



TOWN OF ESSEX VERMONT

81 MAIN STREET, ESSEX JUNCTION, VERMONT 05452

BOARD OF CIVIL AUTHORITY MEETING as BOARD of ABATEMENT DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING DECEMBER 3, 2025

Members Present: Dawn Hill-Fleury, Chair; Betsy Dunn, Vice-Chair; Iris Banks; Alyssa Black; Jennifer Booker, Deputy Town Clerk (non-voting); Kendall Chamberlin; Leonora Dodge; Alexis Dubief; Rey Garofano; Georgia Lavigne; Karen Lemnah, Assessor; Cynthia Sievwright, Ken Signorello; Liz Subin; Erik Post; Margaret Smith; Irene Wrenner

Others Present: Kate LaRose, Administrative Assistant; Bryan Cairns; Wendy Hoffman

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Dawn Hill-Fleury, Chair.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

BETSY DUNN made a motion, seconded by **MARGARET SMITH**, to accept the agenda as presented. Motion passed 14-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

None.

5. CONSENT ITEMS

~~a. Approve Minutes: October 29, 2025~~

IRENE WRENNER made a motion, seconded by Georgia, to remove the minutes of October 29, 2025, from Consent Items. Motion passed 14-0.

6. APPROVE MINUTES: OCTOBER 29, 2025

Ms. Wrenner offered corrections to the names of the individuals who seconded various items. The document will be updated and discussed at the next meeting. Ms. Hill-Fleury encouraged all members to send potential corrections to Ms. Booker prior to the start of the meeting.

IRENE WRENNER made a motion, seconded by **KEN SIGNORELLO**, to table the minutes of October 29, 2025. Motion passed 14-0.

7. REQUESTS FOR ABATEMENT

a. Wendy Hoffman (Estate Executor), Carl Hoffman, -request to abate sewer, water, utility, or service charges caused by circumstances that were difficult to foresee or outside of the person's control. 24 V.S.A. § 1535(a)(10).

Ms. Hoffman said that this request is for unforeseen water and sewer usage in her deceased father's townhouse. Her brother had been living in the home and moved out in the beginning of September. After the final bill was received, a plumber revealed that furnace valves were not working correctly, allowing water to continually flow. There was no evidence inside the property that a leak was present. She is requesting the overage amount reduced to a more typical rate. The leak issue was not the responsibility of the HOA. The plumber rerouted the line into the rafters to repair it. The average monthly water bill was around \$240/quarter, and the amount was around three times as high when the final bill was issued. Ms. Hoffman said that, had she known that this issue was occurring, she would have fixed it. Ms. Hill-Fleury said that the Board would enter deliberations and will notify Ms. Hoffman of the results.

b. Bryan Cairns, dba Champlain oil Company- request to abate taxes in which there is a clear or obvious error. 24. V.S.A. §1535(a)(4).

Mr. Cairns said that he is the owner of Champlain Oil Company. The company has owned 38 Jericho Road for many years, and, upon listing the property for sale, he realized that there was a discrepancy in the size of the lot on the tax bill. He is requesting an abatement between the actual and billed size of the lot and presented calculations for such. The property has been taxed at 1.58 acres and is .94 acres. The applicant is requesting an abatement of \$11,676.11. Ms. Black said that she is confused as to how this error was made. Ms. Lemnah said that the property was subdivided in 1988. When the reassessment was completed in 2005, the incorrect figures were given for the property size. She presented this as a part of the errors and omissions that were to the Selectboard. Mr. Cairns said that he thought that he owned the amount of acreage specified on the bill. He is requesting the difference from 12 years, not 20 years of incorrect property value. Ms. Wrenner said that she is concerned about granting a refund based on this year's tax rate, as it varies over the years. Mr. Cairns said that he has given all bills to an accountant for this purpose. Ms. Smith questioned why only 12 years was requested to be refunded when 19 years was in error. Mr. Cairns said that he only has records for 12 years, not 19. Ms. Black said that she is concerned that the town is taxing two different people for the same space.

7. DELIBERATION

BETSY DUNN made a motion, seconded by REY GAROFANO, to enter deliberative session. Motion passed 14-0.

BETSY DUNN made a motion, seconded by ERIK POST, to exit deliberative session. Motion passed 14-0.

BETSY DUNN made a motion, seconded by KEN SIGNORELLO, to deny the abatement request from Wendy Hoffman (Estate Executor). Motion passed 12-2, with ALYSSA BLACK and CYNTHIA SEIVWRIGHT dissenting.

Reason provided: It is the homeowner's responsibility to maintain the equipment within the home.

Ms. Lemnah left the meeting.

REY GAROFANO made a motion, seconded by LEONORA DODGE, to approve the full abatement request for Bryan Cairns, dba Champlain oil Company.

AMMENDMENT by BETSY DUNN that the applicant cannot take this issue to court. No vote, amendment failed.

AMMENDMENT by KEN SIGNORELLO to limit the abatement to the most recent six years of the requested amount. Not seconded, motion failed.

Vote: Motion passed 12-0.

8. ADJOURNMENT

BETSY DUNN made a motion, seconded by MARGARET SMITH, to adjourn the meeting.

Discussion: Mr. Chamberlin asked if it is within the Board's purview to create specific standards for water and sewer abatements. Ms. Hill-Fleury said that she is unsure but will check with the state.

Vote: Motion passed 13-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Darby Mayville,
Recording Secretary