



***Town of Panton Chartered 1761***

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**Board of Abatement Meeting Minutes  
Monday, September 25, 2023**

In Attendance: Board of Abatement Chair Howard Hall, Board of Abatement Member Terease Boucher, Justice of the Peace (JP) Gretchen Bailey, JP Eileen Brennan; JP Paula Moore, Town Clerk & Treasurer Maggie McCormick

Via zoom: Stevie Morris, Michael Morris

- 1) Howard called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.
- 2) Additions/deletions to the agenda: None
- 3) Approval of the minutes of the May 22, 2023 Board of Abatement meeting
  - a. Tabled
- 4) Public comment : None
- 5) Tax Abatement Request Hearing
  - a) Howard read the purpose statement and requested the appellants state their names and address:

Stevie and Michael Morris  
500 Adams Ferry Road, Panton
  - b) Clerk swore in the group
  - c) Howard asked the appellants to tell the group about their abatement request.
    - i) Michael answered that during the recent reappraisal inspection of their property, the inspector has a copy of the lister card and asked Michael and Stevie about the basement. Noting the lister card shows a basement and the house at 500 Adams Ferry does not have one, the inspector advised them to request an abatement based on lister error.
  - d) Paula asked when Michael and Stevie purchased the property. Michael answered 11/6/2014.

- e) Paula asked when Michael and Stevie had become Panton residents. Michael answered 2019, but wanted to double check. Noted he moved here in April on 2108 and that they submitted 2018 income taxes returns to both New York and Vermont.
- f) Paula asked about the circumstances of the reduction in value in 2015 from \$682,700 to \$392,200. Micheal and Stevie answer that the property was in foreclosure and owned by credit union. Further, the property was unoccupied, the house was incomplete, and had been on the on market for two years. The siding was popping off and was rotting in places, a tree was growing through the house, there was only a crude construction staircase, and unfinished walls. He further noted that the bank from whom they attained a mortgage stipulated several property improvements as a condition of the loan and gave them a period of not longer than 90 days to make those improvements.
- g) At the time, Michael and Stevie were aware of several other potential buyers who walked away after seeing the house, as well as other competing bids when they made their bid.
- h) Michael stated that they had a friend, Adam Powers, an attorney represent them at the grievance hearing. The lister/s at the time set the value of the property at the price they paid for the house.
- i) Eileen asked the asking price: Michael and Stevie answered that asking price was never formally communicated to them. When they felt comfortable enough to make an offer, theirs was the highest. Eileen asked if an appraisal was done at the time. Michael and Stevie were unaware of an appraisal. They had a pre-purchase inspection done and said they might have the list of recommendations from that inspection.
- j) Paula asked about the reduction in the square footage of the house between 2012 and 2015. Stevie and Michael believed it was reclassification of a porch that was previously included as interior space.
- k) Paula stated that the reduction in value from 2012 to 2015 was a 40% reduction that they have been enjoying the tax break on the lower value for several years.
- l) Eileen asked again if an appraisal was done on behalf of their lender. Stevie and Michael were unaware of a bank appraisal.
- m) Stevie acknowledged everyone needs to pay their fair share and that the reappraisal process has been eye-opening and is glad the
- n) Eileen asked if they looked at other properties at the time to compare. Michael stated they didn't look at others and did not know what was happening in the real estate market. House was designed by Michael's deceased uncle.
- o) Clerk asked if they were aware of Vermont Homestead Declaration. Stevie and Michael answered "no," and the clerk informed them of the statute and advised them to file Homestead prior to October 15 deadline. They have paid the lower non-homestead rate since.
- p) Clerk asked what they were requesting—did they want all their overpaid taxes back from 2015 forward? Also noted that someone agreed to the result of their 2015

grievance. Micheal said he wasn't aware of a lister's card presented to him, but that Adam must have signed off on that. Michael stated the statute says there is no statute of limitations for abatement request.

- q) Howard asked if there were more questions for Stevie and Michael and if Stevie and Michael had more to say. Stevie thanked the Town for the effort put into the hearing and asked the board to let them know if they needed more information.
- r) Howard stated that the Board would meet in executive session at a future date and render a written decision within 30 days.

Maggie moved to suspend the meeting to another time. Paula seconded. All in favor; the meeting was suspended at 5:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maggie McCormick  
Town Clerk and Treasurer

DRAFT