



**Ad-Hoc Reappraisal Committee Meeting - September 8th @  
2:00PM in Bushor Conference Room (City Hall, 1st Floor) and  
\*\*REMOTE\*\*  
9/8/2022**

**AD-HOC REAPPRAISAL COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, September 8, 2022**

**Bushor Conference Room and via Zoom**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Members Present:** James Unsworth (Chair), David Edwards, Jonathan Chapple-Sokol, Dan Kirk, Joan Shannon, Alan Bjerke

**Staff Present:** John Vickery (City Assessor), Joseph Dempsey (City Attorney's Office Staff)

**Members Absent:** Christopher Haessly, Kevin Stapleton

**Others in Attendance:** Lanier Hagerty, Rob Taylor

Meeting called to order at 2:04 PM.

**1.0 Agenda**

**1.01 Motion to Adopt/Amend Agenda**

*Motion to Adopt Agenda as is.*

Motion by David Edwards, Seconded by Jonathan Chapple-Sokol.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes.

Yes: Unanimous.

**2.0 Adopt Minutes from 08/25/2022**

**2.01 Motion to Adopt Minutes from 08/25/2022**

*Motion to Adopt Minutes from 08/25/2022 with one change made to include the fact that a city-wide appraisal costs approximately one million dollars.*

Motion by Joan Shannon, Seconded by Alan Bjerke.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes.

Yes: Unanimous.

**3.0 Deliberative**

James Unsworth: Moving on to the comments in public comment. We really need to communicate better how we appraise and make sure the public understands the process. I don't think people fully understand how a property is valued. There is



**Ad-Hoc Reappraisal Committee Meeting - September 8th @  
2:00PM in Bushor Conference Room (City Hall, 1st Floor) and  
\*\*REMOTE\*\*  
9/8/2022**

a difference between an appraisal and going to a lender. The property database the city has seems pretty darn good for Burlington, but others may feel differently. Education and communication about the process seems very important.

Alan Bjerke: I buy property all over the state and Burlington has more information than is typical. The more information we have the more people might find deviations. A property record in a town like Eden could only be three values. I don't know the appraiser that spoke, but his problem might stem from that.

Joan Shannon: I agree with Alan, we have the best website for information that I am aware of. However, I agree with the appraiser that you do find a lot of information that is not accurate, especially with permits. Our system allows for looking up that information online, but what you find might be inaccurate. In other communities you have to go to town hall and do some digging. My sense is that every time we update our software we lose information. I can't prove it, but I think we lose closed permits that become open again. We might not have information because some permits aren't pulled. We should catch those problems, but it is not an appraisal problem. The permits now on the site lack a summary and require clicking through every permit.

Jonathan Chapple-Sokol: I will rant a bit. I think the website is good. I think the City of Burlington website has credibility issues and it colors everything. If you look at the About Us page for BPD, they have not updated the sworn officer count in probably two years. There seems to be a lot of stale information on the city website. Another speaker talked about his house value. Across the street from me is a house worth 650k and within 2 days they got 900k offers. A lot of people think their homes are overvalued because they don't know their home's value. People don't want to hear their house is worth that much.

I think having a good website is not good enough. I think the City could deputize people to help neighbors understand the property record cards. It is nice to have a neighbor help you rather than someone in City Hall. Maybe people should be able to opt in to what realtors have and get notifications of what houses sell for in their neighborhood. One of the problems on property record cards is data errors. If homeowners closed a permit then they could certify the info on the property record cards. The homeowner could have to take a positive action to certify the card's accuracy.

John Vickery: Building on that: deputizing citizens for information could be important during an appraisal time. Better still would be to have a Youtube video or something to help people understand the record card so people have a neutral educational resource. This video could be out between the appraisals, then have deputies during appraisals. I would like enough staff to appraise properties after sales since sales build an algorithm. We do not see every sale, but we do see some. It is better to do an inspection after a sale if possible. I hope this committee creates some recommendations addresses this.

James Unsworth: Do the public have to let assessors into your property?

John Vickery: We don't force our way in, but also state law allows owners to turn us away.

David Edwards: Is it a factor in an appeal that an owner refused the appraiser entry?

John Vickery: We do the best job we can no matter what and we have to be fair. The end result needs to be fairness regardless of what the owner does.

David Edwards: In an appeal, if an owner does not allow an appraiser in-

Alan Bjerke: Board of Tax Appeals members go into the house, not the appraiser. Board members do the site visit, not the assessor.

David Edwards: So if the Board members aren't allowed it, they lose their appeal?



**Ad-Hoc Reappraisal Committee Meeting - September 8th @  
2:00PM in Bushor Conference Room (City Hall, 1st Floor) and  
\*\*REMOTE\*\*  
9/8/2022**

Alan Bjerke: Correct. Only a couple people did not want the assessor to join the Board members. Often the assessors do not want to join anyway.

John Vickery: Yes, we are usually busy.

Joan Shannon: If I could suggest: we might need some structure to our conversation. Maybe we could list some of the problems so they are on the table. Either problems we see or that are raised by the public. Then maybe we can see where there might be solutions. Some solutions might require state law changes or just communication changes. I think it would help to have some better structure going forward.

James Unsworth: Sure. I am still wrapping my head around what the problems we want to identify.

Joan Shannon: I agree, I think listing will help. I think the data card has some good information for the public, but also has other info that the public doesn't need while lacking some that assessors use to make the evaluation.

Alan Bjerke: Back to the structure question. The City Council resolution created a basic list to identify our goals.

James Unsworth: I can read the list here:

1. Identification of timelines and practices during the assessment process that are impediments to citizen participation and fair valuations; and recommendations around those;
2. Review of the appeals process and recommendations;
3. Develop a best practice around education and participation of citizens in the assessment process and how their properties are valued. Provide recommendations on how that support will be offered;
4. Develop recommendations for the frequency of citywide reappraisals including; funding, criteria for selection of consultants, and consideration of a rolling appraisal process;
5. Review capacity of the Assessor's Office, including staffing and IT needs.
6. Opinions on which of the recommended changes are consistent with the authority already vested in the City Council and which require a charter change;

Those are the broad strokes things, but there are a lot of small issues.

Alan Bjerke: But most items fit into one of those categories.

James Unsworth: So do we want to brainstorm a list then break into groups to develop ideas. We had groups before, but it was more administrative rather than solutions to the City Council resolution. The City Council gives a good umbrella to identify issues.

Alan Bjerke: Do we want to go through the list and then team up?

Joan Shannon: So meet outside the group to come up with solutions? Okay. I think it helpful to have the resolution posted on BoardDocs. Just email Joe (jdempsey@burlingtonvt.gov) if they have suggestions, but we want to make sure there is a place to put the comments.

Jonathan Chapple-Sokol: I made some suggestions and now we have an email on the homepage.

James Unsworth: Lets identify some groups for these individual issues in the resolution.

Alan Bjerke: There was a feeling that people wouldn't appeal their appraisal until the tax bill came. That is just human nature. People don't pay attention to the appraisal until the tax bill comes.

John Vickery: In a reappraisal year it is usually before April 1, that is also the date of value. There is an informal period after



**Ad-Hoc Reappraisal Committee Meeting - September 8th @  
2:00PM in Bushor Conference Room (City Hall, 1st Floor) and  
\*\*REMOTE\*\*  
9/8/2022**

that, then the deadline is by July 12 for tax bills. In a regular year, May 20 is the hearing time then the hearings are wrapped up before July. Outstanding appeals come after that deadline. In some states the notice of new value comes with your tax bill. If people see it with their taxes then it creates a bottleneck prior to December 31.

Jonathan Chapple-Sokol: When did Tyler do the hearings?

John Vickery: April.

Jonathan Chapple-Sokol: The Board of Assessors heard 1900 appeals after that.

Alan Bjerke: It is a problem of human nature to react to new tax bill rather than new valuation.

Jonathan Chapple-Sokol: I think it is important, but people did appeal after their taxes were filed.

James Unsworth: Looking at the City Council resolution: the first two bullets tie in together.

Alan Bjerke: I volunteer to be on the group with appeal timelines.

James Unsworth: I might float around between groups.

David Edwards: I can be with Alan on the first two points.

James Unsworth: Bullet three: "Develop a best practice around education and participation of citizens in the assessment process and how their properties are valued. Provide recommendations on how that support will be offered;"

That's probably one on its own.

Jonathan Chapple-Sokol and Alan Bjerke: We can do that.

James Unsworth: Bullet 4: "Develop recommendations for the frequency of citywide reappraisals including; funding, criteria for selection of consultants, and consideration of a rolling appraisal process;"

Joan could you help with that? Having insight into City Council could be helpful with that.

Joan Shannon: I can do that, yes. A lot of that is a legal issue. I hate to ask city staff to do more, but we may need to know more about the legal requirements.

James Unsworth: I can meet with you, and talk to Jared Pellerin about the legal issues.

Joan Shannon: Jared and John Vickery can probably help with this.

John Vickery: We have a lister's handbook to get something to this group. I can be the outside expert for this group and offer suggestion for each group.

James Unsworth: I will do this bullet with you, Joan. Bullet 5: "Review capacity of the Assessor's Office, including staffing and IT needs."

John do you have a wish list? Such as employee headcount?

John Vickery: We had a report done for appropriate staffing levels and I will find that report to pass along.

Alan Bjerke: Does your department get a budget ask or some other method?

John Vickery: Somewhere in the middle.



**Ad-Hoc Reappraisal Committee Meeting - September 8th @  
2:00PM in Bushor Conference Room (City Hall, 1st Floor) and  
\*\*REMOTE\*\*  
9/8/2022**

James Unsworth: The last bullet is more of an overall goal. I will send emails to make sure we are all on the same page. Thank you Joan for the idea. I will take the lead on the IT/capacity of assessor's office.

Dan Kirk: I can help with staffing recommendations.

Jonathan Chapple-Sokol: Maybe anyone who is not here/did not sign up, can be assigned to a bullet point.

Alan Bjerke: So the last one involves changes to City Council or City rules?

James Unsworth: Yes, so the last one is about how we can change things and the scope of the change.

Alan Bjerke: As an example: there is a statute that says land trust homes are assessed at 60-70% fair market value. I understand the subsidy to support land trusts, but we could have a condo on the waterfront that might now be a second home that is still assessed as a land trust home.

James Unsworth: are there covenants about that?

Alan Bjerke: You don't need to homestead I don't think. We are getting to an age that land trust condo owners might be well off and don't need the subsidy of only assessing at 60-70%. They should only get that if it has a homestead declaration. We can craft our lists and then come together to create a big wish list for our committee. Transparency and credibility is the most important part and we can't have outliers to ensure credibility.

James Unsworth: I totally understand how that assessment difference might make people upset. I know there are examples of inequalities in the system that could make people upset. Anything else from the public comment?

Jonathan Chapple-Sokol: How do we make sure everyone knows about the next public hearing?

James Unsworth: We used Front Porch Forum, something in the news that was short. Did this get onto the City Council agenda?

Joan Shannon: Yes, I did publicize it in councilor comment and put it on my Front Porch Forums. I think every committee member can do a lot to publicize the hearing. People were mad in the moment about the process, but may not be anymore. People seem to want to complain about the results rather than want to change the process. The easiest thing to do might be a way to have written comments sent to an address. Those comments can be shared with the committee prior to the hearing. Everything is a public record regardless of if the comments go onto BoardDocs.

James Unsworth: anything else?

Jonathan Chapple-Sokol: I can send something to NPA meeting admins as well.

James Unsworth: Good. We are still looking for another renter spot, if anyone finds someone please let them know they can hop into the committee.

David Edwards: Is there a process to amend the resolution down to 1 renter instead of 2 if we can't find anyone?

Joan Shannon: The City Council can do what they want if it's on the agenda. Ad-hoc committees are tough since time is short.

James Unsworth: Anything else?

Alan Bjerke: Do we want to encourage anyone else to hop onto each subcommittee?



**Ad-Hoc Reappraisal Committee Meeting - September 8th @  
2:00PM in Bushor Conference Room (City Hall, 1st Floor) and  
\*\*REMOTE\*\*  
9/8/2022**

Joan Shannon: Perhaps a summary of each subcommittee?

James Unsworth: yes, I will send that out in an email so everyone can be on a subcommittee.

**4.0 Any Other Committee Business**

James Unsworth: Any further business to discuss?

**5.0 Adjournment**

**5.01 Motion to Adjourn**

*Motion to adjourn.*

Motion by Alan Bjerke. Seconded by Jonathan Chappel-Sokol.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes.

Yes: Unanimous.

**Meeting adjourned at 2:58PM.**