

Board of Civil Authority Meeting
July 8, 2015

Upon due notice to each member of the Board, the listers, Town Agent and the 3 appellants, the Board of Civil Authority met at the Bethel Town Clerk's Office on July 8, 2015 at 6:30 pm. Board members present were: Bill Hall & Lisa Hill, Selectmen; Jean Burnham, Clerk; Eric Benson, Kirk White, Cathy Day, Ola O'Dell & Scott Putney, Justices. Listers present were Louise Ferris-Burt.

Before the hearing began, the Board had an organizational meeting as this was the first meeting of a new year. Bill Hall was elected as Chairman and the Rules of Procedure were passed.

The following appeals were heard after all necessary oaths were given.

GREEN MOUNTAIN BIBLE CONFERENCE

Lister, Louise Ferris-Burt described the property under appeal as being 4.7 acres off Camp Brook Road with approximately 24 buildings on it. The property is used as a church camp and had been leased since 1880. James Abbott owner of the land gave them a deed to the property in 2009.

She explained that most recently only privately owned camps were taxed with a value of \$169,000 and those used communally, valued at \$358,800 were exempt. Because the state says church camps are no longer exempt they are being taxed on the full value of \$486,900 this year.

Lee Perry spoke for the camp with many other members present. He presented the Board with a copy of a booklet about the camp (exhibit A) and documents pertaining to an appeal on a similar camp in Hartford. (exhibit B)

He said that they were told at the grievance hearing that the state said they could no longer exempt certain church properties so that was why they had received a grievance notice. State also told them that the BCA didn't have the authority to exempt property, but that it had to be done at a Town Meeting by the voters or by statute.

He also said they had first met with the listers in 2007. And that they filled out an exemption application that was provided them by the state. This exemption was granted to some degree by the town & listers. He said nothing has changed other than they now own the land instead of leasing it.

The property is operated as a church camp and is open according to state guide lines and qualifies to be completely exempt. As far as the association is concerned it is a church and open one week out of the year and not used for anything else. All of the buildings are used for the ministry and according to state definitions fit within the guidelines so he feels that it still should be exempt.

He was told at the grievance meeting that it was a state problem, but he feels that the value put on the property is way over assessed.

In doing some research, he contacted Michelle Wilson of Property Valuation & Review and told her what the listers had said that the state was making them do this and she stated that this was not true. She told them that the state had asked the towns with exempted property to explain why and that the listers never responded to any of their requests. She asked if they had ever filled out the exemption form, which they had. Said he filled out a new one showing several changes which included title to the property and rate changes for the camp. She told him the state only wants what is due them. The towns still have the right to do what they see fit. The state just wants justification.

He feels that the church is in the middle, with the state saying one thing and the listers saying something else. Said they have the approved exemption from 2007 and nothing has changed.

Said he tried to find something in the statutes that said the state was making the towns do this but could not find anything.

Louise cited a court case which she said prompted all this. Said yes, they had approved the original exemption, but the state was clamping down on church properties and she felt that there was nothing they could do but tax the property because of the Supreme Court Ruling. The board agreed that they needed to have a copy of this ruling to be reviewed by the town's attorney. Louise said she would see that we get it.

Scott asked if it was a summer camp. Mr. Perry said it was a Bible Camp held for one week in the summer.

Ola asked if they rented it out. He said no, it is just used for the camp and there are no facilities when shut done.

Lisa asked how they were taxed before. He said 10 privately owned cabins were taxed as well as 2 acres of land. The value was \$165,000. One bill was sent and the owners of the private cabins figured out what their taxes would be.

Kirk asked if the privately owned camps were available during the rest of the year. Said they were but no one ever stayed there, just went up to do work on the cabins.

There being no further questions, Kirk White, Ola O'Dell and Eric Benson were appointed to the inspection committee and asked to report their findings at a meeting to be held on Aug. 5, 2015 at 6:30 pm.

DEMI ALDRIGHETTI/CASEY NOVOTNY

Eric Benson excused himself from this appeal.

Lister, Louise Ferris- Burt explained that the property was located at 2420 Gilead Brook Road and consisted of 35.3 acres with dwelling, barn and pond. The town has it assessed for \$284,300.

Attending this appeal were Demi Aldrighetti and David & Danell Aldrighetti.

Demi said they had bought the property last year for \$239,000. She presented an appraisal (Exhibit A) that was done by Eric Benson Appraisal Co. in June 2014 which set the value at \$244,000. Said she felt the town's assessment of \$284,300 was too high.

Louise passed out a copy of their assessment as well as some comparables (Exhibit B). Said the property had been through foreclosure.

As no one had any questions, Lisa Hill, Scott Putney and Cathy Day were appointed to the inspection committee.

TONI DESLAURIER

Lister, Louise Ferris-Burt explained that the property was located on 188 Birch Hill Road and consisted of 10.9 acres with dwelling, studio and shed listed at \$270,100.

Toni Deslaurier said she was appealing the value of a tiny house that her daughter was building on her property. Said it was not fixed to the property and that no one was living in it. It had been built on an old mobile home frame. Said her daughter had been looking at land in Rochester and felt the tiny house would be gone by April 1st. She presented copies of bills for materials (Exhibit A) which totaled about \$3000.00, much less than the \$8300 the listers assessed it at.

Louise said they had assessed it as a shed. They had inspected it on Oct. 10, 2014 and it had no tires or plate and again on April 14, 2015.

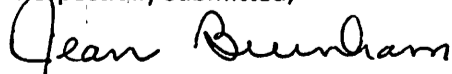
Toni said that it did have tires now and hoped it would be moved soon.

Scott asked if labor to build could be factor into the cost or value.

There being no further questions, Scott Putney, Ola O'Dell and Eric Benson were appointed to inspect the property and report back to the Board.

On a motion by Lisa Hill and seconded by Kirk White meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm until Aug. 5, 2015 at 6:30 when reports of the inspection committee will be heard.

Respectfully submitted,



Town Clerk