



TOWN OF CALAIS

3120 Pekin Brook Road
East Calais, Vermont 05650
802-456-8720
calaisvermont.gov

Board Of Abatement Meeting
DRAFT MINUTES
Monday July 22, 2024, 5:00 PM
Calais Town Hall

Present: Christy Mihaly, Anne Winchester, Kari Bradley, Scott Bassage, Charlotte Hanna Bassage, Jamie Moorby, Teegan Dykeman-Brown, Bill Davis, John McCullough, Wilson Hughes, Michael Loignon, Kristina Bielenberg, Barbara Butler, Janet Ancel, Craig Line, ORCA
Zoom: Bill Powell, Ann Wheelock, ORCA

Call to Order: Janet called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. She recused herself due to the possibility of a perception of a conflict of interest and appointed Charlotte Hanna Bassage as temporary chair.

Minutes of the Prior Meeting: Kristina made a motion to approve the minutes of July 8, 2024. Scott seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Guide for Public Bodies: Charlotte asked Teegan if she would like to discuss the Guide for Public Bodies that she emailed out that day. Teegan said she thought that because it had not been warned and people may not have had time to look at it, she would like to save it for a future meeting.

Hearing for Request for Abatement for Parcel #450287: Charlotte offered Craig a seat at the table where the board members were sitting and offered that board members introduce themselves if it would make him more comfortable. He thanked her but declined.

Craig reviewed his previous hearing with the board and emphasized that because the board approved the financial disclosure form after he submitted his second application, he believed he was not required to submit it. However, he felt like the board had changed their minds and it was requiring it, and he felt that the information it requested was information he did not want circulating out among people he doesn't know well enough to trust. He was willing to answer questions from the board verbally.

Charlotte explained that the board could not require him to fill out the form but reminded him that without sufficient evidence, the board could not grant an abatement based on financial need.

Craig clarified that he had checked two of the criteria boxes on the application form, but he had talked with Teegan earlier in the day and learned that the second box only applies to veterans and their families, so he was applying based solely on inability to pay (24 V.S.A. § 1535(a)(3)).

As for his finances, he said he has \$31,800 in credit card debt, and he is working to make more than minimum payments, but the interest is still adding up. His monthly expenses exceed his monthly income by about \$1,000. He does have two vehicles, and he plans to sell one, but he needs to do some work on it first, and he was prevented from doing so first by his illness and then by his sugaring duties. He also came into some antiques in June and plans to sell some of those.

Kristina asked about preventing future delinquencies, and he explained that the big issue was that he had failed to file his Homestead Declaration and Current Use appropriately in the last two years and subsequently had a significantly higher tax bill for 2022 and 2023. He applied for an extension on his income taxes in 2024, as he typically does, given his sugaring schedule, but he is working to make sure everything is done this year in a timely manner.

He has \$1,900 cash on hand. He has no mortgage, and this property is the only one he owns. It cannot be subdivided because it is preserved with the Vermont Land Trust. He thought about selling off the property and all of his sugaring equipment, but he doesn't know what he would do for employment in that case, so he is choosing to continue sugaring. He has about \$10,000 in syrup that he is working on selling. He feels that there won't be an issue with paying his property taxes next year.

Barbara pointed out that the tax bills for "next year" will be going out in less than a month, and Craig said that he's aware, and he stands by his statement.

Craig expressed appreciation at the board's decorum and respect in this particular meeting.

Kristina asked if the amount of the request on the application was still correct. Teegan confirmed that it is.

Christy asked about Current Use – is it accurate that it's only been a year or two that he hasn't filled it out correctly? Craig confirmed. Charlotte shared her experience that the state does not allow for any errors for Current Use and will not adjust a tax assessment after the fact.

Barbara made a motion to go into deliberative session at 5:35. Kristina seconded, and the motion passed.

Scott made a motion to come out of deliberative session at 5:56. Bill seconded, and the motion passed.

Kristina moved that the hearing be continued to Monday, July 29, at 5:00 pm at the Town Hall. Scott seconded, and the motion passed.

Charlotte ended the meeting at 5:57.