the hearing.

Hearing #2: Charles and Lynne Dowds
Property Location: 3703 Jericho Street
Parcel ID #3-34/SPAN #285-090 -12689

5:50pm: The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. Charles and Lynne Dowds were present. They affirmed the oath & acknowledged they had received a copy of the Rules of Procedure. The Chair asked them what statutory criteria they felt best fit their circumstances; they stated, "*Taxes in which there is a clear or obvious error…*". Mr. Dowds said they bought a home on Jericho Street on April 11, 2025. They did not have the taxes escrowed. They did not receive the tax bill and were unaware they had missed the tax payment until the delinquent tax notice. They provided a copy of the delinquent tax notice was mailed to the wrong street name "Woodside Rd" vs. Woods Rd. Mrs. Dowds said they had owned property in Quechee previously and had the taxes paid via escrow through the mortgage company. The Chair closed the hearing.

Hearing #3: Steven and Barbara Regen
Property Location s: 66 Kingfisher Road, #1D
Parcel ID # 12-8128-NVC-1D /SPAN #285-090- 11128

6:05pm: The Clerk called the Regen's who requested to participate by phone. The Chair opened the hearing. Barbara and Steven Regen attended remotely via telephone. The Chair read the Oath to the Regens. They affirmed the oath & acknowledged they had received a copy of the Rules of Procedure. Bryan Gazda, Director of the Hartford Department of Public Works was present and affirmed the Oath. The Chair explained that the BoA is a quasi-judicial board with limited scope based upon State statute. She noted some parts of the Regen's request such as reclassifying the rate structure and installation of meters or instructing others to do so, is beyond the authority of the BoA. The BoA hears testimony and bases their decision to grant an abatement on the evidence presented to them. Mr. Regen explained they are requesting an abatement of water charges for the seventeen years they have owned the property based on the discrepancy between the flat-rate fee assessed for non-metered units and the lesser fee assessed for units. He estimated the overpayment to fall between $3,400-$6,800. On November 19, he submitted a document via e-mail titled "*Overpayment of Water Sewer Bills for 66 Kingfisher Road, Unit 1D*". In addition, Mr. Regen read for the record a document he had provided on November 18, 2025, entitled "*Oral Statement to the Hartford Township Abatement Board*". The document outlined the flat-rate fee he pays for his unit and the metered fee paid by another property owner. The statement also stated the property is used in the summer months and they are classified as "year-round despite generating zero usage during winter and spring when unoccupied." The Clerk had distributed both documents upon receipt to the BoA members and provided hard copies at the hearing. Bryan Gazda, DPW Director, stated Quechee is unusual explaining that the developer (not the Town) of many of the early condominiums did not have water meters installed; the flat-rate system was established. He said the majority of Quechee properties are charged a flat rate. In the early 2000's, newly developed condos had meters installed. He said DPW is working with a consultant to look at this issue. He noted water is a utility and he suspects most property owners still pay for power and other utilities even if they are not occupying the property full-time. He added the DPW still has ongoing annual expenses to maintain the system for all users whether full- or part-time. He also said it would be up to the Homeowners" Associations to determine if it is possible to have meters and to incur the expense of installing them. The Chair noted, Quechee has a separate water system from Wilder, White River Jct., Hartford Village area. Mr. Gazda noted most of those property owners have meters. Mr. Regen concluded by stating they are seeking fairness and under the current rate structure they have been subsidizing the other units for 17 years; he said he thinks there is a solution to the inequity.

Hearing #4: M T Associates, LLC
<u>Property Location:</u> 906 Hartford Avenue
Parcel ID # 24-132 /SPAN #285-090- 13330

6:25pm: The Chair opened the hearing and identified the property. The property owner/representative was not present. The Chair provided a recap of the Abatement request stating the applicant is requesting interest for the late payment of property taxes be abated. M T Associates, LLC included a copy of the envelope with a postage meter date of August 1, 2025, and a copy of a list of other property tax bills paid for other locations with an issue date of August 1, 2025, and the date the corresponding checks cleared the bank. The MT Associates, LLC abatement request states: "Postal service is at fault for the missed date." The Hartford Finance Department provided a copy of the envelope they received with the payment with a White River Junction postmark of August 19, 2025. The tax payment was due by August 15, 2025. The tax bill states: "Your payment is due and payable (IN-HAND OR US POSTAL SERVICE POSTMARK) by the Above Due Date." The Chair closed the hearing.

6:32pm: The Board entered deliberations.

7:05pm:
<u>Decisions:</u>

Hearing #1 (May Pierce : 276 Tall Timbers Drive): Jen Horn made a motion to grant an abatement of property taxes in the amount of $1,337.50. Sara Blood seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Hearing #2 (Dowds: 3703 Jericho Street): Scott Farnsworth made a motion to abate interest in the amount of $226.16. Jo Alexander seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Hearing #3 (Steven and Barbara Regen66 Kingfisher Road, #1D): Mark McNamee made a motion to deny the request for an abatement of water and sewer charges. Pat Cook seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Hearing #4 (M T Associates, LLC : 906 Hartford Avenue): Lynn Bohi made a motion to deny the request for an abatement of interest charges. Jo Alexander seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7:10pm Sara Blood moved to adjourn. Jen Horn seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by Lisa M. O’Neil, Hartford Town Clerk