

Skowhegan Board of Assessors  
Minutes  
Regular Meeting  
June 26, 2020

Present: John F. Grohs, Chairman  
Bonnie A. Baker, Vice Chairman  
Harvey Austin, Jr.

Assessor's Agent: William "Bill" Van Tuinen  
Asst. Assessor: Leisa D. Emery-Burns

Others Present: Jeff Provencal

**I. Call to order:**

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 by Chairman John Grohs.

**II. Minutes to be approved and signed:**

1. January 16, 2020, Regular Meeting:

Bonnie Baker made a motion to approve and sign the minutes as written, seconded by Harvey Austin. – Vote 3 yes – 0 no

**III. Items by the Public:** None

**IV. Unfinished Business:** None

**V. New Business:**

1. The Shed Self Storage, Map 27, Lot 32, abatement request \$30,000:  
Bill Van Tuinen explained this property is located at 9 Center St. Jeff Provencal is the owner. The entire first floor is unusable; it needs a lot of work and repair. It is basically gutted and not fit for living in, it is a wreck. The second floor is occupied by the owner's daughter.

Bill recommends an abatement for the condition of the home and the lack of livability on the first floor. Bill recommends an abatement in the amount of \$14,100 in value, which is \$243.08 in taxes.

Jeff Provencal said his biggest concern was the foundation in the back of the barn, he stated it has to be rebuilt. The barn structure is okay, but the foundation base in the back is bad, the water has gotten to it.

Bill said the value of the whole barn is only \$3,500 in value.

Harvey Austin asked how Jeff felt about Bill's recommendation of \$14,100 in value reduction.

Jeff Provencal stated that abatement is acceptable.

Harvey Austin made a motion to grant the abatement as recommended, seconded by Bonnie Baker. – Vote 3 yes – 0 no

2. Central Street Studios, Map 9, Lot 25, abatement request based on purchase price:

Bill Van Tuinen explained this property was purchased recently for \$300,000 and we had it valued at \$538,000. The property is located at 28 Research Drive. The owner has had a heating system leak that happened in February of 2020 and that will be addressed for the upcoming tax commitment, but is not relevant for this abatement because it happened after April 1, 2019. This abatement is based strictly on sales. Bill said he looked at a couple of sales, one being the Skills building that is near this property and the Franklin Somerset Credit Union sale that is just over the town line in Madison on the East Madison Road. Bill reviewed the sales and the subject property.

Bill recommends reducing the value to \$400,000 which would be an abatement of \$138,000 in value; \$2,379.12 in taxes.

Harvey Austin asked what Bill was going to have for a value on it for the upcoming year.

Bill stated he has a value of \$277,000 on it for the 20-21 year, because of the water damage on April 1, 2020.

Harvey Austin asked if the owner was asking for the abatement because of the damages.

Bonnie Baker stated that it sounds like the abatement would be based on sales, and the water damage would be for the upcoming tax bill.

Bill said it was unclear if the owner was asking for the water damage for the abatement or not, but the damage is not relevant for the abatement request because the damage was after April 1, 2019.

John Grohs asked if we would be revisiting the property after the damages were fixed.

Bill said we would look at the property again for April 1, 2021.

Bonnie Baker made a motion to approve the recommended abatement in the amount of \$138,000 in value, which is \$2,379.12, seconded by John Grohs. – Vote 3 yes – 0 no

3. Central Maine Septic & Portable Toilet Rentals, Map 23, Lot 71A,  
abatement request: unspecified

Bill Van Tuinen said this property sold in December 2018 for \$45,000. The value is \$49,300. This property is located right behind The Big Apple. The house is uninhabited and there is a garage door located in the back for storage. The whole lot is used for the storage of portable toilets for the business.

Bill recommends no abatement.

Harvey Austin asked if Bill thought this property had the same value as Jeff Provencal's, when Jeff has someone living in the upstairs and this property is not livable. Harvey stated we just reduced Jeff's down to \$27,100 with part of it being livable.

There was a discussion on the condition of the property and what it was purchased for and what it is being used for at this time. It was also discussed if the building has gone beyond repair what it will cost to get it torn down.

Harvey stated that he feels this property is not livable and Harvey feels it should at least receive the same abatement as Jeff Provencal's. Harvey made a motion to grant an abatement in the amount of \$14,100. The motion died for lack of a second.

Harvey asked if anyone had seen this property located at 11 South Street.

Bonnie Baker said she has been by, but has not been in.

John Grohs said he has never been in the property.

Bill Van Tuinen said if the Board would like to table this abatement request, Bill will do an interior inspection if possible.

Bonnie Baker made a motion to table this abatement request so that Bill Van Tuinen can do an interior inspection, seconded by Harvey Austin. – Vote 3 yes – 0 no

4. Nancy R. M. Bussiere, Map 9, Lot 12, abatement request: \$3,600

Bill Van Tuinen explained this property is located on 150 Stevens Road. The stable that was valued at \$3,600 in value was removed in November of 2018.

Bill recommends granting the abatement in the amount of \$3,600 value, which is \$62.06 in taxes.

Harvey Austin made a motion to approve the abatement as recommended, seconded by Bonnie Baker. – Vote 3 yes – 0 no

5. Whit's End request not to be taxed for Personal Property:

Bill Van Tuinen said this is not an abatement request, but it is a request to not tax personal property for the upcoming taxes.

Bill explained we have received an email from Whitney Cunliffe stating the restaurant was closed on December 22, 2019 for renovations. They were fully ready to open in April but due to the Coronavirus and the new restrictions mandated by the State they did not believe it would be profitable to open yet. They stated since their business will now be closed for over a full year, they are requesting not to be taxed personal property for the business during the period the restaurant is not in operation.

Bill said if the business was closed permanently, he would have no problem not taxing the personal property, but they have just chosen not to open at this time because it isn't profitable. Bill said many other restaurants in town have been staying open and making sacrifices to serve their customers. Bill said he recommends that we tax the personal property as usual. Bill said he is bringing it to the Board because he wants the Board to weigh in on this decision.

Harvey Austin asked how much are we talking in value and taxes.

Leisa Emery-Burns stated we are assessing Whit's End for a value of \$47,700 in value, which would have been \$822.35 in taxes.

Harvey Austin stated that some of the business' that are staying open are getting help from the federal government. Whit's End has chosen not to go that route and just stay closed.

John Grohs asked if we know for sure whether he is getting or not getting any government funds.

Bill said he feels it is irrelevant.

Bonnie Baker stated that some business' have chosen to do take out only, some have temporarily closed, some are now doing dine in; how do you pick and choose.

Harvey Austin said you take them up as they come to the Board with a request.

John Grohs stated the subject is also up for sale.

Harvey Austin asked if there are any other restaurants closed.

Bonnie Baker said on April first there were other restaurants closed, but some are partially open.

Leisa Emery-Burns asked John Grohs if there was a motion on Whit's End.

Harvey Austin made a motion to give Whit's End half off. There was no second.

Bonnie Baker asked if Whit's End participates in BETE or BETR.

Bill Van Tuinen stated Whit's End is not eligible for BETE.

Leisa Emery-Burns stated that he is eligible to participate in the BETR program.

Bonnie Baker asked if a motion was needed to just continue to tax.

Bill Van Tuinen stated that he technically doesn't need a motion, but he would like the Board to make a motion on this issue.

Bonnie Baker made a motion to continue to tax until the business is closed permanently, seconded by John Grohs. – Vote 2 yes – 1 no (Harvey Austin)

**VI. Chairman's Items:**

John Grohs said that we will need another meeting to bring up the item that was tabled.

Bill Van Tuinen said the way he understands things from recent conversations with the Town Manager, the intention is to hold town meeting in September and commit the taxes quickly after that. Many figures are still up in the air, such as revenue sharing. Hopefully those numbers will become available by the time Town meeting takes place.

Usually we try to have one meeting to go over the amounts to be raised and one meeting to commit the taxes. We may need to do this in one meeting this year.

We will have to have another meeting to go over the item we tabled.

**VII. Member's Items:** None

**VIII. Assessor's Agents Items:** None

**IX. Asst. Assessor's Items:** None

**X. Adjournment:**

Bonnie Baker made a motion to adjourn, seconded by John Grohs – Vote 3 yes –  
0 no

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 PM

The Skowhegan Board of Assessors

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John F. Grohs, Chairman

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Bonnie A. Baker, Vice Chairman

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Harvey Austin, Jr.

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