

**Town of Plainfield Board of Abatement Hearing**  
**August 6, 2024**  
**149 Main St. Plainfield, VT and via Zoom**  
**Minutes - Draft**

**Agenda:**

- Election of Board of Abatement Chair per 24 V.S.A. § 1534
- Consideration of properties damaged in the July 10, 2024 flood
- Adjourn

**Present:** Plainfield Board of Abatement members Town Clerk/Treasurer Bram Towbin; Listers Sandy Ross and Kayle Hope; Justices of the Peace Dale Bartlett, Steven Farnham, Peter Young, and Peter Youngbaer; and Select Board member Karl Bissex. Also in attendance was Assistant Town Clerk Kristin Brosky.

At 4:05 pm Sandy Ross announced that this is an abatement hearing for damage to property from the July 10, 2024 flood.

Election of Board of Abatement chair per 24 V.S.A. § 1534:

**Ross nominated Peter Youngbaer to be Chair of this hearing. Dale Bartlett seconded. All Board of Abatement members, except Bram Towbin who had briefly stepped out of the room, voted in favor.** Youngbaer accepted the responsibility of chairing the hearing.

Board of Abatement members in attendance introduced themselves. Youngbaer noted that there was a quorum. He explained that typically the Board of Abatement receives letters of request for abatement but, with the overwhelming damage to properties, the Listers had prepared a spreadsheet list of many damaged properties to consider for abatement. He asked Ross to describe the spreadsheet. She stated that some property owners had reached out asking for abatement following the flood, even before tax bills were mailed. She stated that she had reached out for advice from the Secretary of State's Office and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) and had been told that the law states that properties must be taxed on the condition of the property as of April 1<sup>st</sup>. She explained that in setting the tax rate she and Town Treasurer Bram Towbin had attempted to make up for the potential loss of tax revenue from abatement of damaged properties. She explained that she had recommended this hearing to be held prior to the due date for the first tax payment to offer some relief to property owners who had suffered property damage in the flood.

Towbin rejoined the meeting and Peter Young also joined the meeting. Young stated he is requesting abatement for his property that was damaged in the flood. Youngbaer stated that, according to the Secretary of State, Young may participate in the hearing, needing only to recuse himself from voting on his own abatement.

Ross stated that normally a letter from property owners requesting abatement is necessary, but shared that the State Tax Department and VLCT informed her that it is permissible to compile a list of properties given the devastation from the flood and that the Board of Abatement can abate for properties that have not made a request. Ross reviewed the spreadsheet, sharing that the Town will be reimbursed by the State for any school taxes lost in abatement.

Steven Farnham and Youngbaer pointed out mistakes on the spreadsheet. Towbin provided copies of the 2024 tax bills to Ross. Farnham asked if the law allowed property owners to appeal their abatement. Ross explained that the law states the Board of Abatement is permitted to abate. Youngbaer read aloud from the 2014 Secretary of State's Guidebook which states that decisions of the Board of Abatement are final, there is no appeals process, however if the taxpayer feels the Board of Abatement has abused its discretion an appeal may be made on those grounds. Youngbaer pointed out that in 2025 property owners would have the opportunity to appeal their property value based on the currently underway Townwide reappraisal. Farnham asked if the damage to a property should change, would that property be reconsidered. Ross explained that changes would be considered in the following year. Dale Bartlett asked if individual FEMA reimbursements are paid to property owners or to the Town. Ross stated that the State of Vermont will offer the Town reimbursement for school taxes lost to abatement. Ross and Kayle Hope worked to correct mistakes on the spreadsheet. Farnham asked if any of the property owners on the spreadsheet list had provided input. Ross stated many had requested abatement. She stated that she had not visited all of the properties. She stated she had worked with Lister Gary Smith to determine degree of damage to properties. Youngbaer clarified that if an individual property owner's abatement amount is greater than the amount due for the first tax payment that the remainder will be applied to the second tax payment due in November. Karl Bissex asked if properties will be taxed at full value for the 100 days between April 1, 2024 and July 10, 2024 with the remainder of the year taxed at the abated value; this was confirmed. He asked if appraisers performing the Townwide reappraisal will revisit homes that suffered flood damages. Ross confirmed this. Ross stated that letters of abatement would be mailed out to property owners within 10 days. Board of Abatement members reviewed the properties on the spreadsheet list. Ross realized further amendments were needed and worked with Hope to make these changes. Board of Abatement members reviewed the final amended figures.

Peter Young left the meeting.

Consideration of properties damaged in the July 10, 1024 flood:

Youngbaer called for a motion. **Farnham moved to abate property taxes for the following property owners in the following amounts:**

<b>McGauran</b>	<b>35 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$561.22</b>
<b>Casey</b>	<b>60 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$1,625.14</b>
<b>Grimaldi</b>	<b>65 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$3,222.12</b>
<b>Henry</b>	<b>99 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$2,175.53</b>
<b>Kishishita</b>	<b>100 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$2,405.21</b>
<b>Cady</b>	<b>118 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$4,000.50</b>
<b>Abell</b>	<b>270 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$1,777.79</b>
<b>Hardy</b>	<b>652 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$112.68</b>
<b>Gray</b>	<b>1034 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$1,516.52</b>
<b>Hull</b>	<b>1246 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$1,261.22</b>
<b>Cochran</b>	<b>1735 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$793.92</b>
<b>Winthrop</b>	<b>2366 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$158.77</b>
<b>Row</b>	<b>2514 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$117.01</b>
<b>Flood</b>	<b>2996 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$457.21</b>
<b>Pope</b>	<b>3316 Brook Rd</b>	<b>\$303.36</b>
<b>Stover</b>	<b>10 Hudson Ave</b>	<b>\$3,137.40</b>
<b>Gray</b>	<b>23 Hudson Ave</b>	<b>\$1,588.31</b>
<b>Young</b>	<b>36 Hudson Ave</b>	<b>\$1,438.79</b>
<b>Edelstein</b>	<b>48 Hudson Ave</b>	<b>\$78.27</b>
<b>Ziegler</b>	<b>641 Rec Field Rd</b>	<b>\$442.04</b>
<b>Sahba</b>	<b>50 Mill St</b>	<b>\$314.19</b>
<b>Bradley</b>	<b>64 Mill St</b>	<b>\$2,463.72</b>
<b>Pl Brook House</b>	<b>96 Mill St</b>	<b>\$6,051.18</b>
<b>Gerstman</b>	<b>107 Mill St</b>	<b>\$2,242.70</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>147 Martin Mdw Rd</b>	<b>\$184.18</b>
<b>Meisner</b>	<b>1495 Coburn Rd</b>	<b>\$1,126.77</b>

**For a grand total of \$39,555.75. Ross seconded.** Youngbaer opened the floor to discussion.

Towbin acknowledged that the abatement process does not pass judgement on the extent of damage but rather follows a set of rules to determine abatement amounts. Ross suggested that abatement letters to property owners should indicate that the abatement process followed the law. She also stated that property owners with flood damage who were not included on this list of abatements may still request abatement. Youngbaer added that there is no deadline on abatement. Youngbaer suggested this be announced at an upcoming Select Board meeting. Bissex requested that this topic be added to the agenda for the next Select Board meeting on August 12, 2024. Youngbaer asked for clarification that amended figures on the spreadsheet prepared by Ross and

Hope were correct. Ross confirmed. Towbin noted that many properties being considered for abatement are also on the Town Water and Sewer system. Farnham raised a process question, asking if this subject pertained to the motion. Youngbaer stated it did not. Ross called for a vote on the motion. Youngbaer called for further discussion of the motion and seeing none, called for a vote. **The motion carried unanimously.** Youngbaer asked the Listers to send out the appropriate letters with the appropriate corrections.

Youngbaer noted that it is under the Board of Abatements jurisdiction to grant abatement on Water and Wastewater charges. Ross stated that the bills had just been mailed and shared that they only included the minimum fee due to there being no meter readings.

Adjourn:

**Farnham made a motion to adjourn. Ross seconded. Youngbaer called for a vote. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kristin Brosky, Assistant Town Clerk.