

## Minutes

### Board of Civil Authority Meeting

August 13, 2025, 10:00 a.m.

**Present:** Brian Savage-BCA Chair, Tamar Bouchard, Nicholas Brosseau, Donald Collins, Steven Pike, Neal Speer, Matthew Walker, Suzanne Washburn, Randy Brock-BCA Members, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels- Asst. Town Admin, Betty Cheney-Collector of Delinquent Taxes, Dianne Day-Village Admin Asst/Clerk

**Listers:** David Horton, Kevin Nichols, Amy Giroux

**Appelants :** Matthew & Ilze Luneau, David Passini, Amy Raymond

**Zoom:** No Attendance

1. Mr. Savage called the meeting to order at 10:01 am.
2. Mr. Savage reviewed the agenda and agreed to move Ms. Betty Cheney up on the agenda as the other two appellants were not present yet.

#### Abatement of Uncollectable Taxes Hearing

- 1) Cheney, Betty Collector of Delinquent Taxes & Abatement of Uncollectible Taxes  
Mr. Savage swore in Ms. Cheney.

Ms. Cheney came before the board to request abatement of taxes for travel trailers that have been removed from Lakewood Campground. Ms. Cheney said she has verified with Collette Case, the owner of Lakewood Campground, and these are no longer there. Ms. Cheney also included one business that is no longer in existence.

YY0043-0000 Mike Bailey	2024	\$67.78
YY0054-0000 Robin Wescott	2024	\$151.93
YY0119-0000 Patty Patoine	2024	\$154.26
YY0173-0000 Zach Nolan	2024	\$144.91
YY0194-0000 Dylan Belisle	2024	\$130.89
YY0297-0000 Christine Jarvis	2024	\$119.20
YY0300-0000 Eugene Quintin Jr.	2024	\$133.23-Gone in 2023
YY0301-0000 Matt Porter	2024	\$172.96
ZZ0117-0000 R. Giroux Repair	2024	\$57.61-Should not have been on 2024 taxes.

This is normal for trailers to move in and out. This taxable property is not in the Town of Swanton anymore according to the Campground owner.

The total request is in the amount of \$1,132.77.

**Mr. Pike made a motion to accept the recommendation of abatement of taxes in the amount of \$1,132.77 for the travel trailers as presented by the Delinquent Tax Collector Betty Cheney, seconded by Ms. Bouchard.**  
**Motion carried.**

Abatement of Taxes Hearing-Town

2) Luneau, Matthew & Ilze 2956 Sweet Hollow Rd. Swanton, VT

Request of abatement of their 2023 & 2024 taxes.

Mr. Savage swore in Ms. Luneau.

Ms. Luneau shared they are unable to pay their taxes, interest and collection fees because they took out VSAC loans to help their daughter go to college.

Because the VSAC loan was not current the State took their state income tax refund that was due to the Town towards taxes.

Ms. Luneau said she was communicating with VSAC, and they abruptly stopped communication and did not know why.

Ms. Luneau said they are barely making ends meet and they cannot pay these taxes.

Ms. Luneau's written request states they owe \$477.71 for 2023, and \$2,191.99 for 2024 as of 12/19/2024.

Ms. Luneau said she is self-employed as a basketball performer, and her husband is a schoolteacher, and they don't make enough money to pay these taxes owed.

Mr. Savage reviewed the 2023 tax return the board had before them.

Ms. Luneau said during COVID the State paid their taxes and she expected that to continue.

Mr. Savage asked if they hold a mortgage on the home? Escrow? Ms. Luneau said no they cannot take out a loan because their credit is bad.

Ms. Washburn asked if there is just one income in their home? Ms. Luneau said her husband is a teacher and works but she is a performer and is paid \$500 per show. These are not guaranteed income.

Ms. Washburn asked if they don't have a car how does she get to these events out of State. Ms. Luneau said her mother-in-law allows her to use her car, to go to events she rents a car.

Ms. Washburn asked Ms. Luneau if she had considered getting another job, there are so many places looking for help? No.

Mr. Brosseau asked Ms. Luneau if she has discussed with the Town setting up a payment plan? No.

Mr. Brosseau asked Ms. Luneau if she has anyone, she could borrow the money from to pay these taxes? No.

Ms. Bouchard asked how much is actually owed? Ms. Luneau did not know.

Ms. Fournier printed the amount owed is \$2,011.00, plus interest and penalties to Ms. Cheney.

Mr. Brosseau asked what the conversation with VSAC was like, they are usually amendable. Ms. Luneau said it was all via email and once they asked how much they could pay per month the conversations stopped.

Ms. Cheney shared when Ms. Luneau paid her 2023 taxes the payment went towards interest and penalties first, the balance towards the taxes. Ms.

Bouchard clarified the balance for 2023 is interest and penalties.

Ms. Bouchard asked if for 2024 what wasn't paid was the balance less the State payment.

Ms. Cheney's statement for 11-19-2024 was for \$2,669.70 for 2023/2024.

Ms. Cheney will provide the amount owed to date before the next meeting.

Mr. Brock asked in the event the abatement is denied, and the Town were to give them a period of time with and amount to pay is that something they would be willing to do? Ms. Luneau said if they had no choice.

Mr. Brock asked what will happen this year? Ms. Luneau said that is a good question, but she believes the State will pay them.

Mr. Collins asked where Ms. Luneau's husband works? Christ The King, private school not a public school and he gets paid less she believes.

Mr. Collins, suggested they make an appointment with VSAC and work out a payment plan they are good to work with.

Mr. Savage recessed the Town Abatement hearing and convened the Village Abatement hearing for BCA members who are a resident of the Village.

#### Abatement of Taxes-Village

#### 3) Passini, David 49 Fourth St. Swanton, VT

Mr. Savage swore in Mr. Passini.

Mr. Passini owes \$1,834.62 for his 2024 taxes as of 7-15-2025.

Mr. Passini shared his background, his financial situation and why he is unable to pay the amount owed for his Village taxes.

Mr. Passini shared he lost his job in 2022 and has been trying to make his company successful since then. Mr. Passini shared that his anxiety has limited his progress, but he is making progress.

Mr. Savage reviewed Mr. Passini's 2024 tax returns.

Mr. Savage asked Mr. Passini to clarify he received \$800 a month for rental income renting out a room in his home. Mr. Passini said that was his only income. Mr. Passini believes he will begin receiving Social Security soon as he is now 62.

Ms. Washburn asked to clarify he was going to receive Social Security not a pension.

Mr. Passini says he does not have a lot of debt it is manageable. Mr. Savage reviewed Mr. Passini's monthly expenses.

Mr. Passini said he has visited the Abenaki food shelf and was very grateful it is there for those in need.

Ms. Day asked if he would only be able to make a certain amount of money on Social Security? Yes only \$20,000 a year and the rental income will be factored into that with his web design work.

Mr. Collins said it sounds like you're getting your life together, would you be willing to work with the Village to set up a payment plan? Yes.

Ms. Day said the payment would need to be worked out with Ms. Cheney, the Delinquent Tax Collector.

Mr. Walker asked Mr. Passini if he anticipates the same situation for this year? Yes. That should be part of the payment plans as well, if the increases in his income are not enough to pay his taxes.

Ms. Day reminded Mr. Passini the Abenaki Food Shelf is a great resource for him to use.

**Mr. Speer made a motion to adjourn the Tax Abatement hearing, seconded by Mr. Pike. Motion carried.**

#### Appeal of Grievance Decision by the Listers

Mr. Savage called Grievance Hearing to order at 10:59 am.

1) Raymond, Amy 2506 Highgate Rd. Swanton, VT

Mr. Savage shared the process with the BCA to determine the property value to Ms. Raymond. The BCA will need to convene an inspection committee to visit the property. The BCA has the ability to lower, leave the same or increase the property value.

Mr. Brock stated that Ms. Raymond is using his property as a comp and asked if anyone felt this was a conflict of interest? No one had a concern about this.

Mr. Savage swore in Ms. Raymond, Mr. Horton, Mr. Nichols & Ms. Giroux.

Mr. Horton passed out Listers Exhibit A.

- Exhibit A is a list of Itemized Property Costs for all 4 contiguous parcels on Ms. Raymonds property with a total value of \$623,100. This includes 23.79 acres, 1890 sq ft manufactured home, 2160 sq ft rental duplex.
  - 1) 11.3 acres with manufactured home
  - 2) 1.13 acres with a rental duplex
  - 3) 1.28 acre vacant building lot
  - 4) 10.08 acres vacant building lot

Mr. Horton said when Ms. Raymond brought her property to grievance the Listers reviewed and could not justify lowering the value of the land. The Listers did reduce the quality of the manufactured home after comparing other properties from Average-Good to Average. This reduced the combined value by \$11,600.

This was in line with other manufactured homes on Highgate Rd.

Mr. Horton shared how the property values are developed with the CAMA program the Town uses for all properties.

BCA members asked Mr. Horton questions to clarify values. The more land you have the less it is worth.

Ms. Raymond passed out Appellant Exhibit 1

- Exhibit 1 was a drawing of all 4 parcels Ms. Raymond owns with the values listed.

Ms. Raymond shared she has always owned contiguous property. What changed was the 3 lot subdivision adding the purchase of 2506 Highgate Rd. This changed how the Town assessed the property. Ms. Raymond shared the comparable are in her neighborhood.

Ms. Raymond also stated she did not feel she was given enough before the grievance hearing. Ms. Raymond said she grieved the property values and the due process of how she was able to obtain the information for her property.

Ms. Raymond listed comparable properties listed below for land values vs her land value.

- 1) 1981 Highgate Rd (now known as 22 Wilderness Way)
- 2) 1975 Highgate Rd (now known as 132 Wilderness Way)
- 3) 2, 8 & 14 Earlnita Lane
- 4) 2396 Highgate Rd
- 5) 2605 Highgate Rd (now known as 400 State Drive)
- 6) 2474 Highgate Rd

- 7) 2494 Highgate Rd
- 8) 2448 Highgate Rd
- 9) 2506 Highgate Rd
- 10) 2530 Highgate Rd
- 11) 2508 Highgate Rd
- 12) 1981 Highgate Rd (now known as 82 Wilderness Way)

Ms. Raymond said the value of the land increased when she purchased the land from her ex-fiancé vs the previous land value.

Mr. Horton shared Listers Exhibit B

- Exhibit B is parcels listed below with the amount of wetlands & land that abuts the interstate. These are contributing factors in land values.
- 1) 2494 Highgate Rd
  - 2) 2474 Highgate Rd
  - 3) 132 Wilderness Way
  - 4) 82 Wilderness Way
  - 5) 22 Wilderness Way
  - 6) 2560 Highgate Rd
  - 7) 2396 Highgate Rd
  - 8) 2448 Highgate Rd
  - 9) 2530 Highgate Rd
  - 10) 2506 Highgate Rd-Did not show wetlands

Mr. Brock asked for clarification on how the lowering of value for wetlands is determined. Mr. Horton said they take a look at how much of the land is wetlands and make a judgement call. This is done consistently for all properties in Swanton. The current land schedule is based off the last Town appraisal in 2007.

Mr. Pike asked who decides what is considered wetlands? The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources/State of Vermont.

Ms. Raymond asked where the map of wetlands is from? ANR? No the Town uses a mapping company.

Mr. Horton shared Listers Exhibit C

- Exhibit C listed below are 4 properties that are manufactured homes with land for a cost per square foot comparison. Each property has and Good-Average listing for quality of the home. The cost is replacement less depreciation.
- 1) 2506 Highgate Rd, Yr Built 2004, \$33.56 per sqft

- 2) 109 Woods Hill Rd, Yr Built 2000, \$36.92 per sqft
- 3) 2185A Sheldon Rd, Yr Built 1999, \$33.33 per sqft
- 4) 6 Kellogg Rd, Yr Built 2004, \$31.87 per sqft

Ms. Raymond said she when she came to the grievance process her dwelling value was \$129,000. The listers paperwork today shows the dwelling value of the manufactured home at \$104,300. Mr. Horton does not have anything that stated the manufactured home was valued at a higher amount.

Ms. Raymond said official wetlands map is the Agency of Natural Resources and her property has wetlands, because last year she was denied from the Department of Agriculture to build a cider barn because her property sits in a wetland.

Ms. Giroux asked if Ms. Raymond has a map that shows the wetlands on her property. Ms. Raymond said they should use the ANR map.

Mr. Savage said the map the Town uses is a service the Town subscribes to and should be updated. The map is used for all properties in the Town.

Mr. Savage asked Ms. Raymond if her property was approved for a subdivision? Yes. Mr. Savage said the lots could be sold, vs some properties listed in the comps have not been subdivided.

The BCA members discussed who will volunteer for the Inspection Committee to report back to the board. (Mr. Brosseau as a Selectboard Member cannot be on the committee)

The BCA Inspection Committee will consist of Don Collins, Randy Brock & Matt Walker. The inspection at 2506 Highgate Rd. will be 8-18-25 at 1pm.

Mr. Savage stated when the Inspection Committee visits the property the members cannot take any more evidence.

The BCA will reconvene and receive the inspection report and decide on Abatement of Tax request on 8-20-25 at 3pm.

**Mr. Pike made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:12 pm, seconded by Ms. Bouchard. Motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted by,  
Christina Candels-Assistant Town Administrator