

Town of Shaftsbury
Board of Civil Authority Meeting/Appeals Hearing
August, 25 2026
Town Hall 677 VT Route 7A

Members present: Karen Mellinger, Vice-Chair; Mike Caslin; Abby Chaloux; Eamon Mulligan; David Mance; Ann Mele; Joseph Coonradt; Joan Vargo; Linda Morris; Kate Seaton (arrived via zoom); and Marlene Hall, Town Clerk

Ms. Mellinger called meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Ms. Mellinger asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the July 29th hearing. Mr. Mance made the motion, Mr. Caslin seconded. Motion passed 11-0-0.

The board then moved to the review of inspection reports.
There were two withdrawals from the original hearing. Ms. Cushman and Mr. Serrao chose not to pursue the appeal.

Appellant Chawla:

See attached inspection report

Appellant Sausville:

See attached inspection report for both properties

Appellant Johnson:

See attached inspection report

Appellant Cornwell:

See attached inspection report

Appellant Cushman:

Withdrew

Appellant Serrao:

Withdrew

The Board then entered into deliberative session. Motion made by Ms. Chaloux and seconded by Ms. Mele. Motion passed 11-0-0

Board left deliberative session at 5:50. With no other business to come before the board, Ms. Mele made the motion to adjourn, Mr. Coonradt seconded. Motion passed 11-0-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Marlene Hall, Town Clerk

To: The Board of Civil Authority

From: Inspection Committee: Marna Dailey, Karen Mellinger, Linda Morris

Date: August 5, 2026

RE: Inspection of Property ID #030102, located on 6779 Route 7A, Shaftsbury
Owned by Sunjit Chawla

Inspection was made by the three Committee members on August 5. As Mr. Chawla was unable to be present, a friend of his, Jack Rochette, met the Committee for the inspection.

The property is located on Route 7A, just north of the Lake Shaftsbury entrance and south of the Arlington line. It is bordered by residential properties, the closest on the south side being a small home on a small lot. There is an open field across 7A, tree/brush lines on the north and south of the property and a steep hillside on the rear (west side) of the property.

The Committee walked the perimeter of the property with Jack Rochette who was able to identify the approximate boundary lines of the property. The septic system and well (identified as an Artesian well by Jack) locations were pointed out to the Committee. The home site is level and the property observed seems consistent with the .5-acre figure indicated by the listers.

The one-story building (excluding the below ground basement) is quite large, with multiple additions coming off from the original building. The square footage identified by the Listers appears reasonable. The Committee walked around the house's exterior, noting that most windows appeared in good condition, as was the vinyl siding. The roofing material appeared to be mainly asphalt, with perhaps some metal on small additions, which was hard to discern from the ground level. Deterioration was not evident. As this had previously been an animal shelter, there were many outside metal "runs" for dogs, which were accessed from inside cages. A good deal of the property immediately surrounding the building was poured concrete.

An interior inspection of the house revealed a very large space with multiple additions containing many divided rooms. Several rooms contained large metal kennels that were in good condition. Some of the flooring was vinyl. The building currently is being used to house a huge number of stored items, including paintings, books, furniture and other household type property. Rooms seemed to be separated with wallboard, which seemed to be in fair condition.

There was a room clearly identified at one time as the bathroom, with toilet and two sinks. Another small room had plumbing for another sink, although the plumbing fixtures were not attached. In addition, there was an area that had hook ups for laundry.

Our committee observed that there are some areas of damaged ceiling in one of the “kennel” rooms and in another small room towards the back of the house. Areas of the ceiling appeared to have been insulated with vermiculite, only visible due to damage in the ceilings.

The odor we observed while walking through the house was one we attributed to mold and mildew.

We accessed the basement, which is below the original portion of the building, via a set of wooden stairs. The basement was quite damp, with a substantial amount of black mold and mildew covering the ceiling and walls. The flooring was cement, with drains drilled in the floor, but there was still some standing water. There are several separate rooms in the basement, one of which houses the furnace and two old oil tanks.

The Committee agreed that the house has been rightly depreciated by 80 percent by the Listers. Although the upstairs could be cleaned up and renovated, the basement area/mold issue is considerable and would need to be mitigated. The Committee did note that there are plumbing rough-ins, although they were not noted on the lister card. It was not clear to the Committee that the listers had visually inspected the property. The Committee believes there certainly is value in the building, as evidenced by the storage for which it is currently being used. We believe that the 80% depreciation figure is fair.

A large expanse of the outside property is currently covered by the extensive size of the building. This, in our opinion, should not detract from the actual value of the property. Should a property owner decide to remove any of the extensions on the main house, it would provide for a very reasonable space outside.

The Committee feels that the current valuation of \$79,500 valuation is appropriate.

Submitted by Committee members:

Linda Morris

Marna Daily

Karen Mellinger

Inspection Report

Attendees: Alice Sausville, Abby Chaloux, Eamon Mulligan, Kate Seaton, Dave Mance

Lands of Alice Sausville, Chapel Road, Shaftsbury

Parcel 180230 – 18 +/- acres, 0 Chapel Road

- Parcel is located on the northern side of Chapel Road (town road), with an observed right-of-way for power lines and telephone utilities.
- Inspection consisted of observation from Chapel Road of the southern boundary line and a walk along the eastern boundary via a neighboring driveway.
- The parcel is largely vegetated, with grasses and small trees along the southern border and mature trees and thick brush along the eastern boundary.
- The property appeared to be generally flat with no significant slope.
- Parcel is in the R40 Zoning District
- The wetland inventory map indicates that approximately 40% of the parcel contains soils consistent with Class 2 wetlands.

The property value was reduced from \$87,300 to \$37,000 following an appeal to the Assessor's office.

Highest and best use is likely for use as forest land with the possibility of use for a seasonal camp and the value assigned (\$37,000) is consistent with these uses.

Inspection Report

Attendees: Alice Sausville, Abby Chaloux, Eamon Mulligan, Kate Seaton, Dave Mance

Lands of Alice Sausville, Spur Road, Shaftsbury

Parcel 180238 – 10 acres at the north end of Spur Road

- Spur Road is a private shared Right of Way. Testimony from owner is that she has a 50 foot right of way to reach her parcel.
- The parcel is 100% wooded with a mix of mature hardwood and scattered pine.
- A small seasonal stream flows westerly along the north property line. Owner constructed a wood road to a “picnic area” in the northern portion of the parcel.
- The property is gently sloping to the west.
- Utilities end at the neighboring property and would need to be extended to reach this parcel.
- Parcel is in the R-40 Zoning District
- The wetland inventory map indicates that approximately half the parcel contains soils consistent with Class 2 wetlands.

The property value was reduced from \$62,500 to \$27,500 due to access and the contributory value of a 2 acre house site was removed.

Highest and best use is likely for use as a camp and/or woodlot and the value assigned (\$27,500) is consistent with these uses.

Inspection Report

Attendees: Zoe Contros Kearn, Joan Vargo, Katherine Seaton

Lands of Leon Johnson, 33 White Creek Rd, Shaftsbury

Parcel 13-22-16 – 0.5 acres, 1,580 sq ft single family home and small detached garage

Parcel is located at the intersection of Elm St. and White Creek Rd, sitting on the western side of White Creek and north of Elm St.

Property shares a small portion of a private driveway with another residence, 13 Elm St., and has view of a well-maintained agricultural property to the East and green forested hills to the West.

Railroad tracks are close to the parcel, roughly 260 yards from the residence along the Western boundary.

Inspection involved walk around the property and its two structures: primary residence and detached 1-car garage, followed by a later interior inspection with the property owner.

Exterior parcel is relatively clear with tall grass surrounding the structures, some shrubbery and trees line the parcel boundaries to the west of the road frontage.

Primary residence and detached garage are structurally sound per the property owner, though both structures require substantial rehabilitation to be rendered remotely habitable.

Comprehensive remediation is required, including but not limited to: weatherproofing, full interior restoration to ameliorate extensive elemental damage, pest control to address evidence of varied pest activity, new plumbing, new electrical.

The property appeared to be generally flat with no significant slope, with the exception of a minor slope on the southern corner punctuated by a deteriorating old stone retaining wall along the shared driveway.

The property value was reduced from \$146,000.00 to \$90,700.00 following an appeal to the Assessor's office.

Highest and best use of this property would include renovation of the structurally sound existing house and garage and re-sale. The value assigned (\$90,700) is consistent with these uses.

Inspection Report

Attendees: Robert Cornwell, Nathan Cornwell, Zoe Contros Kearn, Abby Chaloux, Eamon Mulligan

Lands of Robert and Lauriane Cornwell, Hollow Hide-A-Way Road, Shaftsbury

Parcel 020114 – 31 +/- acres, 0 Hollow Hide-A-Way Road

- Hollow Hide-A-Way Road is a private shared Right of Way. Testimony from owner is that he has a 50 foot deeded right of way to reach his parcel.
- Inspection consisted of observation from Hollow Hide-A-Way Road along a pathway (assumed right of way) to a water bar located about a 10-minute walk into the parcel from west to east. Testimony from Nathan Cornwell indicated that vehicle access at least part way into the parcel was possible and practiced in the past
- A stream was observed running parallel to the south of the assumed right of way, with testimony from Nathan Cornwell that a lean-to structure had once been on the property.
- The parcel is vegetated with mature hardwood trees. Nathan Cornwell stated that he and his brother have requested permission to cut trees for wood on the lot.
- The property significantly slopes to the west.
- Parcel is in the R80 Zoning District

Highest and best use is likely for use as a woodlot with the possibility of use for a seasonal camp and the value assigned (\$65,200.00) is consistent with these uses.