

HARTFORD BOARD OF ABATEMENT
Tuesday, August 4, 2026
Hartford Town Hall, Room 2
171 Bridge Street, White River Jct., VT 05001

MINUTES (DRAFT)

Members present: Jo Alexander; Lynn Bohi; Pat Cook; Don Foster; Jen Horn; Nancy Howe, Chair; Sue Kirincich; Erik Krauss; Mark McNamee; Linda Miller; Lisa O'Neil, Town Clerk; Tim Fariel; and Rick Vincent, Assessor.

5:34pm: Nancy Howe, Chair, called the meeting to order. She indicated we had only one hearing this evening and the applicant was present.

Hearing #1: Susan I. Barrett
Property Location: 361 South Street
Parcel ID #24-89/SPAN #285-090-10243

The Chair opened the hearing. Ms. Barrett was present, she affirmed the oath, acknowledged receipt of the Rules of Procedure, and confirmed the applicable abatement category selected was "property lost or destroyed during the tax year." Ms. Barrett indicated she has been dealing with this loss of property and FEMA response since the July 2023 flooding. The FEMA process was started and FEMA approved funds for an engineering report for demolition and stabilization of the embankment erosion. She said the erosion has continued to worsen with recent storms. She noted Lori Hirshfield, Planning Director, submitted a written status update (*see attached Memo from Lori Hirshfield, Planning Director) and they are seeking additional funds to address removal of the structure and stabilization of the site. Tim expressed frustration with the length of the process and said we are dealing with two separate issues: a geology issue and a loss of use of the home for the property owner. He said we should let the State know how we feel. The Chair reminded Board members the Board of Abatement has a limited statutory charge, and in this instance, we can only consider whether or not to abate property taxes. She said the Select Board may wish to explore further. Ms. Barrett said she worked until May, but now that she is retired paying the taxes on this property in addition to expenses on her current property is more difficult. The Chair closed the hearing.

5:40pm: The Board entered deliberations

5:45pm: Came out of deliberations

Decision

Hearing #1 (Barrett): Mark McNamee made a motion to abate the amount of \$988.98 representing the full amount of the tax bill for Tax Year 2027. Tim Fariel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5:47pm : Jen Horn made a motion to adjourn. Linda Miller Seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

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

attached to
mins. of Board
of Abatement 8/4/2026

JUL 27 2026

MEMORANDUM

July 27, 2026

TO: Lisa O'Neil, Town Clerk
FROM: Lori Hirshfield, Director, Department of Planning & Development
SUBJECT: 361 South Street Property – Abatement Hearing

The following is a status update on the FEMA HMGP Buyout for 361 South Street (Barrett property). This property is on the edge of a very steep ravine, and the impact of the flood in 2023 resulted in significant erosion in the ravine impacting the stability of the steep embankment and the structures. The challenge the Town has been addressing with the state is how to safely remove the structures and complete site restoration given the very steep slopes, and extreme ongoing erosion with unstable soil conditions. This poses a threat to adjacent properties if not done properly and liability for the Town to proceed otherwise.

In the early stages of the buyout process the Town engaged an engineering firm to give professional guidance on what the scope of work and cost estimate would likely be to develop an engineered plan for demolition and site restoration given the site conditions. The State worked with the Town to obtain additional FEMA funds for the Town to hire an engineer to conduct a geotechnical analysis of the site conditions, develop a preliminary plan to safely complete demolition and site restoration, and provide an engineer's probable cost estimate.

FEMA approved the additional funds for the engineering which was sent to the Town on July 14, 2025. The State and FEMA viewed this as the first of a two-stage process with the second stage being a final modification request to FEMA for the updated scope and costs of demolition/stabilization based on the engineer's assessment and design.

As anticipated, additional funds are needed to safely do the demolition and site restoration requiring slope stabilization as a necessary component to ensure safe site conditions during and post demolition. The State had concerns about the cost and wanted to consider an option that fits within the existing budget, which was discussed with the Town and the Town's engineer. The Town's engineer concluded that approach would not meet engineering standards and therefore they could not sign off on it. The Town has met several times with the state and most recently on July 8, 2026. As a result, the state is working with the Town to submit a HMGP amendment for additional funding to ensure a safe approach.

Please let me know if you have any questions.