



TOWN OF CALAIS

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Board Of Abatement Meeting

Monday July 8, 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, Jordan Keyes, Wilson Hughes, Steve Sweeney, Michael Loignon, Kristina Bielenberg, Barbara Butler, ORCA
Zoom: Janet Ancel, Craig Line, ORCA

Call to Order: Janet called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm. She expressed that she was unwell and appointed Charlotte Hanna Bassage as temporary chair.

Because of the two new Selectboard members present, Charlotte introduced herself and invited everyone else to do so. All members introduced themselves.

Minutes of the Prior Meeting: Wilson made a motion to approve the minutes of May 13, 2024. Scott seconded the motion. Kristina pointed out that while Craig Line is documented as participating in the meeting, his name is not listed under the attendees. Charlotte proposed we accept minutes as amended. **The motion passed.**

Review of updated drafts of the Abatement Application and Financial Disclosure Form: Teegan reviewed some of the changes she had made to the document in response to Janet and Dillon's suggestions. Charlotte repeated the idea from a previous meeting that applicants should be aware that they can reach out to the Town Clerk as a liaison to help with the process. Teegan said that she usually offers basic assistance when people apply. Scott asked if the offer should be spelled out on the application, and members agreed.

Kristina pointed out that it needed to be clear to applicants who was expected to turn in the financial disclosure form (e.g., those applying because of a lister error need not do so, but those applying based on financial hardship should.). The group clarified the appropriate wording for the application.

Bill suggested requesting that applicants submit a copy of their tax return. Janet said there would be a lot of information on a document like that that applicants wouldn't want public and that would not add to the case for abatement. Kristina said that some applicants may be in arrears and wouldn't have it to submit.

Barbara asked that "Childcare" be its own line item on the monthly expenses chart on the financial form. Jordan asked that we wrap up amendments to the application before moving to the disclosure form. Charlotte pointed out that they are two separate line items in the agenda. Charlotte asked if the board felt ready to talk about approval. Teegan outlined the adjustments recommended up to that point.

Anne moved to approve the hearing application form changes. Jamie Moorby seconded. Motion passed.

The group agreed with Barbara's suggestion to make "Childcare" its own line item on the disclosure form. The wording of the title of the form was changed from "Information" to "Disclosure". The "Healthcare/Prescription" line item was reworded to read "Medical expenses". Christy asked for clarification regarding multiple requests for mortgage information. Discussion revealed that some repetitive questions could be consolidated, and the new question, "Are you behind on your mortgage payments?", would be added. Jordan asked if we would want to add a second column to the chart to ask if any line items had "overdue amounts." Janet thought that might be overwhelming for applicants. Teegan reminded board members that this was supposed to be a simpler worksheet and explained that it was already a struggle to fit it on the front and back of one page. Barbara suggested eliminating the vehicle chart to save space. Teegan explained she included it to remind people that vehicles weren't just cars and trucks but also recreational vehicles. Steve thought the chart provided valuable information. Jordan recommended just a "Vehicles" line item under monthly payments, maybe with an asterisk listing vehicle types, and a "Vehicles" line under Financial Assets, too.

Scott asked if we might want to minimize any more additions and save additional questions for during hearings. Jordan preferred to make as much information as possible available to the board before a hearing. Charlotte asked how much the applicants talk to the town clerk beforehand. Teegan emphasized that she had only had two applicants in her time in office so far, but she tries to keep a fairly open back-and-forth communication.

There was discussion about whether the disclosure form was "required" or "recommended". Barbara recommended wording such as "Completing the financial disclosure form is a part of the application process for applicants applying based on inability to pay," and eliminating the need to choose one, and the board agreed. Barbara pointed out that the Homestead Declaration question asked two questions and only offered one answer choice. Teegan said she imagined it covering both, as in "Yes, I've filed it for this year and past years," or "No, I have missed some deadlines," but agreed to change it for clarity. Charlotte pointed out it was getting near the time for the Selectboard meeting to begin and asked about further changes. Steve said the form was only meant to be a baseline, a starting point to put applicants on a level playing field. Kristina reminded the board that it can always come back and make more changes later. **Barbara moved that the board adopt the form with the agreed upon edits. Scott seconded. Motion passed.**

Teegan said that she would make the updates and then send the amended documents to the board. She would also send the Financial Disclosure Form to Craig Line in anticipation of his hearing on July 22.

Legislative Act 106: Teegan briefly outlined Legislative Act 106 relating to Abatement and Delinquency.

Michael will not be at the next meeting. Charlotte will lead that hearing on July 22. **Scott moved to adjourn, John seconded. Motion passed at 5:58 pm.**