

# **Committee to Review Real Property Assessment Functions Town of Norwich**

## **1. Introduction**

The Committee to Review Real Property Assessment Functions for the town of Norwich (“Lister Committee” or “Committee”) was appointed on July 6<sup>th</sup> to make recommendations to the Selectboard and Listers regarding the maintenance of the Grand List and the organization of the Listers’ office. The Committee received its final charge on July 28<sup>th</sup> and began its work in an initial meeting on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. A copy of the final charge and a listing of the members of the Committee can be found in the Appendix of this report (Appendices 1 & 2 respectively).

Over the past three months, the Lister Committee has held eight meetings. Additionally, Committee members collectively conducted 25 interviews, within Norwich and around the state of Vermont, to gain a better understanding of how Norwich maintains its Grand List and organizes its Listers’ office and how other towns have addressed these issues. Interviewees include the Director of Property Valuation and Review, professional assessors, current and former Norwich Listers, and Listers from towns around the state. A full listing of the individuals interviewed, the towns they are from, and their roles can be found in Appendix 3 of this report. Summary information on each town interviewed can be found in Appendix 4.

In formulating its recommendations, the Lister Committee considered a number of methods of maintaining the Grand List including the following:

- Periodic complete reappraisal,
- Rolling reappraisal,
- Statistical update,
- Partial reappraisal, and
- Adopting a change in permit process whereby a permit would be required for improvements that may increase the value of a home.

The Committee also considered several options for organizing the Listers’ office including hiring a:

- Full-time assessor as employee,
- Part-time assessor as employee,
- Full or part time clerk,
- Contract assessor, or
- Listers who do all the work required for maintenance of the Grand List.

The Lister Committee based its recommendations on the information it gathered during its interviews and upon pre-existing knowledge within the Committee. The Lister Committee feels that its recommendations best balance the competing interests to maintain the accuracy and equity of the Grand List with moderate costs.

## 2. The Committee's Recommendations

### *Maintenance of the Grand List*

- Complete a periodic town-wide reappraisal every four years.
- Divide the town into quadrants and gather data on 25% of the parcels in town each year so that information on every parcel will be updated at least every four years.

During the data gathering process, changes to parcel data would be documented and material changes could result in a change in assessed value. Any changes to the assessed value (because of material changes to a parcel) would be based upon the cost data generated at the most recent town-wide reappraisal.

### *Benefits*

- **Predictability & Stability:** People in town can count on a reliable schedule for the updating of information on all parcels every four years and on the town performing a town wide reappraisal every four years. The relatively brief period between each town wide reappraisal should keep the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) and Coefficient of Dispersion (COD) within desirable ranges. A general definition of the CLA and COD can be found in Appendix 5.<sup>1</sup>
- **Spreads out Cost and Work:** Data gathering is the most expensive and time consuming aspect of a town wide reappraisal. A rolling data gathering approach spreads out the work and expenses over four years.
- **Parcel data kept current:** The information on the town's parcels would be kept relatively current, improving the accuracy and equity of the Grand List.
- **Lower Cost:** Savings should be realized over time (after the first four year cycle) as the firm or individual gathering data becomes more familiar with the town.

### *Organization of the Listers' Office*

- Listers to develop policy and perform statutory duties only.
  - Paid an annual stipend
- Hire a contract assessor or a part time assessor.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) and Coefficient of Dispersion (COD) are measures used to compare market values with assessments based on three years of sales of real estate within a town (CLA) and equity within towns (COD). While they are useful measures, particularly over time (i.e. several years), care should be taken as they can provide misleading information.

- One to two days per week.
- Hire a Clerk.
  - 20 hours per week to full-time.

#### *Benefits*

- **Stability & Consistency:** The knowledge base would not be lost were a Lister or Listers to lose an election or resign.
- **Cost:** The Listers' office should realize savings relative to current budget levels. Savings could grow over time as there is a learning curve associated with data gathering and assessing a town.
- **Diminished real and/or perceived conflict of interest:** It is easier for a professional assessor to perform his or her work without any conflicts of interest and to be perceived by citizens of town as being impartial.
- **Expertise:** Professional assessors typically have more training and field experience than do Listers.

### **3. Summary of Job Descriptions & Responsibilities**

- **Listers:** Statutory duties including lodging the Grand List and policy, Grievances, BCA hearings.
- **Clerk:** Data input, transfers, filing, permitting information, mapping issues, current use duties, scheduling, tasks related to maintaining the office, central point of communication.
- **Assessor:** Site inspections, assessing changes to parcels (e.g., new construction or subdivisions), addressing exemptions, tracking and analyzing sales of property and reporting the same to state, maintaining an accurate data base, grievances, BCA hearings. In a reappraisal year: conduct a town-wide review, develop new land schedules, new cost tables, current use valuations.

The Committee recommends that the Clerk and Assessor report to the Town Manager (as required by Vermont statutes). Because the Listers' are ultimately responsible for signing off on the Grand List based on values the Assessor has developed, it is anticipated that the Listers and Assessor would meet on a regular basis when developing the Grand List. It would be critical that regular communication occur amongst all the parties involved. While the Clerk and Assessor would report directly to the Town Manager, the Town Manager should actively solicit feedback from the Listers' on the performance and activities of the Clerk and Assessor.

The divisions of responsibilities outlined above are only summaries of the recommended responsibilities of each role: Listers, Clerk, and Assessor. The

Committee recommends that the Listers and Town Manager collaborate to develop more complete job descriptions. It should be noted that there are aspects of the Clerk's roles that, while administrative in nature, would require some training and/or technical skills.

*Benefits*

- Clear responsibilities, division of tasks and clear line of reporting.
- Most hours performed by lower cost clerk. The hourly rate of a clerk is below that of a professional assessor.
- Expertise of assessor utilized for data gathering and assessing duties, not data input and administration.

**4. Lister Budget Information and other Selected Data of Towns Interviewed**

Data from the towns interviewed by the Committee shows that Norwich spends considerably more on its Listers budget than the other towns interviewed. The data suggests that there may be savings to be realized by implementing the recommended structure. It is possible that other organizational structures for the Listers' office could also yield savings but, in the Committee's opinion, its recommended structure best balances the accuracy and equity of the Grand List with moderate costs. Additional data from Norwich and the towns listed below can be found in Appendix 6 and 8

**Town Budget and Other Statistics of Towns Interviewed (2010 and/or 2011)**

<b>Town</b>	<b>Lister Budget</b>	<b>Taxable Parcels</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Lister Budget per Taxable Parcel</b>	<b>Grand List Value (\$millions)</b>	<b>Value per Parcel</b>
Norwich '10	\$ 108,111	1,542	3,544	\$ 70.11	\$ 779	\$ 505,043
Norwich '11	\$ 96,400	1,542	3,544	\$ 62.52	\$ 779	\$ 505,043
Charlotte	\$ 66,360	1,672	3,569	\$ 39.69	\$ 934	\$ 558,433
Dorset	\$ 37,154	1,474	2,036	\$ 25.21	\$ 718	\$ 487,330
Fairlee	\$ 30,406	651	1,000	\$ 46.71	\$ 204	\$ 312,871
Hartford	\$ 182,290	5,446	10,367	\$ 33.47	\$ 1,466	\$ 269,210
Hartland	\$ 27,800	1,546	3,223	\$ 17.98	\$ 443	\$ 286,461
Middlebury	\$ 57,974	2,640	8,496	\$ 21.96	\$ 802	\$ 303,652
Sharon	\$ 18,000	756	1,500	\$ 23.81	\$ 161	\$ 212,899
Woodstock	\$ 86,523	1,889	3,500	\$ 45.80	\$ 902	\$ 477,435

**Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) and Coefficient of Dispersion (COD) of**

**Towns Interviewed for 2009-2011**

<b>Town</b>	<b>CLA</b>			<b>COD</b>			<b>Last Town-wide Appraisal</b>
	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>	
Norwich	90.91	91.99	97.07	11.99	12.29	9.11	2004
Charlotte	99.22	100.24	100.85	9.00	8.20	8.64	2004
Dorset	101.32	95.16	95.52	17.11	13.03	11.37	2003
Fairlee	102.46	100.95	101.18	5.96	5.08	6.98	2004
Hartford	96.46	95.65	95.51	9.92	8.53	8.62	2007
Hartland	95.71	92.44	96.61	13.89	13.90	10.52	2005
Middlebury	84.63	81.96	85.58	14.20	13.83	13.43	2005
Sharon	68.29	67.96	68.24	17.90	13.48	15.63	2003
Woodstock	94.19	92.25	93.25	13.71	13.46	9.94	2002

**Cost comparison of Norwich 2011 and Charlotte 2011 Budgets with Town-wide Appraisal Costs**

Charlotte’s annual Listers budget includes all of the costs associated with a town-wide appraisal while Norwich’s 2010 & 2011 Lister budget numbers in the above chart do not include these costs. Charlotte spreads out its town-wide reappraisal costs over five years, collecting parcel data over four years and performing a town-wide reappraisal on the fifth year. To better compare the budgets of these two towns, which have similar populations, number of parcels, and socio-economic distribution, the data below adds 20% of Norwich’s \$175,000 town-wide appraisal budget to its 2011 Lister budget.

<b>Town</b>	<b>Lister Budget</b>	<b>Taxable Parcels</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Lister Budget/Parcel</b>	<b>CLA</b>	<b>COD</b>
Norwich	\$ 131,400	1,542	3,544	\$ 85.21	90.91	11.99
Charlotte	\$ 66,360	1,672	3,569	\$ 39.69	99.22	9.00

**5. Transition Period**

The current town budget year ends on June 30, 2012. The Committee believes that implementation of its recommendations should be considered for the next budgetary cycle commencing on July 1, 2012. The Listers and Selectboard should work to ensure that the transition does not negatively impact the town wide appraisal that is currently underway.

**6. Appendices**

- 6.1 Final Charge: Committee to Review Real Property Assessment Functions
- 6.2 Committee Members: Committee to Review Real Property Assessment Functions
- 6.3 Interviews Conducted by the Committee
- 6.4 Summary Information on Towns Interviewed by the Committee
- 6.5 Definition of Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) and Coefficient of Dispersion (COD)
- 6.6 Selected Data from Norwich and Towns Interviewed
- 6.7 Interview Transcripts
- 6.8 Graphs of CLA History for Towns Interviewed

# APPENDIX 1

## Charge for Committee to Review Real Property Assessment Functions Town of Norwich

### 1. Introduction

The Norwich Selectboard and Board of Listers are interested in a review of the function and process of developing and maintaining the Town Grand List. A total Town-wide reappraisal was done for the 1989 Grand List with an update in 1991. A Town-wide reappraisal was done in 2003 for the 2004 Grand List with an update in 2005. A contractor has been retained to complete a Town-wide reappraisal for the April 1, 2013 Grand List.

The Board of Listers is an elected Board with the responsibility to develop and maintain a grand list for the purposes of assessing real property taxes. The Selectboard recommends to Town Meeting a Town budget, which includes funds for the Board of Listers. Professional assistance for the Board of Listers to assist with developing and maintaining the Grand List requires the approval of the Selectboard after a recommendation of the Board of Listers. Other employees assisting the Board of Listers need the approval of the Town Manager.

The Board of Listers has worked to maintain equity and proportionality in the maintenance of the Grand List. Equity and proportionality relates to property owners paying their fair share of property taxes based on assessed values of property that are consistent with assessed values of other properties in town. With the passage of education funding Acts 60/68 the Common Level of Appraisal, which is an aggregate equalization ratio, has become a very important component in calculating education tax rates. The Common Level of Appraisal is used to achieve equity between towns.

There are three statistical measures of the equity and proportionality of a grand list. They are the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA), Coefficient of Dispersion (COD), and Price Related Differential (PRD).

In Vermont a town-wide reappraisal is required by the Vermont Department of Taxes, Property Valuation and Review (PVR) if the CLA drops below 80% or the COD exceeds 20%. The following values were provided by PVR to the Town on May 10, 2011.

CLA – 90.91%

COD – 11.58%

### 2. Statement of Purpose

The role of the Committee is to make recommendations to the Selectboard and Listers regarding options for the maintenance of the Grand List, the organization of the Listers' Office and the communication interfaces that make the processes transparent and useful to the public, including the efficiencies and cost effectiveness of the Listers activities.

### 3. Public Participation and Involvement

Public participation and involvement in the Committee's work is a high priority and the Committee shall conduct a minimum of three public forums, one at the beginning of the

process to review the scope of the Committee's work, one during the process to review the Committee's progress and one near the end of the process to review a draft of the Committee's report before submittal to the Selectboard and Listers.

#### **4. Membership**

The Committee shall consist of a minimum of five members, appointed by the Selectboard. The members should be a cross-section of the Town and bring to the Committee diverse interests and expertise. The Committee shall choose from its membership a chair and other positions as appropriate. The Committee may establish subcommittees to assist in carrying out its work.

#### **5. Meetings**

The Committee's meetings shall be held at a regular time and place when possible. The time and place of each meeting shall be made available and posted in the same manner as the Selectboard agenda and in compliance with Vermont's open meetings law. Draft minutes of meetings shall be available within five business days of any meeting.

#### **6. Committee Review and Analysis**

The Committee will determine what information needs to be gathered and reviewed. The Committee may obtain information from the Board of Listers, as needed, as well as reviewing other internal and external resources including information from Vermont Department of Taxes, Division of Property Valuation and Review and the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO). The two principal areas of study are the process for maintaining the Grand List and organization of the Listers' Office. The two areas of study are interrelated and the organization of the Listers' Office needs to be able to support the process for maintaining the Grand List. In conducting the study the Committee should consider, at least, the following.

##### **Grand List Maintenance**

- Periodic complete reappraisal
- Rolling reappraisal provided that the rolling reappraisal is completed within a 3-year timeframe
- Statistical update
- Partial reappraisal that results in changes in Grand List value to a substantial portion of the parcels in the municipality, and results in a significant change in total Grand List value over the prior year's total.
- Other Town ordinances and/or zoning by-laws that would assist in Grand List Maintenance, including requiring permits for improvements that may increase value but currently do not require a zoning permit.

##### **Options for the Organization of the Listers' Office**

- Full-time assessor as employee
- Part-time assessor as employee
- Job functions for assessor
- Full or part time clerk
- Contract assessor
- Listers do all the work required for maintenance of the Grand List.

The final report from the Committee should include a full discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each option considered, the financial costs and/or savings of adopting any of the options, a suggested organizational chart for each organizational option considered and the steps and schedule necessary to implement any recommended change.

**7. Final Report**

The final report from the Committee, including its findings and recommendations, should be presented to the Selectboard and Board of Listers on, or before, October 31, 2011.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Committee Members**

#### **Committee to Review Real Property Assessment Functions**

Lauren Girard Adams

Michael Cahoon

Adele Fulton

Dennis Kaufman

Buff McLaughry

Peter Milliken

William Schaffner

Dwight Sperry

Robert Spottswood

### Appendix 3

#### Lister Committee Interviews

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Role</b>
William Johnson		Director Property Valuation & Review
Bill Tobin		District Advisor Property Valuation & Review
Liz Blum	Norwich	Lister
Ernie Ciccotelli	Norwich	Lister
Jonathan Vincent	Norwich	Lister
Gerard Chapdelaine	Norwich	Former Lister
Steve Wheelock	Norwich	Former Norwich Assessor
Bill Krajewski	Norwich	Contract Assessor (Performing townwide appraisal)
Kay Gault	Charlotte	Lister
Heather Manning	Charlotte	Lister
Ed Clodfelter	Charlotte	Contract Assessor
Bob Giency	Dorset	Lister
Peter Trifari	Dorset	Lister
Margo Schoffstall	Dorset	Lister
Noel Walker	Fairlee	Lister
John Wetzel	Fairlee	Lister
Clarissa Holmes	Hartford	Assessor
Clyde Jenne	Hartland	Town Clerk & Former Lister
Bill Finger	Middlebury	Town Manager
William Benton	Middlebury	Contract Assessor
Beth Dow	Middlebury	Lister
Galen Mudgett	Sharon	Lister
Paul Wildasin	Woodstock	Lister
Carol Wood	Woodstock	Lister
Charlie Dagner	Woodstock	Lister

## Appendix 4

### Summary Information on the Towns Interviewed by the Committee

#### Charlotte:

Charlotte has a population of approximately 3,700 and 1,670 taxable parcels. The town is similar to Norwich in size and socio-economic makeup. It has a current Grand List Value of \$930 million and its average parcel value is modestly higher than that of Norwich because of its significant number of parcels on Lake Champlain. Charlotte employs a periodic town wide reappraisal model at a scheduled interval of five years. The scheduled town wide reappraisal could be done more or less frequently depending upon the dynamism of the real estate market. The town has also split up the town into four quadrants and it gathers data on one quadrant every year on a rolling basis. The town has hired a part-time contract appraiser that completes all of the data gathering and performs the scheduled town wide reappraisal. The Listers perform all of the administrative duties in the office with each Lister responsible for specific administrative duties. The Listers are paid an hourly rate of \$15/hour and work approximately 1,800 hours per year in aggregate. There is no clerk. Similar permitting system to Norwich. [The Lister Committee members that visited Charlotte feel that their process of maintaining the Grand List and their organization of the Listers office seemed to work well and at a good value. The CLA & COD statistics and modest budget numbers seem to support this sentiment.]

#### Dorset:

Dorset is located just north of the town of Manchester ,VT ( southwest region of the State) and the two towns have many socio- economic and recreation opportunities that are comparable to Norwich. The town has a population of 2,036 and a taxable parcel inventory of 1474 (about 50 commercial and 62 in Land Use). The town has second homes mixed with farms, village homes and a few multi family complexes. The Listers have an active role in valuing; one of the Listers has a State certified fee appraiser background and works on assessing, a second is an active real estate agent and the third does mostly data entry, although the 3 Listers review and collect inventory data together. The budget is \$37,154 with the Listers paid \$16/hr for work performed. The town has not had a reappraisal since 2003. It tried a statically update in 2006 of land values which caused an uproar and all Listers quit. Since that time the new Listers have focused on accuracy and transparency to bring credibility back to the office. The CLA is now 101 and the COD is at 17. The town plans to have a complete reappraisal in 2 years. If the Listers have a lack of data for their modeling they use comps in Manchester. Inspections are done by permits pulled (footprint changes only require a permit) and subdivisions...usually about 50 a year. There is a consensus amongst the Listers that going forward the town would move toward a full time or part time assessor as Listers are becoming dinosaurs.

## Appendix 4

### Fairlee:

The Town of Fairlee, Vermont is composed of approximately one half of the acreage in Norwich, about half the population and half the number of parcels. Fairlee has about the same miles of Connecticut River frontage with similar developed river frontage parcels. Fairlee also has a sizeable lake with well-developed parcels. The Fairlee grand list is approximately one-third that of Norwich. The commercial properties are assessed by a contract appraiser and all of the remaining work is completed by a three member board of listers. Fairlee uses the periodic complete reappraisal method of maintaining their grand list, with the last complete reappraisal in 2004 (effective 2005) and a statistical update in 2008 (effective 2009), and the neighborhood of lake front parcels being revalued in 2010 (effective 2011). Like Norwich the Fairlee Homestead Education Tax Rate is higher than the Non-Residential Education Tax Rate. The contract appraiser is paid from the professional services line item and the listers are paid from their own wage line item (\$15 per hour for the Lister Chairperson). The listers put in significantly more than the budgeted 1500 man-hours per annum, with some of the excess paid and most gratis. The listers inspect between 50 and 100 properties per annum. Fairlee does not value contiguous parcels separately (as does Norwich). Inspections are pegged to zoning permits, changes observed while driving the roads of Fairlee, or after a sale. In order to maintain an acceptable CLA and COD, Fairlee makes continuous changes to their grand list. Hartford

### Hartford:

Hartford has a population of 10,000 and a town manager form of government. Hartford has 5,446 taxable parcels. Its listers office has a full-time assessor, a part-time assessor, and a full-time administrative assistant/clerk. These employees report to the town manager, but the listers set policy and approve all changes in values, hear grievances and lodge the grand list. The full-time assessor is paid \$66,500/year plus benefits. The part-time assessor is paid \$20/hour and works 2-3 days/week. Hartford performs a town-wide reappraisal only when required by state law (based on the CLA and COD) and contracts with a reappraisal company to do that. The last two town-wide reappraisals occurred in 1999 and 2007. In the 2007 reappraisal, the company only did a statistical update. Between the reappraisals, the town-employed assessors inspect all properties in the town to update and correct descriptions of properties, interiors and exteriors. They have divided up the town into five sections that are inspected at least once every 5 years. They also regularly inspect properties that are granted permits by the town or are sold if the sales price varies significantly from the assessment.

### Hartland:

Hartland has a population of 3,400 and approximately 1,500 taxable parcels and a town manager form of government. The listers' office has three part-time listers who are paid \$15.50/hr, except for the chair who is paid \$16.00/hr. A part-time clerk is paid \$16.55/hr to do data entry. The listers divide up duties according to their strengths and interests. For instance one lister does most of the field reviews of properties, plus mapping changes and correspondence. A second lister handles changes to CAMA,

## Appendix 4

updates NIMRIC and does sketches and current use. A third lister is adept at reviewing sales and keeping track of every sale. He understands what is happening in the market because he used to be an appraiser. The three listers have been working together for years. They are known for consultation, transparency and consensus. All three will be retiring soon. An occasional contract assessor is called upon at \$65/hr to help with complex properties and very occasionally to defend values in a grievance. His bill is less than \$5000/year. Total budget for last fiscal year (July 2010 to June 2011) was \$27,800, including hiring the assessor. Hartland performs a town-wide reappraisal only when required by state law (based on the CLA and COD). The town then contracts with a reappraisal company (Ed Klodfelter) to do that. The last two town-wide reappraisals occurred in 2004-05 and in 2007. The 2007 reappraisal was a statistical update with field reviews to meet IAAO criteria. Between the reappraisals, the listers drive all the roads in spring and fall to visit every Hartland driveway. They may look at an entire neighborhood, but work to be open about when and why. There is no permit system.

### Middlebury:

Middlebury has a population of approximately 8,500 people (include 2,100 students) and 2,220 taxable parcels. The town periodically completes an unscheduled town wide appraisal; the last one was in 2005. Listers are a policy body and they meet only 2-4 times a year and for grievances and are paid a annual stipend of \$700. The work of maintaining the Grand List is done by a part-time assessor and a part time clerk. Over the past several years the assessor has worked 1 day a week but now only ½ day a week. At the last town wide reappraisal (performed by Ed Clodfelter) there were not a lot of appeals. There was also an informal appeal process that took care of many of the issues prior to the official appeal process. The Lister budget was \$57,974 for 2011 and is projected to be \$29,300 in 2012 because of the decrease in assessor time. Also the former clerk left (retired) and the new clerk (Kay Gault from Charlotte) is very efficient and experienced. The permitting system is similar to Norwich's.

### Woodstock:

Woodstock has a population of approximately 3,500 and 1,889 taxable parcels. The town is similar to Norwich in size and socio-economic makeup. It has a current Grand List Value of \$901 million and its average parcel value is modestly lower than that of Norwich. Woodstock utilizes a periodic town wide appraisal model at irregular and long intervals (last one in 2002). The town has also performed a statistical update in 2006 which, according to the Listers, did not go smoothly. The Listers perform all of the appraising and administrative work in the office, except for the Woodstock Inn. They periodically hire a specialist in the hospitality field to appraise the Woodstock Inn. The Listers are paid \$20.50/hour and work approximately 3,000 hours per year. There is no clerk. The cost per parcel of the office was amongst the most expensive of the towns visited and the COD was somewhat high (13+) in two of the three years between 2009-2011.

## Appendix 5

### Definitions of Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) and Coefficient of Dispersion (COD)

From the 2011 Annual Report of Division of Property Valuation and Review

#### Assessment practices in Vermont

There are two widely used measures for evaluating assessment practices in Vermont—the common level of appraisal (CLA) and the coefficient of dispersion (COD). The CLA is the ratio of a municipality's total grand list value to its corresponding "equalized" value derived through PVR's equalization study. In other words, it is a percentage that compares local assessments to PVR's estimate of market value. The statewide CLA improved to 94%. For 2009 it was 90%. The result of the 2008 study was 88%—slightly better than the 86% shown in 2007.

Another way to use the CLA to evaluate assessment practices is to consider the change in the number of municipalities that have extremely low CLA's and are thus very far from Vermont's statutorily set standard of 100 percent fair market value. The further away from true market value the more difficult it is for property owners to analyze whether their valuation is equitable. In 1981, 41 municipalities were appraising property at less than 30 percent of fair market value. In 2007 there were only 26 districts with a CLA less than 60 percent. For 2010 only 23 towns have a CLA under 80%. Towns with a CLA under 80% will receive an Order to Reappraise.

About a third of towns have a CLA of 100% or greater. The higher CLA's are in part a function of the drop in fair market values in many areas.

The coefficient of dispersion (COD) is a measure of the equity across assessments in a municipality's grand list. It is a much better measure of fairness than the CLA. The higher the COD, the more likely it is that similar properties are being assessed at different levels resulting in inequities in assessments within a grand list.

Assessment equity is important in order to meet the equal protection requirements of the Vermont and United States Constitutions. If a town's grand list shows a common level of appraisal of 90 percent and all properties are assessed relatively close to 90 percent of their market value, there is a high degree of equity and the municipality will have a low COD. Assessment standards generally hold that CODs of 15 percent or less are good—in newer or fairly homogenous areas 10% or less is considered good. Few such areas exist in Vermont. If, on the other hand, individual properties range in assessment from 60 to 140 percent of market value, then property owners are not being treated fairly in terms of the resulting tax burdens. Maintaining the equity or uniformity of assessments is more important than maintaining an overall level of assessment that is close to the 100% valuation standard.

**Appendix 6**  
**Lister Budget and Other Data on Towns Interviewed**

Town	Lister Budget	Taxable Parcels	Population	Lister Budget per Parcel	Grand List Value (\$millions)	Value per Parcel	CLA			COD			Last Townwide	Notes
							2011	2010	2009	2011	2010	2009		
Norwich '10	\$ 108,111	1,542	3,544	\$ 70.11	\$ 779	\$ 505,043	90.91	91.99	97.07	11.99	12.29	9.11	2008	Excludes Townwide Reappraisal Fund Contribution
Norwich '11	\$ 96,400	1,542	3,544	\$ 62.52	\$ 779	\$ 505,043	90.91	91.99	97.07	11.99	12.29	9.11	2008	
Charlotte	\$ 66,360	1,672	3,569	\$ 39.69	\$ 934	\$ 558,433	99.22	100.24	100.85	9.00	8.20	8.64	2004	Includes Townwide Reappraisal Expenses
Dorset	\$ 37,154	1,474	2,036	\$ 25.21	\$ 718	\$ 487,330	101.32	95.16	95.52	17.11	13.03	11.37	2003	Statistical update in 2006
Fairlee	\$ 30,406	651	1,000	\$ 46.71	\$ 204	\$ 312,871	102.46	100.95	101.18	5.96	5.08	6.98	2004	Statistical update in 2008 and townwide in process
Hartford	\$ 182,290	5,446	10,367	\$ 33.47	\$ 1,466	\$ 269,210	96.46	95.65	95.51	9.92	8.53	8.62	1999	Statistical update in 2007
Hartland	\$ 27,800	1,546	3,223	\$ 17.98	\$ 443	\$ 286,461	95.71	92.44	96.61	13.89	13.90	10.52	2005	Statistical Update in 2007
Middlebury	\$ 57,974	2,640	8,496	\$ 21.96	\$ 802	\$ 303,652	84.63	81.96	85.58	14.20	13.83	13.43	2005	Population includes 2100 College Students
Sharon	\$ 18,000	756	1,500	\$ 23.81	\$ 161	\$ 212,899	68.29	67.96	68.24	17.90	13.48	15.63	2003	New one in process
Woodstock	\$ 86,523	1,889	3,500	\$ 45.80	\$ 902	\$ 477,435	94.19	92.25	93.25	13.71	13.46	9.94	2002	Statistical Update in 2006

Norwich Comparison to Charlotte With Town-wide Reappraisal Costs

Town	Lister Budget	Taxable Parcels	Population	Lister Budget per Parcel	Grand List Value (\$millions)	Value per Parcel	CLA			COD			Last Townwide	Notes
							2011	2010	2009	2011	2010	2009		
Norwich '11	\$ 131,400	1,542	3,544	\$ 85.21	\$ 779	\$ 505,043	90.91	91.99	97.07	11.99	12.29	9.11	2008	2011 Budget + \$175K town-wide app. spread over 5 years
Charlotte	\$ 66,360	1,672	3,569	\$ 39.69	\$ 934	\$ 558,433	90.91	91.99	97.07	11.99	12.29	9.11	2004	

**Appendix 6**

**Organizational Information on Town's Interviewd (2010 or 2011)**

**Lister Information**

Town	Stipend or Hourly	Rate	Hours Worked Annually	Active or Passive	Assessment Role	Administrative Role	Last Townwide	Notes
Norwich	Hourly			Active	Yes	Yes	2008	
Charlotte	Hourly	\$15/hr	1800	Active	No	Yes	2004	
Dorset	Hourly	\$16/hr	1850	Active	Yes	Yes	2003	
Fairlee	Hourly	\$13-\$15/hr	1700	Active	Yes	Yes	2004	
Hartford	Stipend	\$10/hr	300	Passive	No	No	2007	
Hartland	Hourly	\$15.50-\$16/hr	1500	Active	Yes	Yes	2005	Approx. 1500 hours spread between Listers & Clerk
Middlebury	Stipend	\$700/yr	Periodic Meeings	Passive	No	No	2005	
Sharon	Hourly/Stipend	\$6500/yr	450	Active	Yes	Yes	2003	
Woodstock	Hourly	\$20.50/hr	3000	Active	Yes	Yes	2002	

**Clerk Information**

Town	Salary or Hourly	Rate	Hours Worked Annually	Notes
Norwich	Hourly			
Charlotte	N/A			
Dorset	N/A			
Fairlee	N/A			
Hartford	Salary	\$41,700/yr	1750	But per interview could probably be part time
Hartland	N/A	\$16/hr	N/A	See note about in Lister Information Section
Middlebury	Hourly	\$18/hr	350	
Sharon	N/A			
Woodstock	N/A			

**Assessor Information**

Town	Salary or Hourly	Rate	Hours Worked Annually	Notes
Norwich				
Charlotte	Contract	\$27,000/yr	500	
Dorset	N/A			
Fairlee	N/A			
Hartford	salary	\$66,500/yr	2000	Rate does not include benefits
Hartford	hourly	\$20/hr	1000	Data gathering
Hartland	Contract	\$5,000/yr		For complex properties only
Middlebury	Contract	\$18,500/yr	200	Prior to this year used to be 1 full day per week
Sharon	N/A			
Woodstock	Periodic Fee			For Woodstock Inn Only

## **Appendix 7**

### **Interview Transcripts**

69 Page Document  
Available Upon Request

# Appendix 8

## CLA History for towns that were interviewed for Lister Review Committee

Grand List Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Charlotte	75.11	106.48	96.74	88.37	80.56	100.85	100.24	99.22
Dorset	102.55	94.09	105.6	105.6	98.98	95.52	95.16	101.32
Fairlee	83.7	105.16	97.35	93.54	78.54	101.18	100.95	102.46
Hartford	85.09	77.15	67.2	62.07	98.11	95.51	95.65	96.46
Hartland	99.67	90.72	77.34	104.79	99.42	96.61	92.44	95.71
Middlebury	77.37	72.68	109.11	101.3	91.92	85.58	81.96	84.63
Norwich	122	108.2	109.36	104.77	100.27	97.07	91.99	90.91
Sharon	102.05	96.66	87.71	77.01	69.91	68.24	67.96	68.29
Woodstock	98.43	93.36	85.19	105.96	95.39	93.25	92.25	94.19

The CLA numbers above that are shown in **RED** indicate reappraisal years.







