

BOARD OF CIVIL AUTHORITY HEARING
Stephanie Sheehan's Property Assessment
219 South Mendon Road,
JULY 20, 2015 - 5:45 pm @ MENDON TOWN HALL.

The Town Clerk, Marie Conway, nominated Ann Singiser as Chair of the BCA Meeting. This nomination was approved by all attending BCA members.

BCA members had already taken and signed their Oath.

The Chair thanked Stephan Sheehan for coming and the clerk administered the Oath to Stephanie.

The meeting was called to order **at 5:35 p.m.** and the Chair stated the purpose of the hearing was to hear the appeal presented by Stephanie Sheehan on 219 South Mendon Road.

The Chair introduced the BCA members: Ann Singiser (JP), Marie Conway (Town Clerk), Lindsey McCauaig (JP); Rich Carlson(JP), Charlene Godair (JP), and Selectboard members Dick Wilcox, Geoff Wells and Larry Courcelle.

Representing Mendon as the Town Assessor: Spencer Potter.

Stephanie stated that she is a part-time resident.

The Chair asked Spencer to present the town's assessment and how it was established. Spencer stated that 219 South Mendon Road is a single-family residence with 1.9 acres with an assessed value of \$206,400.00. Spencer distributed copies of the property lister card (This was marked **Exhibit A-1**). According to Spencer, this is basically a straight forward, attractive home. Spencer had some sales to introduce, which he will pass out. He feels that the assessment is appropriate for the market value of the property. Spencer stated the way you generally form an opinion is what have other properties sold for.

A copy of lister card for 584 Meadowlake Drive indicates a single family residence on 1.7 acres which sold in September, 2012 for \$222,500. (This was marked **Exhibit A-2**)

The copy of lister card for 198 Brookwood, a single-family residence, which sold in April 2012 for \$205,000. (**This was marked Exhibit A-3**)

The lister card for 1437 Townline Road, on 1 acre, sold in October, 2014 for \$205,000. (This was marked **Exhibit A-4**)

Spencer felt that \$206,400 for 219 South Mendon Road was "right in the ball park."

The Chair then invited Stephanie to present her position. Stephanie stated that she had tried to find out before she left town when the BCA hearing would be held, but that information had not been available at that time. Stephanie passed out a packet of information (This was marked **Exhibit B-1**) and stated that she had researched through the Secretary of State's office as to her rights and what relief she might be entitled to. She believes that her assessment is higher than neighboring properties. She checked the rules on the appeal process and stated she can question her higher rate than neighbors. Stephanie stated that as a result of Irene and the recent Ice Storm, she had spent over \$1,000 on tree removal. Stephanie noted that in 2007 she added a garage.

After Stephanie grieved her assessment, she received a letter from the Assessor dated June 22, 2015 denying any change in her assessment without giving any reason for the denial. Stephanie stated that her property is unique, not comparable to Spencer's evidence. Her property is one level, on a slab. All of the properties presented have basements; all are multi-level, and are all bigger than her property. Her property has 1619 square feet; it has 2 bedrooms and 1 bath. The unit cost would amount to \$77.88 per square foot. The garage building is assessed for an additional \$20,000. Her house is an "earth house."

217 South Mendon Road according to Stephanie is the best comparable. (This lister card was marked **Exhibit B-2**). This property has 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, has 3535 square feet, and was sold in May, 2014 for \$252,500. It has the same footprint as appellant's. The garage on that property has a single garage. The unit cost on that property breaks down to \$59.20 per square feet. Specs on 217 were updated last year.

10 South Mendon Road is very different from the Sheehan property. It sold in July, 2013 for \$260,000. It is a 4 bedroom, 3 bath home with 2353 square feet—1456 upper level, 1456 basement level. The unit cost averages at \$50.75 per square foot. (This was marked **Exhibit B-3**).

3 South Mendon Road has a separate detached garage. It was sold in November, 2013 for \$165,000; it has 1464 square feet and is a 3 bedrooms and 1 bath property. The unit cost breakdown would be \$74.31 for the building alone. (This was marked **Exhibit B-4**)

Stephanie stated that she feels she is being over-assessed and requests relief.

The Chair asked Spencer if he would like to address any of Stephanie's evidence. Spencer passed out an article which recently appeared in San Francisco which discussed square footage as opposed to straight comparisons. (This was marked **Exhibit A-5**) Spencer stated that if you look at the sales for comp properties, you will have no problem with the assessment at 219 South Mendon Road at \$206,400.

The Chair invited questions from any BCA members. Geoff Wells asked what year Stephanie's garage was built. She stated it was 2007. Geoff asked if any other

improvements to the property had been made since 2005. Stephanie stated she had maintained her property, but there were no other additions. Geoff asked what was the exterior covering of the building. Stephanie replied that it is concrete and cedar. The garage is similar to the house. Geoff asked about the shared driveway. Stephanie stated that both properties are responsible by deed for the upkeep. 217 owns the driveway. 219 has access to the driveway

Lindsay MacCuaig asked Stephanie if she were a non-resident of Vermont. Stephanie stated she retired in December, 2012, and her primary residence has been in Massachusetts since 1988.

The Chair explained to Stephanie that the next step in the process is to arrange for a site visit by at least 3 members of the BCA, at her convenience. Stephanie suggested that Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday of this week (July 22, 23, or 24) before 8:00am or after 6:00pm would be best for her. Accordingly, Larry Courcelle, Charlene Godair and Dick Wilcox offered to be the inspection committee and would meet at Stephanie's property on Wednesday, July 22, 2015 at 6:30 pm.

Charlene Godair asked Spencer about the square footage differences. Spencer said this is done with a "large grain of salt." It is better to look at the properties sold and based on that information, the assessment stands.

Rich Carlson asked how does construction quality interface with price per square foot. Would the higher the quality; higher the square feet? How about unique structures? The appellant has an earth house. How does that place into the square footage? Spencer replied that it is difficult. The market seems to be able to look at these homes and price them comparable to similar stick-built homes. It is unique, but on market and price comparables, they do sell.

Larry Courcelle asked Stephanie if there was enough room at her property for the inspection committee to park. She assured him there was enough room to park.

Stephanie stated that the Assessor is presumed to be the best judge. She is requesting relief because she is over-assessed compared to her neighbors.

This BCA meeting adjourned until the BCA reconvenes on August 17, 2015 at 6:15pm for the Deliberative Session.