

Board of Civil Authority August 18, 2025
Benson Town Office

Board Members Present: Lynn Bowen, Heidi Chandler, Brad Barrett, Jim Pritchard, Guy Charlton, Daryl Burlett, John Hill and Daric Brown
Absent: Eric Shaw, Lauren Mohan and Edward Peltier (Lister)
Others: Lois Trenn, (Lister Chair), Gina Parker (Lister), Bob Fletcher (Attorney), Malachi Brennan (Attorney), Geoff Hand (Attorney), Amanda Rohdenburg (Outright VT), Dana Kaplan (Outright VT), Jordan Young (Outright VT).

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm by Lynn Bowen.

Testimony continued. Lois Trenn commented that the Tax appeal is not necessarily in need of inspection. John Hill spoke with VLCT, they recommended hearing the evidence and then appointing an inspection committee if needed.

Lynn gave each of the parties 15 minutes.

Geoff Hand, attorney for Outright VT, standing in for Megan Grove, spoke first. Geoff Hand requested the Listers to speak first, so they can respond to their points.

After introductions, Lois started the questioning, asking if the primary use of the property is the same as the mission statement (all LGBTQ youth have hope, equity and power), and how was the camp property used last year to fulfill the mission? And what utilization has been made of the conserved land. Current use of the property does not meet the mission statement goal. Lois Trenn also asked about the application process. The actual use now is very important.

Geoff responded that this wasn't an inquiry hearing, but was happy to respond. The activities of the camp are critical to the youths. They have had around 360 members of the public utilize the property in various ways. Case law is clear in the way the usage can be limited to resources and feasibility of the property. The condition of the property has not been maintained and the buildings are dilapidated and it is not safe for the campers. Outright VT is trying to remedy that, but the non-use should not be used against them.

Amanda Rohdenburg spoke to the Conserved portion of the land, hiking, nature watching and exploring. They have started a process of a forest management plan with the Vermont Land Trust and State Foresters. She stated some of Vermont Land Trust's policies.

Lois Trenn stated the Boy Scouts were exempt because they were chartered with the federal government. Geoff Hand stated that the statutes for Boy Scouts are based on the level of usage and level of usage should have been done every year and asked Lois if they inquired on the level of usage. Bob Fletcher advised not to answer the question. Geoff's responsibility is to convince the listers and the BCA that the property is entitled to exemption. The main question is, what is the primary use of the property on April 1, 2025?

John Hill asked what the use of most seasonal camps are on April first, most are still closed. Bob Fletcher asked how was the property being used, not the future use.

Geoff Hand reiterated that they are making the best use of the property.

Lois Trenn asked about the target audience and who chooses them.

Geoff Hand answered that they serve an indefinite class of persons, are open to in state and out of state individuals, serve an appropriate age range, and balance new versus returning campers. Service is not limited to LBGQ services, it is subject to the application process.

Amanda Rohdenburg stated there are a lot of need for the campers with few opportunities, so there is an application process. They hosted the Lake Association, an older former Boy Scout had a tour. They can be available for people who make appointments. They hosted a prom.

Bob Fletcher recommended to the Board to appoint an inspection committee, get back together and make a decision.

Daryl Burlett asked how much they are open during the year. Amanda Rohdenburg stated that they are open all year, the programs run about two weeks.

Geoff Hand thanked the Board for their time, as the decision has an impact on the services.

John Hill asked the closing date when the property was purchased. Gina answered May 16, 2024.

Guy Charlton discussed appointing an inspection committee, but believes it may not be necessary because it is not about the appraisal appeal. Bob Fletcher believes you should treat it like an assessment appeal, recommending three people on the inspection committee so as to not have to have a warned meeting. Daryl Burlett, John Hill and Guy Charlton volunteered for the inspection committee. After a discussion, the date was set for August 29 at 9:00 AM. The Board recessed the hearing until September 2, 2025 at 5:00 PM.

Review of voter list. Purged voters, and challenged voters that have not voted in two years should be purged, and voter list was handed out by the clerk.

Daryl Burlett asked Bob Fletcher if we can tax exempt a percentage of the property.

Bob Fletcher let the Board know that the appeal process can be done every year, if the organization grows in the process. The decision isn't permanent. In order to make part of the property tax exempt, one would have to subdivide the property.

John Hill motioned, seconded by Daryl Burlett to accept the list of purged voters. So moved.

John Hill motioned, seconded by Daryl Burlett to accept the list of challenged voters. So moved.

Motion to allow public comment by Daric Brown, seconded by John Hill, motion carries. John Fedor-Cunningham stated that back in 1999, Les Burleson wanted to tax the Boy Scout Camp. VLCT said they could be taxed. They met with Boy Scouts and the Boy Scouts said they could be taxed, but would then become a federal Council and would not be taxable. Hence, they were never taxed by the Town.

John Hill requested an executive session for legal matters. Darryl Burlett seconded it.

John Hill made a motion to come out of executive session, Daryl Burlett seconded it.

John Hill made a motion, Daryl Burlett seconded to make public the confidential material sent to the BCA email. So moved.

The meeting adjourned at 5:54 PM on a motion from John Hill with a second from Daryl Burlett.