

TOWN OF SHELBURNE

BOARD OF ABATEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

May 24, 2021

***Meeting held by teleconference.**

DRAFT

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nancy Baker, Joan Lenex, Rebecca Moore, Judy Rosenstreich, Randy Rowland, Lee Suskin.

ADMINISTRATION: Diana Vachon, Town Clerk.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Nancy Baker called the teleconference meeting to order at 7:08 PM. Diana Vachon referenced COVID Act 92 allowing remote meetings.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3. DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

4. APPROVE MINUTES FROM APRIL 26, 2021

MOTION: Joan moved to accept the minutes. Becky seconded. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

5. TASK GROUP PRESENTS

Diana will take minutes for tonight. Members will use the Raise Hand feature when they want to speak. Randy will keep track of raised hands.

Nancy summarized the purpose of the subcommittee and how it has evolved. She contacted other towns and found that very few had a list of specific required documentation. Nancy shared her conversation with the South Burlington Town Clerk Donna Kinville. They do not have a formula for the kinds of documentation to be submitted because each individual has specific circumstances. South Burlington has formulized the procedure and an application form. At the hearing the Board suggests what documentation would support the abatement request, reminding the applicant the documentation is optional. The minutes of the BCA hearing reflect the kind of documentation submitted by the applicant; but personal detailed information and figures are not entered into the minutes. Rather, that information is kept on file in the Town Clerk's office. The information is available upon request, but to date has not been requested, according to the South Burlington Town Clerk. If the applicant is applying for an abatement due the inability to pay, the Board has adopted and modified an IRS form, which Donna Kinville will send to Nancy Baker. And she will pass it on to this subcommittee. All applicants at a hearing have a representative from the town as an advocate to help them navigate the process. The Board seeks clarification through

questioning and make clear that this process is to assist those with a temporary financial inability to pay. In this situation, there are members of the Board who work with the applicant to connect them with town and state services (211). It may be prudent that the member who assists the applicant recuse from voting in the decision.

Becky and Joan reported a list of potential education and outreach options. Joan spoke with Peter Frankenburg Director of Finance and Lee Krohn Town Manager. It is possible to put a postcard size note in the annual mailing of the tax bills. Lee will approve the wording. Another idea is to contact the Shelburne News when the bills go to arrange interviews with the Board, Town Clerk, Town Manager, etc. to educate tax payers about the processes available. The initial contact with the finance department to create a payment plan that the Town manager approves. If it is clear that the land owner cannot afford to pay, refer to Town and State resources. The tax payer may go the Selectboard and request that the penalties and interest on late taxes be waived. When the applicant applies for an abatement, they will be given a list of any relevant documents/information to be submitted and the timing for submission.

Lee and Diana contacted the Vermont Leagues of Cities and Towns (VLCT) and the Secretary of State (SoS) for clarification on #2 and #6 of the statutory reasons to abate. They asked for examples of these reasons. Neither source had examples to share. Both sources directed them to the SoS "About Abatement" document and the VLCT Abatement Tool Kit on their website.

Lee recommended having a form for the applicant to fill out if they apply for abatement stating the inability to pay. All other reasons for abatement, the applicant could summarize their circumstances on the application form.

6. DISCUSS NEXT STEPS & REVIEW AND ASSIGN FUTURE ACTIONS

Nancy and Randy will work on a supplemental information sheet to hand out to applicants.

Nancy and David are working on the Guidelines for Conduct.

Joan and Becky will draft some wording for the postcard that may be mailed with the tax bills.

Judy and Nancy will work on reaching out to the Town of Waterbury, which has a large number of abatements, as reported by Judy. This information may provide some insight into some protocols that work for them.

Next meeting is set for Monday June 14th at 7 PM.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.