

MINUTES

Thursday, August 2, 2018 at 5:30 pm

Town of Springfield - Board of Tax Appeals

Selectmen's Hall - 96 Main Street - Third Floor

Board of Civil Authority Members Present:

Alice Emmons

Warren Cross

Scott Farr

Mark Greenvall

Cynthia Martin

Elizabeth Gray

Ernest Lamphere

Kathleen Stankevich

Stephen Matush

Kristi Morris

Chuck Gregory

David Yesman

John Stettner

Barbara A. Courchesne, Town Clerk

Others:

Maxine Aldrich, Assistant Town Clerk

Nichole Knight, Assessor

Terry Perkins, Lister

Matt Krajeski, Town's Appraiser

1. Call to Order

The continuation of the July 26, 2018 meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Ernest Lamphere, Chairman.

2. Swearing in of Board

Chairman Lamphere asked if any Board members here tonight were not present at the July 26, 2018 meeting. Stephen Matush and Cynthia Martin were sworn in by Clerk. Clerk reminded rest of Board that they are still under oath.

3. Tax Appeals

Appeal 18-04: Farm on the River, LLC, 456 Old Connecticut River Road, Parcel #011/2/06

Appellant Margaret Wood, Appellant's Appraiser Jesse Larson, Lister Terry Perkins, Assessor Nichole Knight and Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski were sworn in by Clerk. Appellant's evidence and Listers' evidence were distributed to all parties. Chairman Lamphere read aloud Appellant's letter requesting tax appeal.

Appellant Margaret Wood submitted additional evidence and stated they would like to focus the appeal specifically on the valuation of the main dwelling listed on card 1. She stated the previously assessed value listed at \$437,360. The reassessment listed the value at \$685,100. The previous square footage values were \$72.91 and the current values are \$115.27. She stated there have been no improvements since the previous assessment. She stated the house was built in 1793, it is quite dated, has been unmaintained since the purchase and has deteriorated over time. She stated the independent appraisal from March 2017 ordered by Appellant's lender most accurately reflects the value of the farmhouse at \$55 per square foot. Ms. Wood introduced Appraiser Jesse Larson. Ms. Wood pointed out the MSL listing of the house at \$498,000 which has been on the market for 7 ½ months. Appellant has received one written official offer in the amount of \$255,000. Ms. Wood stated there is no heat in two of the bedrooms. Everything else is stated in Appellant's letter. Ms. Wood referred to 2 School Street as a comparable, built 7 years after her home, 4 over 4 square property, same materials, similar condition, square footage is 1,000 square feet less, 6 bathrooms versus Appellant's 3 bathrooms and is valued currently at \$48.40 per square foot. Appraiser Jesse Larson introduced himself as a farm appraiser, about 14 years, stressed the severe functional depreciation found on this house, very dated kitchen, very dated baths, quite a cost involved repairing structural issues and physical depreciation, then redoing bathrooms, maybe adding more bathrooms, windows, that type of thing that a buyer expects in this market and concludes the value of the house is much lower than the assessed value.

Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski referred to the price paid for the property in December 2016 as \$1.1 million. He stated they don't necessarily see that level of sale in the community. The current assessment of \$1,039,500 is slightly under the sales price. Mr. Krajeski stated that they are confident in the assessment based on sales analyzed. Mr. Krajeski stated the Appellant's house is the superior house in the neighborhood and it is irrelevant to compare how the property was previously assessed: the sales models have been changed completely across the board.

Alice Emmons questioned Appellant contesting just the home or the whole lot. Mr. Larson stated the sales price is accurate and provides some evidence for the superiority of the property. As a farm appraiser, he found 5 comparable sales on the River that were similar, each bought by a farmer, intercultural market value is the driver of this farm and the 5 comps that he chose up and down the river in southern Vermont. He stated the reason for the sale price and the disagreement of the value of the house is because the current owners were motivated by the farm land. Appellant confirmed the house only is up for sale, they are keeping the land, they believe the land value is accurate and the land is in current use.

Chairman Lamphere advised Appellant that a 3-person inspection committee would contact the Appellant and visit the property.

Appeal 18-05: Stacey M. Gates and Janice E. Pelton, 236 Pleasant Valley Road, Parcel #009/3/20

Appellants Stacey Gates and Janice Pelton, Lister Terry Perkins, Assessor Nichole Knight and Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski were sworn in by Clerk. Chairman Lamphere read aloud Appellants' letter requesting tax appeal. Copies of Appellants' letter and evidence and Listers' evidence were distributed to all parties.

Chairman Lamphere confirmed Appellants received the Rules and Procedures. Appellants' additional evidence was distributed. Appellant Stacey Gates referred to the town's record of the original amount shown incorrectly at 3 bedrooms and the appraisal from Apple Appraisers at \$159,000. Mr. Gates stated they probably wouldn't be here except for the mistake made in

number of bedrooms which set them off - can they depend on everything else. Apple Appraisers indicate 2 bedrooms. Mr. Gates stated he got his realtors license years ago and knows that a 3-bedroom sells for more than a 2-bedroom. Mr. Gates stated it would be nice to know the formula for the new appraisal and all other appraisals give the courtesy of some actual sales or similar properties to compare.

Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski confirmed that the data has been corrected to 2 bedrooms. Mr. Krajeski referred to the data card as to why the value had not been adjusted. He referred to the subarea detail showing a finished living area designation being attributed to 50% of the basement and looks at it as could this home potentially be marketed as a 3-bedroom. Mr. Krajeski reviewed the comparable sales: 31 Park Ridge Road sold 8/21/17 for \$171,000; 22 Baker Road sold 6/20/16 for \$190,000; and 1607 Skitchewaug Trail sold 6/24/16 for \$169,900. Appellants have provided two private appraisals at \$159,000 and \$145,000 with no comparables attached. Mr. Krajeski cannot analyze if these appraisals are relevant with no comparables. Mr. Gates stated he did have that information and asked if he could provide that. Barbara Courchesne confirmed Mr. Gates can submit further evidence when the inspection team has visited the property and comes back to report.

John Stettner asked why subareas in comparable sales all have more square footage than the subject property. Mr. Krajeski answered the finished area on the card is space above grade and the 3 comparables have space below grade. Mr. Krajeski stated the subject property is assessed at \$169,000. Mr. Krajeski stated the 22 Baker Road property square footage slightly differs, 996 vs. 1,160, and he doesn't believe that is an astronomical difference in finished square footage and that property sold for \$190,000. Mr. Krajeski stated there are similarities and differences in every property but he feels they have adjusted accordingly in terms of being equitable within the community.

Chairman Lamphere advised Appellants that a 3-person inspection committee would contact the Appellants and visit the property.

Appeal 18-06: Carl W. and Shirley H. Goings, 1267 Skitchewaug Trail, Parcel #007/3/28

Appellants Carl Goings and Mark Goings, Lister Terry Perkins, Assessor Nichole Knight and Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski were sworn in by Clerk. Chairman Lamphere read aloud Appellants' letter requesting tax appeal. Copies of Appellants' letter and evidence and Listers' evidence were distributed to all parties.

Chairman Lamphere confirmed Appellants received the Rules and Procedures. Appellants' additional evidence was distributed. Appellant Mark Goings referred to his 8 examples of other properties in the area that show more square footage and less value than their site. Mr. Goings stated all the examples have mail delivered to their site, freight delivered to their site and road services provided to their site. He stated Appellants' property has none of these services, it is landlocked. Mr. Goings stated the main building hasn't changed in the last 15 years except for furniture, windows and paint. He stated the building is small as it was built to be a hunting camp, there are only 2 closets, kitchen is not finished, and forced hot air is not finished and only heats the basement right now. He stated the front porch leaks and the basement east wall leaks during any rain or snow melt off. He stated they have been stranded for 2-4 days during winter because Gurney Brothers can't get their trucks up the hill to sand their road. Mr. Goings stated the 20 x 24 garage was built in 2007 not in 2015. The Appellants don't understand how they can be paying more but getting less in services than the examples they provided. He asked how property value can go up 150% when nothing has changed in the last 15 years. He would like to know if there are other landlocked properties to use to compare.

Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski stated the property is a 69.5 acre lot with a livable dwelling and assessed at \$191,200. He stated there are more substantial values to homes with considerable acreage. Mr. Krajeski stated the property originally started as a camp and now is a livable dwelling and has been adjusted. He stated the grade factor has been adjusted to slightly below average to accommodate for such. Mr. Krajeski reviewed the comparable sales: 732 Brook Road sold 5/26/17 for \$242,000 an older home on 46.6 acres; 16 Park Ridge Road sold 8/18/17 for \$189,000 a 16.1 acre lot; and 704 Pleasant Valley Road sold on 6/9/17 for \$217,000 an older farmhouse, closer to the road, 43.9 acres.

John Stettner commented that taxes collected on property are to go to services. He asked do the comparable properties have mail service, year round access to fire engine service, is it a real comparison or just comparing size of property and not taking into account the actual living conditions? Mr. Krajeski responded how do they quantify the difference of having to go to the post office to get mail as opposed to having home delivery.

Stephen Matush asked what the land is like. Mr. Goings answered it is all woods except for about 3 acres is mowed. Mr. Matush asked if the land is ripe for logging. Mr. Goings stated they use it for firewood and have a few ATV trails.

Alice Emmons asked if Appellant is living at the property full time. Mark Goings stated he is living at property and his parents live in town. Ms. Emmons asked what is unfinished in the kitchen, is there a refrigerator and stove? Mr. Goings stated there is a refrigerator and stove, it needs cupboards. He stated there is a wood stove in the main living room; the bedroom gets no heat.

Mr. Krajeski referred to the acreage on the card, the first acre has been adjusted 10% for easement and 10% for the access and the remaining 67.5 acres have been adjusted 10% for easement and 20% for topography. The card also shows 5% in the unfinished category to account for unfinished kitchen.

Kristi Morris asked if the Appellant was contesting building site and house only. Appellant confirmed that is the case, not the outbuildings or barn or other 67 acres. Mr. Krajeski confirmed the 2 acres and building and outbuildings was assessed at \$138,600, with \$32,200 assessed to outbuildings.

Chairman Lamphere advised Appellants that a 3-person inspection committee would contact the Appellants and visit the property.

Appeal 18-07: Joseph Lake, 252 Elm Hill, Parcel #006/2/61

Appellant Joseph Lake, Lister Terry Perkins, Assessor Nichole Knight and Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski were sworn in by Clerk. Chairman Lamphere read aloud Appellant's letter requesting tax appeal. Copies of Appellants' letter and Listers' evidence were distributed to all parties. The appellant provide no evidence.

Appellant Joseph Lake testified, thought sugar houses were not taxed, never looked at property card before, the barn is a sugar house, the old sugar house is now the pump house, both lean to are just tank covers, confused by gazebo on the deck but literally just something to cover the grill, doesn't understand the gazebo value and deck value, the wood shed is listed as improvement shed.

Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski confirmed gazebo is assessed at \$1,800, the improvement shed is referred to as an implement shed, it isn't fully enclosed, is assessed at \$2,100. Mr. Krajeski stated the cost of build does not necessarily equal market. Mr. Krajeski reviewed the comparable sales: 2528 Connecticut River Road sold on 8/1/16 for \$382,500; 248 Parker Hill Road sold on 8/18/17 for \$342,500; and 1065 Eureka Road sold on 10/12/17 for \$375,000 required a substantial amount of work to be done to the inside of the house and is a larger tract of land. Mr. Krajeski stated they did not analyze sales before 2015. He stated the Appellant purchased the subject property in August 2007 for \$465,000, and the current assessment is \$414,500.

Alice Emmons confirmed 2017 appraisal was \$428,100, reappraisal was \$432,300 and after grievance is \$414,500. Mr. Krajeski confirmed outbuildings were adjusted at grievance.

Kathleen Stankevich asked about the pool. Appellant stated they are going to fill it in.

Appellant asked if sugar house and pump house fall under agricultural. Mr. Krajeski confirmed the assessment is at full and fair market value based on sales components and if a building was included in current use it would still be assessed at that value but not taxed at that value. Mr. Lake asked if he has to go and tell them to put the buildings in current use. Mr. Krajeski stated Mr. Lake could discuss with his forester to see if the buildings conform.

Chairman Lamphere advised Appellant that a 3-person inspection committee would contact the Appellants and visit the property.

Appeal 18-08: Martin D. Taft, 35 Maple Street, Parcel #01B/1/23

Appellant Martin Taft, Lister Terry Perkins, Assessor Nichole Knight and Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski were sworn in by Clerk. Chairman Lamphere read aloud Appellant's letter requesting tax appeal. Copies of Appellant's letter and evidence and Listers' evidence were distributed to all parties.

Appellant Martin Taft stated he represents his brother's estate and had a formal appraisal done by Rick Tilson at the same time the town appraisers came around. Mr. Taft's appraisal comes in at \$280,000, the town's originally came in at \$337,000 and after grievance dropped \$14,800. Mr. Taft stated there are comparison properties in the appraisal, and Mr. Taft had three other comparisons: 386 Breezy Hill, 729 Parker Hill and 5 Gurney Road appraised at \$201,000. Mr. Taft consulted a realtor and she said he'd never get over \$300,000 for the property. He stated there are only 2.5 acres and it is located next to airport and dog kennel/dog daycare.

Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski pointed out that there is an accessory dwelling, it is a detached building, heated and tied in to plumbing and septic. Mr. Krajeski does not feel Appellant's appraiser has weighted the accessory building with any sort of substantial value. Mr. Krajeski stated the total value of the subject property is \$323,100, and the assessed value of apartment is \$48,700. He stated deducting the apartment leaves an assessed value of \$274,400 which is well within range of Appellant's appraisal. Mr. Krajeski reviewed the comparable sales: 2528 Connecticut River Road sold on 8/1/16 for \$382,500; 228 Bugbee Road sold on 2/28/17 for \$330,000; and 883 Brockway Mills Road sold on 10/6/17 for \$270,000, for all three comparable sales there is not necessarily an accessory dwelling.

Alice Emmons asked if Appellant's appraiser did the main house as well as that accessory building? Mr. Taft confirmed they did and called it a mother-in-law's apartment.

Elizabeth Gray asked if any consideration is given to location near dog daycare and Gurney Brothers with heavy traffic in early morning. Mr. Krajieski stated that overall there is a neighborhood designation, not individual adjustments. He stated the subject property has a neighborhood designation of R5. He stated neighborhoods range from R4 to R7 with R7 being the best. John Stettner asked if the realtor Mr. Taft referred to works in this area and has experience selling houses in this area. Mr. Taft confirmed she does. Mr. Taft asked what the land acreage is on the comparisons provided by the Town. Mr. Krajieski stated 2528 Connecticut River Road is 2 acres, 228 Bugbee Road is 28.2 acres and 883 Brockway Mills Road is 15 acres. Mr. Taft pointed out that all of the comparables are considerably more acreage.

Chairman Lamphere advised Appellant that a 3-person inspection committee would contact the Appellant and visit the property.

Appeal 18-09: Diana and Jay Miles, 271 Craigue Hill Road, Parcel #010/1/06

Appellants Diana and Jay Miles, Lister Terry Perkins, Assessor Nichole Knight and Town's Appraiser Matt Krajieski were sworn in by Clerk. Chairman Lamphere read aloud Appellants' letter requesting tax appeal. Copies of Appellants' letter and evidence and Listers' evidence were distributed to all parties.

Appellant Diana Miles asked when you add more to it how come it drops in value. She stated there are all new windows, new heating, hoping to get it up to the appraisal of \$158,000, the assessment now is at \$130,000.

Town's Appraiser Matt Krajieski stated typically Appellant is looking to go in the other direction but regardless of which direction the Appellant is looking for ultimately they want to maintain a fair assessment based on the sales. He stated two of the Town's comparable sales are within the Appellants' neighborhood. Mr. Krajieski reviewed the comparable sales: 278 Craigue Hill Road sold on 9/30/15 for \$114,000; 390 Craigue Hill Road sold on 6/29/15 for \$135,000; and 88 Pleasant Valley Road sold on 11/23/16 for \$135,000.

Ms. Miles stated the house at 278 Craigue Hill Road shouldn't be compared to their house because it was an old horse barn that got refinished; the quality of the house isn't the same caliber. Mr. Miles said they had other comparables with same lot size, same square footage. Mrs. Miles stated their house has a heated 2-car garage, improvements of \$30,000. Mr. Krajieski pointed out the 278 Craigue Hill Road house sold for \$114,000, the subject property assessment is \$130,000. Mr. Miles asked how you determine a value without going through the house. Ms. Knight confirmed that the Town did have a signature that the appraisers did do a walk through. Mrs. Miles stated they left a bathroom out. Ms. Knight confirmed it had been changed, Listers now have one full bath and one $\frac{3}{4}$ bath and have the house built in 1933.

Warren Cross confirmed the Appellants are asking to have their value raised.

Kristi Morris questioned the average designations on the card. He asked when that designation changes to good. Ms. Knight stated the overall depreciation is rated as average/good. Mr. Krajieski stated that something standard or "plain jane" is considered average and reiterated that costs of improvements does not equal market.

Chairman Lamphere advised Appellants that a 3-person inspection committee would contact the Appellants and visit the property.

Appeal 18-10: Ilse Vergi, 70 Stellafane Road, Parcel #005/4/15

Appellants Ilse Vergi and Tom McClean, Lister Terry Perkins, Assessor Nichole Knight and Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski were sworn in by Clerk. Chairman Lamphere read aloud Appellant's letter requesting tax appeal. Copies of Appellant's letter and evidence and Listers' evidence were distributed to all parties.

Appellant Ilse Vergi stated she is going by the bank appraisal which is considerably lower than the assessment.

Town's Appraiser Matt Krajeski stated he did not have a copy of the bank appraisal. Mr. Krajeski was given a copy to review. After review, Mr. Krajeski stated that two of the bank comparables are the same as two of the Town's comparable sales, which are 160 Randall Hill which sold for \$195,000 on 5/26/16, the amount of acreage is considerably less, subject property is 40.72 acres and comparable is 10 acres. Comparable sale #3 in bank appraisal is same as Town's comparable #1, 871 French Meadow Road, sold for \$215,000 and is 49.1 acres. Mr. Krajeski pointed out the subject property value was lowered in grievance from \$202,200 to \$198,700 based on topography. He referred to another Town comparable at 704 Pleasant Valley Road which sold on 6/9/17 for \$217,000, 43.9 acres. Mr. Krajeski stated the bank's comparable sale #3, same as Town's comparable #1, at 871 French Meadow Road sold for \$215,000 on 3/15/16 and that home is assessed at a below average.

Alice Emmons asked the amount of the bank's appraisal. Appellant responded \$184,000. Appellant Tom McClean asked about usable land. Mr. Krajeski confirmed the first acre has been adjusted 10% for topography, the second acre adjusted 20% and the remaining 38.72 acres adjusted 20% for topography. Alice Emmons confirmed Appellant has 38 acres in current use.

Chairman Lamphere advised Appellant that a 3-person inspection committee would contact the Appellants and visit the property.

Chairman Lamphere asked for inspection committees. The following inspection committees were appointed:

Appeal 18-04: Charles Gregory, Stephen Matush and Alice Emmons

Appeal 18-05: Elizabeth Gray, Kristi Morris and Warren Cross

Appeal 18-06: Scott Farr, Mark Greenvall and Kathleen Stankevich

Appeal 18-07: John Stettner, Alice Emmons and Charles Gregory

Appeal 18-08: John Stettner, Charles Gregory and Warren Cross

Appeal 18-09: Cynthia Martin, Kathleen Stankevich and Elizabeth Gray

Appeal 18-10: Kristi Morris, Alice Emmons and Charles Gregory

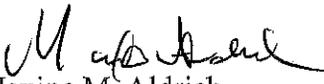
Barbara Courchesne reminded the Board to include the appeal number in their report and decision and gave copies of Mr. Taft's appraisal to the inspection committee for that appeal.

4. Public Comment:

None.

Warren Cross moved to recess; seconded by David Yesman. At 7:40 pm, the meeting was recessed to August 9, 2018 at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,


Maxine M. Aldrich
Assistant Town Clerk