

Town of Swanton Grievance Hearing June 26, 2024

Present: Jim Pratt, David Horton, Amy Giroux, Kevin Nichols-Town of Swanton Listers

1) Parcel Id: HV0020-10:15 am

Malaina Collins (HV0020), Logan Lesperance (HV0090) & Brendan Long (HV0110) all came as a group to dispute their property values. They also provided letters from homeowners of HV0032, HV0050.

Ms. Collins stated when she purchased her property, she knew there was an easement for her property but stated it was not disclosed at the time how large it is that is owned by Vermont Gas. This is the reason for all property owners grieving their property values, loss of usable land due to Vermont Gas easements.

Ms. Lesperance stated he was not even told there was a Vermont Gas pipeline before purchasing his property, it was not on any closing documents or blueprints drawings of the property. Dig Safe was also unaware of a Vermont Gas line until they were told. They were made aware of the line by Green Mountain Power employees.

Mr. Long stated his closing documents or title search does not mention the Vermont Gas pipeline only easements for other utilities and they refer to a HOA that is not set up. They were led to believe the easement was 25' from the railroad and covered all utilities. Mr. Pratt shared how they determine values on a private drive. Mr. Pratt also shared the value of the land Vermont Gas pays for the use of the right-of-way's they own in Swanton. Mr. Pratt stated these concerns are something that should be consulted with their attorneys the Town has no control over what is disclosed.

Mr. Horton will also research and provide the homeowners with the agreement between Michael Allard and Vermont Gas for the development plans.

2) Parcel Id: CR0020-10:45 am

Kathy Kohlhaas came to express her concern for her property values increasing more than she anticipated. Ms. Kohlhaas asked for clarification on homestead and house site value. Mr. Horton explained the difference between the two. Mr. Horton also explained the difference in the value of wetland and usable land.

3) Parcel Id: MV0099-11:45 am

Alan Pelletier came to find out the reason for his property value increase due to vinyl siding and a rec room in the basement. Mr. Horton said in the previous assessment it was listed as hardboard siding from the 2006 assessment. Mr. Pelletier said the home has been vinyl sided twice. The rec room was done before his purchase, all he has done is paint. Mr. Horton asked for clarification of what is in the basement.

Mr. Pratt said it also is unknown if in 2006 if the assessors went inside the home. These additions to property value are due to the sale and the listers can view the listing and

add finished living space to the lister card therefore increasing the homes value. Mr. Horton explained how values are determined.

4) Parcel Id: HI2017-1:00 pm

Heather McDonald came to discuss her home's value. The letter states there are added fireplaces, partition basement, entrance and outdoor patio. Ms. McDonald said all of these items were previous to her purchasing the home. Mr. Horton explained these were not known to the Town before the sale. Ms. McDonald said she lived in the home 7 years ago and all these items were there then. Mr. Horton said the Town's info is based on the 2006 appraisal; these are added after sales. Ms. McDonald said her insurance company has required her to cap the fireplaces and they will not be used. This home will be a rental unit.

5) Parcel Id: GM0007-1:15 pm

David Williams came because he received a letter stating he added a front deck & back deck. He did add a back deck smaller than he received a permit for, but the front deck has been there since the house was built in 2007. Mr. Horton said when they reviewed the cost sheet for the home it did not include porches, therefore they were not charged for them. This was discovered when they went to review the porch he received for the new deck. Therefore, he has not paid taxes on the existing porches for the last 13 years.

6) Parcel Id: YO0013-3:00 pm Richford Health Center

Kathy Benoit & Amanda Combs gave the listers a printout from the Vermont Statute that states federally qualified health centers are exempt from property taxes.

The believe the health center and retail pharmacy should be tax exempt. They have federal rules and regulations they must follow that other businesses do not have to do. For example, see people even if they don't pay their bill. Ms. Combs stated if they didn't step up and take over the pharmacy it would have been shut down. They had to gain federal approval to purchase the pharmacy from Health Services & Resource Administration. Mr. Pratt would like to see this approval. This can be found on Guidestar.com.

They provide medical, dental and pharmacy services that would not be available without them. They employ over 60 employees in Swanton.

Mr. Pratt stated it is his belief that if you go into the retail business you should be treated like any other retailer that makes a profit, selling for a profit and paid for by insurance companies. Therefore, they pay taxes on the pharmacy. They are governed by a board of directors. They do not feel they have the support of the Town of Swanton for what they give.