

Town of Stratton
Board of Listers
June 17, 2020

The Board of Listers met as warned at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 17, 2020 at the Stratton Town Office to hear Grievances of Assessments for the 2020 Grand List.

Present: Listers – Kent Young, Candie Bernard and Beth Liller; and Assessor, Gary Fournier of Brett Purvis and Assoc..

The following Grievances were submitted in writing prior to 10:00am on June 17, 2020 and, therefore, legally eligible to be considered:

- 1) At 10:05am, John Kelly was present to grieve the assessment of his property at Treetop 5A Beechwood Dr. (0800043.1BC05A) assessed at \$741,700.00. Mr. Kelly recently purchased this unit for \$590,000.00 and he presented various recent sales of similar units. He left the meeting at 10:15am.
- 2) At 10:15am, Kellie D’Elia Laskin was present to grieve the assessment of her property at 304 W. Jamaica Rd. (1200020), which is assessed at \$183,900.00. She and Kevin Coffman Bopp purchased this property in January 2020 for \$90,000.00. She admitted that this was not an arms-length sale, as she had been renting for a few years and the owner at that time, Greg Hoffmann, had agreed to sell it to her. She did, however, point out sales of similar properties nearby that sold for less than their assessed value. Ms. D’Elia Laskin left the meeting at 10:25am.

With no appointments until 11:00am, the Listers and Assessor reviewed written grievances for the following parcels:

- 3) Doulis, Cesar and Vesselina, owners of 28 Canedy Rd. (1200042), currently assessed at \$115,700.00, request a reassessment to the recent sale price of \$107,500.00.
- 4) Downtown Special Situations Holdings, LLC – Trustee Mark Rubin, owner of Treetop 5C Beechwood Dr. (0800043.1BC05C) currently assessed at \$810,100.00. He provided sales data of comparable parcels and believes the assessment should be reduced to \$587,500.00 accordingly. The Listers noted that last year, similar units that were grieved had been reduced to \$725,000.00.
- 5) ECT, LLC, trustee Duncan Tenney owner of 39 Acer Rd. (0800027) had submitted a grievance that he had sold the lot for more than what his assessment had been reduced (\$24,500.00). He also seemed to question why his property was assessed at \$357,200.00 before the sale. The Chair of the Listers noted for the record that the existing lot that he had sold out of his property, by Town policy, had been considered as backland and assessed at a lower value per acre than a primary building lot acre, consistent with all such contiguous, undeveloped parcels throughout town. The assessed value of that acreage was simply removed from his assessment – the sale-value had no bearing on the previous assessment of that contiguous land, and it has no affect on the value of the remaining land and property.
- 6) At 11:00am, Attorney Matthew Samuelson, as agent, called in and was placed on speaker-phone to discuss a Grievance submitted by Herbert and Susan Myers, present owners of 219 North Brookwood Rd. (0301018), acting for The Management Trust FBO Hugh Bennett, the owner on April 1, 2020 and assessed at \$1,859,900.00. The Listers accepted all grievance information submitted regarding this property. Attorney Samuelson stated that the owners request a reduction to the sale value \$1,325,000.00, which had been under contract before April 1, 2020. He also had submitted documentation showing that the courts support such a reduction. Following the conversation regarding the property, the Listers explained to Mr. Samuelson that a decision will be forthcoming in approximately one week. The conversation ended at 11:10am.
- 7) At 11:10am, Helen Nault, owner, with her husband, John, of 354 Mountain Rd. (0800048), assessed at \$1,100,000.00, was present to request a reduction of her assessment. She presented an appraisal recently completed for refinancing of their property, completed by Brian Graham, which placed a value of \$978,000.00 on the property. She believes that this was even too high

and thought her property should be compared to other town properties, such as 127 Canedy Rd., 33 Municknung Rd., and 695 Rte 100. The Listers agreed to have the assessor review these comparables, as well as the submitted appraisal, and said that a decision should be available in about a week. At 10:25am Ms. Nault left the meeting.

At this time, the Board continued consideration of written grievances.

- 8) Gaskill, Donald and Kimberly, owners of Slopeside A4C, Shattarack Rd. (0700006.010A0C4), assessed at \$519,000.00. They recently paid only \$440,000.00 for this unit and asked that the assessment be reduced accordingly.
- 9) Mountain Ridge Condominium Owners' Assoc. representing all owners of quarter-share units (0302033 through 0302035) – seven units divided into quarter-shares – each unit currently assessed at \$200,800.00. Their request is to reduce values of each unit to \$140,000.00, based on a sale of one quarter-share at \$35,000.00 within the last year, with other active listings all less than \$40,000.00.
- 10) Pizzi, Matthew, owner of 11B Balsam Corner, Treetop (0800043.4BL11B), assessed at \$647,100.00. He believes that recent sales of similar units indicate a value of \$600,000.00.
- 11) Bailey, Jeffery and Deborah, owners of 16 Sawmill Rd. (0301056), assessed at \$1,220,600.00. They request that it be reduced to the sale price of \$1,080,000.00.
- 12) Plaut, Elaine, owner of 62B Snowbridge Rd. (0301029.062B), assessed at \$1,088,500.00. She stated in her letter that the neighboring unit recently sold for \$800,000.00 and believes her unit should be reduced to this value.
- 13) Puchtler, Shanta, owner of 820 Mountain Rd. and all properties on Snowy Pond Rd. (1200010, 1200026.1, 1200026.2, and 1200026.3), assessed at \$3,632,400.00 total. His letter states that he believes the value should be reduced to the sale values of each property [reflected on the Property Transfer Tax Returns submitted for each property in the sale] and furthermore, it should be reduced by approx. \$500,000.00 of the Personal Property included in the overall sale. The Chair stated that our routine has been that Personal Property is considered in accordance with the amount of Personal Property declared in each of the PTTRs, as there the purchaser delineates how much is paid for Real Property and how much is paid for Personal Property. The Real Property amount is what the state will use in regard to the sales study for the Town, where the assessed value is compared to the sale value.
- 14) Serko, Jonathan, owner of 144B Sun Bowl Ridge Rd. (0800045.120144B), assessed at \$1,020,700.00. He believes his property is over-assessed due to various listings and sales of similar properties in this complex, one as low as \$699,000.00. He continued by stressing the impact of the current COVID-19 crisis on market values.
- 15) Silva, Thomas and Ellen, owners of 500 West Jamaica Rd. (1200034 and 1200035), assessed at \$216,900.00 for both parcels combined. They submitted an appraisal of their property completed by Green Mountain Appraisals of \$180,000.00 and request a reduction of their assessment to this amount.

Following the review of all submitted grievances for the year, Gary Fournier stated that it will take him some time to review and develop his recommendations for each grievance. The Listers agreed to meet again next week; therefore, At 1:30pm, Candie Bernard moved to adjourn the meeting to 10:00am on June 24, 2020 at the Stratton Town Office, at which time the meeting will resume to consider the Assessor's recommendation.

June 24, 2020, 10:00am: The Listers reconvened the meeting. Kent Young called the meeting to order. Present: Listers - Kent Young, Candie Bernard and Beth Liller. Assessor, Gary Fournier called in to discuss his recommendations to date. He has not yet completed a review of all properties that were grieved.

His recommendations are as follows:

- 1) Kelly, John, 5A Beechwood Dr. (0800043.1BC05A) previously assessed at \$741,700.00 – reduce to **\$625,500.00**, which is an average of recent sales of similar properties.
- 2) Doulis, Cesar and Vesselina, 28 Canedy Rd. (1200042), previously assessed at \$115,700.00 - reduce to **\$108,600.00**.
- 3) Downtown Special Situations Holdings, LLC – Trustee Mark Rubin, Treetop 5C Beechwood Dr. (0800043.1BC05C) previously assessed at \$810,100.00 – reduce to **\$640,700.00**, which is an average of recent sales of similar units.
- 4) ECT, LLC, trustee Duncan Tenney, 39 Acer Rd. (0800027) assessed at \$332,700.00. As previously discussed, the existing lot that he had sold out of his property, by Town policy, had been considered as backland and assessed at a lower value per acre than a lot with a primary building lot upon it, consistent with all such contiguous, undeveloped parcels throughout town. The assessed value of that acreage was simply removed from his assessment – the sale-value had no bearing on the previous assessment of that contiguous land, and it has no affect on the value of the remaining land and property; therefore, the Assessor recommends no reduction - that the assessment should stay at **\$332,700.00**.
- 5) Myers, Herbert and Susan, 219 North Brookwood Rd. (0301018), acting for The Management Trust FBO Hugh Bennett, the owner on April 1, 2020, and previously assessed at \$1,859,900.00 – reduce to the sale value of **\$1,325,000.00**.
- 6) Nault, Helen and John, 354 Mountain Rd. (0800048), assessed at \$1,100,000.00. The Assessor stated that he had reviewed the appraisal submitted by the Naults and that this appraisal accounted for a gross living space of only 2500 sq. ft., as it did not account for the upper level of the house, nor did it account for the outbuilding. He believes if the appraisal had been done properly, it would have appraised the property at least at the Town’s current assessment, if not more. Additionally, the comparable properties provided for review had less square footage than the structure in question; therefore, the Assessor recommends no reduction – that the assessment remain at **\$1,100,000.00**.
- 7) Gaskill, Donald and Kimberly, Slopeside A4C, Shattarack Rd. (0700006.010A0C4), previously assessed at \$519,900.00 – reduce to **\$444,800.00**.
- 8) Mountain Ridge Condominium Owners’ Assoc. representing all owners of quarter share units (0302033 through 0302035) – seven units divided into quarter shares – each unit previously assessed at \$200,800.00. The Assessor recommends each share reduced to \$35,700.00 so that each unit is to be assessed at **\$142,800.00**.
- 9) Pizzi, Matthew, 11B Balsam Corner, Treetop (0800043.4BL11B), previously assessed at \$647,100.00 – reduce to **\$578,900.00**.
- 10) Bailey, Jeffery and Deborah, 16 Sawmill Rd. (0301056), previously assessed at \$1,220,600.00 – reduce to **\$1,088,200.00**.
- 11) Serko, Jonathan, 144B Sun Bowl Ridge Rd. (0800045.120144B), previously assessed at \$1,020,700.00. The Assessor recommends reducing the assessment to **\$915,000.00**, based on recent sales of similar units.
- 12) Silva, Thomas and Ellen, 500 West Jamaica Rd. (1200034 and 1200035), previously assessed at \$216,900.00 for both parcels combined. The Assessor recommends reducing the assessment to **\$184,900.00** by reducing the value of the backland due to access restrictions across the brook.

Gary Fournier stated that he needs more time to complete the remaining properties, for various reasons. The Board agreed to meet again next week; therefore, at 10:45am, Candie Bernard moved to adjourn the meeting to 10:00am on July 1, 2020, at the Stratton Town Office, at which time the meeting will resume to consider the Assessor’s remaining recommendations and to make decisions regarding these assessments.

July 1, 2020, 10:00am: The Listers' meeting reconvened. Kent Young called the meeting to order. Present: Listers - Kent Young, Candie Bernard and Beth Liller. Assessor, Gary Fournier called in to discuss the remaining recommendations.

- 13) Plaut, Elaine, 62B Snowbridge Rd. (0301029.062B), previously assessed at \$1,088,500.00. The Assessor said that the \$800,000.00 sale the owner used as a comparable occurred back in 2012. He looked at more recent sales and recommends reducing the assessment to **\$1,026,700.00**.
- 14) Puchtler, Shanta, 820 Mountain Rd. and all properties on Snowy Pond Rd. (1200010, 1200026.1, 1200026.2, and 1200026.3), previously assessed at \$3,632,400.00 total. The Assessor recommended reducing the above properties as follows: 1200010 – no change; 1200026.1 to \$179,300.00; 1200026.2 to \$952,000.00 and 1200026.3 to \$1,620,000.00.
- 15) D'Elia Laskin, Kellie and Coffman Bopp, Kevin, 304 W. Jamaica Rd. (1200020), previously assessed at \$183,900.00. Her purchase at \$90,000.00 was not arms-length, so the Assessor looked at sales of nearby properties that recently sold and, therefore recommends a reduction to **\$173,300.00**.

The Listers reviewed all of the above recommendations presented last week and this week to ensure that the board understands the Assessor's reasoning behind each of the recommendations.

Kent Young questioned the decision regarding Mr. Puchtler's properties. He recommended that the board consider reducing each of the four properties grieved to the sale-amount, as reflected on each Property Transfer Tax Return (PTTR). He noted that the PTTRs did not designate that Personal Property was paid for – the sale amounts all went toward Real Property. He again stated that Town precedent has been that Personal Property is considered in accordance with the amount of Personal Property declared on the PTTR, as this is what the purchaser declared to the VT Dept. of Taxes. Therefore, he recommended the following assessments, which are rounded to the nearest \$100.00 value: 1200026.1 at **\$143,300.00**; 1200010 at **\$103,300.00**; 1200026.3 at **\$1,598,500.00**; and 1200026.2 at **\$905,000.00** [A total of **\$2,750,100.00**].

The Chair then asked for a motion to approve the changes of these four parcels owned by Mr. Puchtler to the said amounts given above. Beth Liller so moved. Candie Bernard seconded – all concurred. Candie Bernard agreed to override each of the previous assessments in the VISION program to reflect these amounts.

The Chair then asked for a motion to approve all the above recommendations made by the Assessor, with the exception of the Puchtler properties already approved above. Candie Bernard so moved. Beth Liller seconded. All concurred, and the assessments were changed as given above.

Candie Bernard will incorporate the above changes and prepare the final Grand List to present to the Town Clerk. She will prepare the Results of Grievance notifications and send those out as well.

Candie Bernard moved to adjourn. Beth Liller seconded. All concurred and the meeting adjourned at 10:55am.

Minutes by:

David Kent Young

Kent Young, Chairman, Board of Listers