

Minutes of Board of Assessment Appeals Meeting Amended - 09/13/25

Date and time: 09/13/25 9:00 AM to: 09/13/25 12:11 PM
Present: Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary, Patrick Hughes, Mike Bekech, BAA Chair, Gary Cicchiello, Kim Kalajainen, Absent:, Sue Graham
CC: Diane Vitagliano, Assessor
Location: East Lyme Town Hall- Upper Conference Room
108 Pennsylvania Avenue, Niantic, CT, 06357

Topics

1. Call to Order & Attendance

Note Chair Bekech called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Additions to the Agenda

Note There was none.

3. Motor Vehicle Appeals (2024 Grand List)

3-1. Joseph Johnson of 8 Cvasin Drive

Note Mr. Bekech swore Mr. Johnson in.

Note Mr. Johnson stated that he owns three vehicles, but the MSRP listed for two of them is incorrect. The first is a 2019 Harley Davidson FLTRXS, and he provided the related tax bills. He explained that he has the base model Harley, but the charges reflect the highest model available, resulting in a difference of several thousand dollars. Since motorcycles don't come with MSRP stickers, he contacted Harley directly. He believes the correct MSRP should be \$27,989.

Note Mr. Hughes explained that a 5% depreciation will occur every year and whatever they determine today will be the baseline.

Note Mr. Johnson noted that he owns a 2015 Subaru Legacy, for which the correct MSRP should be \$23,795. He provided a copy of the original MSRP sticker as proof. He suggested that the town include the MSRP figure used in the calculation on the tax paperwork to make the process clearer for residents.

Note Mr. Johnson also noted that he owns a 2023 Dodge RAM Truck, which he purchased used from Secor, a dealership that has since been sold. He explained that he is having difficulty obtaining the correct MSRP. When he contacted Dodge RAM, they directed him back to the dealership, but the dealership stated they no longer have the paperwork. He expressed concern about overpaying, even if the difference is as little as \$5, emphasizing that it is the principle of the matter. He also feels the current valuation is too high.

Note Mr. Hughes and Mr. Bekech advised Mr. Johnson that he could use the vehicle's VIN number to look up the MSRP. Mr. Johnson responded that the figures vary depending on the source he checks with.

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
EAST LYME, CT
2025 SEP 15 A 9:18
Cecilia M. Bekech
TOWN CLERK

Note Mr. Bekech explained that the Board can only respond to the information provided as outlined by statute. Mr. Cicchiello added that if state data is not available, the town relies on Price Digest. Mr. Johnson commented that if the town is going to use MSRP values, residents should be able to obtain them directly from the manufacturer.

Note Mr. Bekech noted that new legislation often has gaps in its first year, and while the next legislative session begins in January, any adjustments would not take effect until May or June—though they could be applied retroactively. He suggested that Mr. Johnson contact his legislator to share his concerns.

Note Mr. Hughes further suggested trying to locate a similar truck to compare MSRPs. Mr. Johnson replied that with the many available trim levels, finding a match is like “looking for a needle in a haystack.”

Note Mr. Johnson expressed that he wishes the tax office would issue a single bill rather than three separate bills. He accidentally miscalculated the total, and his payment was short by three cents. He is now being charged interest and asked whether the tax office would consider waiving the \$2, emphasizing that it is a matter of principle.

4. Deliberations (if time permits)

4-1. Joseph Johnson of 8 Cavasin Drive

Note Mr. Bekech suggested allowing the Assessor’s office to calculate the percentage off the MSRP while recording the MSRP on the form. He explained that the town’s figure is based on the value in the system, which is usually an average.

Note Ms. Kalajainen asked whether this figure represents the median or the high range. Ms. Vitagliano responded that the State has not been consistent and she has observed discrepancies between Price Digest and JD Power. She clarified that going forward, the town will rely solely on Price Digest, and when pricing a vehicle, they will use the lowest value rather than the highest.

Note Ms. Vitagliano added that residents can provide their MSRP sticker, and the Assessor’s office will adjust the value accordingly. She also noted that the formula is available on the website: $\text{MSRP} \times \text{depreciation} \times 70\%$.

Note 2015 Subaru, #508052-

Note Mr. Bekech noted he brought his MSRP paperwork, which has a figure of \$23,795, which is what he wants his value changed to. He reminded the Board that the Assessor’s office will act on the calculations.

Decision MOTION (1)

Mr. Hughes moved to adjust the MSRP of the 2015 Subaru, #508052 to \$23,795.

Ms. Kalajainen seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 4-0-0.

Note 2019 Harley Davidson, #508054-

Decision MOTION (2)

Mr. Hughes moved to adjust the MSRP of the 2019 Harley Davidson, #508054 to \$27,989, which Harley Davidson recommended.

Mr. Cicchiello seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 4-0-0.

5. Motor Vehicle Appeals Continued

5-1. David Godbout of 15 Cardinal Road

Note Mr. Bekech swore Mr. Godbout in.

Note Mr. Godbout said he has two motor vehicles, a 2014 Chevy Volt, #506166, and a 2015 Chevy Volt, #506168.

Note Mr. Godbout addressed Bill 501 and raised concerns regarding the lack of a quorum for the Legislative hearings, providing screenshots of recorded meetings to support his claim. He noted that electronic attendance does not constitute in-person presence and therefore does not establish a quorum.

Note Mr. Cicchiello clarified that the Board's issue pertains solely to the application of MSRP values. Mr. Godbout responded that they are operating under the assumption that the law grants the Board certain authority. Ms. Kalajainen emphasized that it is the Board's responsibility to enforce state law, and that they cannot control legislative outcomes. Mr. Godbout disagreed, asserting that the Board does, in fact, have such authority and expressed a desire for his vehicle appeals to be handled under the previous procedures.

Note Ms. Kalajainen suggested that the Board could make a motion to adjourn and discuss the matter further with town officials. Mr. Godbout contended that any action taken under the current rules would be void, as his paperwork was submitted under the prior regulations. He also noted that he had spoken with State Representative Menapace, who incorrectly assumes that the State Legislature operates under FOIA guidelines, whereas it is guided by the Constitution.

Note Mr. Cicchiello observed that the Board has not received guidance from the Attorney General's office, and therefore, their role is limited to applying the law regarding MSRP. He acknowledged Mr. Godbout's objections, commended his diligence, and noted that if litigation ultimately supports Mr. Godbout's position, the Board could be instructed to act retroactively. He further noted that Mr. Godbout's concerns are matters for a higher court.

Note Mr. Godbout recommended that the Board review its authority further and consult with the town attorney. He suggested that the Board document issues related to the General Assembly limiting public access to proceedings and the lack of accessibility for handicapped individuals in the building.

Note Mr. Bekech noted that the Board of Assessment Appeals currently has a quorum and expressed appreciation for Mr. Godbout's position. Mr. Godbout inquired whether he should file a motion to reconsider; Mr. Bekech indicated that this option may be available as part of his appeal, while Mr. Cicchiello stated that he does not believe there is a formal provision for reconsideration.

Note Mr. Godbout explained that the police prevented him from attending the meeting earlier, which he stated was within his legal rights. He referenced previous incidents from 2012 and 2013, noting that FOIA rulings affirmed the public's right to observe both the proceedings and the Board's deliberations.

6. Deliberations Continued

6-1. David Godbout of 15 Cardinal Road

Decision MOTION (3)

Mr. Hughes moved to take no action based on the fact that no MSRP values were offered.

Mr. Cicchiello seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 4-0-0.

Note Mr. Godbout said he will be making a motion to reconsider and again suggested that the Board look into their authority.

7. Adjournment

Decision MOTION (4)

Ms. Kalajainen moved to adjourn the September 13th, 2025, Board of Assessment Appeals meeting at 12:11 p.m.

Mr. Hughes seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 4-0-0.

Note Respectfully Submitted,
Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary