

Board of Abatement Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 25, 2021, at 6 pm, Town Hall + Zoom

Present: Jeremy Weiss (Town Clerk), Sandra Ferver* (Town Treasurer and Delinquent Tax Collector); Selectboard: Denise Wheeler (Chair), Rick Kehne, Marc Mihaly; Michael Loignon*, Steven Mills, Wilson Hughes*, Dillon Burns*, John McCullough, Barbara Butler, Katie Lane-Karnas* (Recording Secretary), Janet Pocarobba*, Jan Ohlsson* Charlotte Hanna Bassage, Scott Bassage

* indicates participation in the meeting by Zoom video call

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 6 pm. The Chair signed in all members under oath.
2. Approve Minutes: John Brabant made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2021 meeting; John McCullough seconded. The motion was voted and passed unanimously (abstained).
3. Abatement: Stephen Mills has requested an abatement of \$2,000 of his 2020-2021 property taxes, based on the reason “taxes of persons who are unable to pay their taxes, interest, and collection fees (24 VSA 1535(a)(3)). The tax bill from this year shows a reduced state payment over 2020. Mr. Mills commented that his taxes have increased \$725 between 2020 and 2021 (*see Town Treasurer’s clarification below*).

John Brabant noted he attended a meeting about ARPA federal aid money related to COVID-19 and how it is being distributed and utilized around the state. A VHFA person shared about a program for folks struggling to pay their interest on property taxes and utilities and he shared the signup link to this Homeowners Assistance Program and offered to help Mr. Mills navigate this.

Mr. Mills answered questions describing his situation (he doesn’t have relatives assisting with any bills). He explained his efforts to have medical bills reduced and handle collection agency proceedings.

The Chair answered an inquiry about the ARPA funds—it may not be used for property taxes.

The Town Treasurer clarified that Mr. Mills’ tax bill went *down* between 2020 and 2021. The change in his tax *obligation* was due to the decrease in his state adjustment credit between these two years (due to more federal unemployment income in the second tax year). His assessment did not change. Mr. Mills is currently working between 15-21.5 hours a week (\$14 per hour). The first tax bill (in June) he paid a first installment of \$500 that he had saved. He incurred close to \$10,000 to repair the well, a roof repair due, a septic system needed renovation along with tree removal and a water heater incurred repair expense. The well pump

is shared with two neighbors and Mr. Mills decided this year to ask the shared neighbors for a contribution to the water pump electric expense.

The Chair suggested contacting Americorp about resources for home repair needs and Capstone for connection to other resources.

Mr. Mills noted his weekly income and that he has Medicare coverage (cost of approx. \$420 per quarter instead of previously that was the cost per month). Jan Ohlsson suggested looking into Medicaid as a secondary insurance to reduce cost. Medicaid will cover low income and potentially pay the Medicare premium as well. The means for checking in on this is Vermont Health Access.

The total tax is \$3,011 and he has paid \$500; he has requested a \$2,000 abatement. John Brabant suggested an idea to keep the tax bill pending, and not waive any amount as of yet, and rather hold it until such time as the Town gets word from VHAB and they make the determination of any amount they would cover, and then Mr. Mills return to the Board about abating interest and penalties, etc. This would require Mr. Mills to apply for VHAB as described above, and John Brabant is willing to assist with this application as needed. The Chair suggested a time frame of no longer than three months to return to continue this (January 25, 2022).

Marc Mihaly noted that in talking with Capstone or VHAB, Mr. Mills be clear he has not been offered abatement. Charlotte Hanna Bassage suggested evidence of Mr. Mills following up on the suggestions provided today (this documentation could be emailed to the Chair, Denise Wheeler).

- ✓ Homeowners Assistance Program (John Brabant has offered to assist)
- ✓ The Chair suggested contacting Americorp about resources for home repair needs and
- ✓ Capstone for connection to other resources.
- ✓ Jan Ohlsson suggested looking into Medicaid as a secondary insurance to reduce cost. Medicaid will cover low income and potentially pay the Medicare premium as well. The means for checking in on this is Vermont Health Access.

Mr. Mills was in agreement about this process.

4. Adjournment: At 6:40 pm meeting was not adjourned but held open to be continued at a future meeting, no later than January 25, 2022.

Date: 10/25/2021 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Board of Abatement at the _____ meeting