

**Minutes of the Norwich Board of Listers' Grievance Hearings
1, 4 & 6 June 2015, Tracy Hall**

1 June 2015, 1 pm

Present: Liz Blum (Chair), Cheryl A. Lindberg, Lee Michaelides (Listers); Matt Krajeski (Assessor); Jonathan Bynum (Scribe); grievants as put forth below.

Blum opened the hearings at 12:58 pm.

09-046.100, 1035 Bragg Hill Road, belonging to Susan F and Leah McLaughry, current assessment \$157,900.

Bruce McLaughry was present. McLaughry stated that the newly created lot has no view, is impacted by class 2 wetlands, and that he has a December 2014 appraisal for \$131,500. McLaughry asked that the assessed value be set at \$130,000.

09-046.000, 1093 Bragg Hill Road, belonging to Susan F McLaughry, current assessment \$1,122,600.

Bruce McLaughry was present. McLaughry stated that the house had been recently inspected and that an increase had been made for three fixtures (a bathroom sink, a slop sink and a clawfoot tub), which had not previously been included in the assessment. McLaughry felt this increase was not warranted. He also argued that, for his two adjoining lots on Burton Woods Road, the lots were (a) entirely covered by conservation easements precluding residential development, and (b) should not be valued as if they were on Bragg Hill Road, as they have no Bragg Hill frontage. McLaughry asked that the assessed value be lowered by \$300,000.

09-043.000, 1208 Bragg Hill Road, belonging to Brian and Erika Dade, current assessment \$1,603,200.

Erika Dade was present. Dade questioned her recent Change of Appraisal Notice, showing an increase in her Homestead value. This was because there was no longer a portion of her property being rented. Dade then requested that her assessed value be lowered in light of the recent sale of the former Leatherwood property on Bragg Hill.

10-018.100, 275 Beaver Meadow Road, belonging to Lori McDonald, current assessment \$359,500.

Lori McDonald and her son Hunter Tuttle were present. Tuttle presented several recent sales as comps. He also stressed that the upstairs of the new dwelling was completely unfinished as of 4/1/15.

Tuttle requested that the assessed value be set at \$290,000.

05-066.000, 607 VT Rte 132, belonging to Earl Smith, current assessment \$295,400

Earl Smith was present. Smith questioned why it was necessary for the Town to hire a firm from Massachusetts to do their appraisals. Smith emphasized that his home was a 1970s modular dwelling, and not of the same quality as a stick-built home, and had deferred maintenance issues. Smith said that he did not feel the house would fetch the assessed value if sold.

04-025.000, 55 Bramble Lane, belonging to Peter & Deborah Carter, current assessment \$454,700

Peter Carter was present. Carter listed various structural, design, and cosmetic issues with the dwelling, and pointed out the poor and ledge-ridden quality of the land.

16-050.000, 96 Church Street, belonging to the Michaelides-Rahmann Family Revocable Trust, current assessment \$576,300

Lister Lee Michaelides recused himself from the Michaelides hearing.

Lee Michaelides was present. Michaelides argued that his property is assessed as if it had a view, whereas because of the growth of his neighbor's trees, he no longer has a view. Other properties along the street enjoy a superior view to his without having it added to their assessments. Moreover, the discharge of two large culverts makes much of the Michaelides property unusable.

03-057.000, 1490 Beaver Meadow Road, belonging to Craig and Veronica Thurston, current assessment \$1,231,100

Veronica Thurston was present. Thurston offered a comp of 207 Willey Hill Road, recently sold for lower than the Thurston assessment. Thurston questioned the contributory value of the many outbuildings on the property, especially the pool house which has not been operational for several years. She also noted the difficult topography, and that they had had a realtor recently suggest an asking price significantly lower than the assessed value.

Thurston requested that the assessed value be set between \$1.1 and 1.2 million.

09-018.000, 127 Tigertown Road, belonging to D.C. Whitfield, current assessment \$397,800

DC Whitfield and her daughter were present. Whitfield said that she was appealing at the suggestion of Matt Krajewski, who had recently inspected the property. The assessors had not previously been able to access the property, and had made some incorrect assumptions about the house's interior, especially about quality, the size of the basement and the amount of living space. Whitfield offered the Ciccotelli property as a land comp, asking that her land assessment also be reduced due the difficult topography. Whitfield requested that the assessed value be set between \$300,000 and \$335,000.

10-009.000, 752 Bragg Hill Road, belonging to Justin & Jennifer Krawitt, current assessment \$994,000.

Justin Krawitt was present. Krawitt related how he had recently purchased the house for \$950,000. After purchase, flooding issues had necessitated the removal of the entire finished basement. The upstairs is in the midst of an extensive renovation. Krawitt said that the house at present has only about 2500 sq ft of finished space. He offered 5 comparables on Bragg Hill and Dutton Hill.

Krawitt requested that the assessed value be reduced to \$800,000 or a bit less.

04-060.200, 1445 New Boston Road, belonging to Wilfred & Pamela Smith, current assessment \$398,800.

Wilfred & Pamela Smith were present. They related how they had recently bought the property in foreclosure for \$290,000. They submitted a bank appraisal for \$314,000. The house had been vacant for about three years, and while mostly in good shape has issues with plumbing and siding. The downstairs bathroom ceiling was ruined by leakage from the bathroom above.

At about 5:10 pm, the grievance hearings were continued until 4 June 2015 at 9 am.

4 June 2015, 9:00 am

Present: Liz Blum (Chair), Cheryl A. Lindberg, Lee Michaelides (Listers); Matt Krajeski (Assessor); Jonathan Bynum (Scribe); grievants as put forth below.

09-022.000, 297 Tucker Hill Road, belonging to Marianne Spalding, current assessment \$2,417,800

Lister Lee Michaelides recused himself from the Spalding hearing.

Marianne Spalding was presented by her attorney, Scott McGee, who was present. McGee related that a portion of the Spalding property is currently offered for sale for \$1,995,000, and has not sold. What is being marketed is the dwelling and 59 of the parcel's 111 acres. While the property is not currently subdivided, an application is pending.

McGee offered some calculations to the effect that \$1,929,750 would be a fair assessment for the entire parcel. He offered some further sales comps that suggested a rather lower figure. McGee requested that the assessed value be lowered to \$1,929,750.

04-035.100, 24.97 acres on Turnpike Road, belonging to Scott & Catherine McGee, current assessment \$182,000

Lister Liz Blum recused herself from the McGee hearing.

Scott McGee was present. McGee related how he had recently acquired a roughly ½ acre piece of land that sits between Turnpike Road and Blood Brook and is contiguous to a larger tract he already owned. The small piece had previously been a stand-alone parcel and assessed as having a housesite, and was given to McGee by the previous owner in exchange for McGee's paying off the back taxes. McGee contended that the newly acquired parcel is not buildable and so should not be assessed with a housesite. He cited *Neun vs the Town of Roxbury* in support of the position that the small parcel should not be given its own housesite. McGee also argued that the larger parcel was overassessed due to the expense (\$60,000-\$80,000) of constructing a bridge over Blood Brook, as would be necessary to develop it.

McGee asked that the small subparcel be assessed simply as bulk acreage. If this was to happen, he said he would be willing to drop his objection to the assessment of the larger piece. He also expressed willingness to merge the two parcels by deed if the Listers desired.

10-001.100, 741 Bragg Hill Road, belonging to David & Loretta Leatherwood, current assessment \$1,907,200

This property was under contract on 1 April 2015 and had subsequently been sold. The owner of record (the Leatherwoods) had assigned their appeal rights to the new owners, the Scott Steffey Trust and Molly Bourne, who were represented by their attorney Scott McGee. McGee related that the sale price (\$1,295,000) was far below the assessment, and was an arms length transaction between a willing buyer and a willing seller. McGee requested (citing *Wilde vs the Town of Norwich*) that the assessment be lowered to the sale price adjusted by Norwich's Common Level of Appraisal.

05-110.000, 433 Pattrell Road, belonging to the Lucy Metcalf Trust, current assessment \$1,084,500

The Trustee of the Lucy Metcalf Trust, Mark B. Elefante, had sent a letter appointing Charlotte Metcalf to act as the Trust's agent for the purposes of grieving the assessment. Metcalf related that the property had formerly been assessed as a single parcel, but after the purchase by the Metcalf Trust had been reassessed such that it was now three parcels. The reason for this was that the deed transferring title to the Trust cited three parcels, whereas the 1947 deed transferring ownership to Bowen (the previous owner) had only cited one. Some surveys had been performed during Bowen's ownership that drew the tract as 3 parcels divided by town roads, even though, according to Metcalf, in commissioning these surveys Bowen had not intended to subdivide.

Metcalf stated that the Trust intended to merge the parcels and displayed an unsigned deed to this effect. She also referenced a merger deed enacted by Kerry Riess, which similarly merged multiple lots across Town roads.

Lindberg asked Metcalf if the deed citing three parcels was incorrect. Metcalf replied that technically it was not, since when a Town road bisects a parcel, it creates two parcels. Blum asked whether the lots were merged as of 1 April 2015. Metcalf replied that they were not.

04-024.000, 15 Bramble Lane, belonging to Garrett Palm & Fiona Kenny, current assessment \$989,800

Garrett Palm was present. Palm had recently purchased the property for \$1,250,000. He submitted a detailed list of comps, suggesting that the recently raised assessment of the Palm property was on a price-per-square-foot basis disproportionate to other homes in the vicinity. He asserted that homes with a sale price listed on the website tended to have a significantly higher price per square foot than those showing no sale. Palm was concerned that, since a townwide reappraisal is scheduled for next year, he might suffer a “double whammy,” with a possible increase next year compounding the inequitable increase he had already seen this year. He related that the house had not been improved since 2011, and that the original portion of the dwelling, built in 1978, had inferior fit and finish to that of the newer addition.

Palm requested that the assessed value of the property be returned to the previous year’s value.

At about 11:25 am, the grievance hearings were continued until 6 June 2015 at 10 am.

6 June 2015, 10:00 am

Present: Liz Blum (Chair), Cheryl A. Lindberg, Lee Michaelides (Listers); Matt Krajeski (Assessor); Jonathan Bynum (Scribe); grievants as put forth below.

10-039.100, 101 Brigham Hill, belonging to Byung Kwon & Mi Yoo Choi, current assessment \$316,200

Byung Kwon & Mi Yoo Choi were present. The Chois stated that they had performed recent upgrades to septic, windows, kitchen appliances, floors, new woodstove, radon mitigation for water and air, and central vacuum system, costing about \$50,000. He also asked that a third bedroom in the finished basement be recorded on the property record card.

Choi stated that he believes the fair market value of the property is \$350,000, and requested that the assessed value be adjusted accordingly.

04-030.000, 1292 Turnpike Road, belonging to Jennifer Ankner-Edelstein and Eric Edelstein, current assessment \$341,000

Jennifer Ankner-Edelstein and Eric Edelstein were present. The Edelsteins stated that they had recently purchased the property for \$315,000. The property had been on the market off and on for a number of years, most recently for \$330,000. They said that the property needed mold and radon remediation, quoted at \$6,000-\$12,000. The property has been a rental for many years and is in need of repair. The lot is a difficult shape and has no road frontage.

The Edelsteins asked for a reduction of the assessed value to \$310,000, but would accept \$315,000.

15-019.000, 64 Abigail Road, belonging to Joanne McCormick, current assessment \$421,000

Joanne and John McCormick were present. The McCormicks requested two changes to their assessment.

First, the McCormicks submitted a survey showing that their acreage includes ownership of Abigail Road. They also submitted various photographs of their road and of other private roads in Town, and two comps of properties that receive adjustments in comparable situations. They requested that a -5% adjustment for the easement burdening their property be made to their housesite value.

Second, they assert that the topography of their land is similar to that of their neighbor, and that their neighbor receives a -20% adjustment for topography on excess land while the McCormicks do not. They request a -20% adjustment for topography on their excess land.

05-148.000, 34 Barbara Lee Lane, belonging to Michael and Rosalie Wilson, current assessment \$523,100

The Wilsons did not attend in person, but had submitted a written request for a correction to their homestead and housesite values. When filing their HS-122 they had mistakenly claimed a business use to their outbuildings, whereas in reality there is none.

There was then brief discussion of a possible correction to the Abstract under 32 VSA 4111(f) for 06-023.000, Dennis M & Roberta S Kaufman et al., 535 Campbell Flats Road. It had already been decided to add this item to the next agenda.

At about 11:15 am, the Chair called the Norwich grievance hearings to a close.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Blum
Chair, Norwich Board of Listers