

**STATE OF VERMONT  
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Vermont Public Utility Commission Orders and )  
Memoranda issued in response to COVID-19 ) Case No. 20-0789-INV  
pandemic )

**RESPONSES TO PUC QUESTIONS POSED IN 4/7/2020 MEMO RE ACCESS TO  
GRAND LISTS FOR IDENTIFYING ADJOINING LANDOWNERS**

Dunkiel Saunders Elliott Raubvogel & Hand, PLLC hereby submits the following comments in response to the PUC's April 7, 2020 Memo:

**1. In your experience, what percentage of town clerks' offices are open for land records research? Is this by appointment or otherwise?**

Thus far, we have generally found that the Towns we have contacted have been able to help with specific questions over email/phone. One Town claimed they would help by appointment only, but was ultimately able to help over email. However, we have also experienced at least one Town that has not been responsive to multiple emails.

**2. If you have visited a town clerk's office by appointment, what was your experience with close personal contact? Was social distancing properly maintained?**

We have not had to visit any offices.

**3. If you have visited a town clerk's office recently, what specific concerns did you have?**

n/a

**4. Have you contacted any town clerks either online or by telephone to request the names and addresses of any owners of property adjoining either your or a client's project site? If yes, how did the clerk respond to your request?**

Yes. We conducted initial adjoining research via VCGI mapping and town websites, and then requested confirmation/updates from the Town clerks, which we received from either the clerk or the lister.

**5. Have you attempted to use online municipal records to identify adjoining landowners? If yes, how successful were you in your efforts?**

Yes, in addition to the VCGI mapping system, we have also used 2018 grand lists from the VT Dept of Taxes to cross-check the info before requesting confirmation from the Towns themselves.

**6. If you have attempted to use online municipal records to identify adjoining landowners, did you find it complex or relatively easy? Compare the amount of time it took you to perform the task using online records versus traveling to a clerk's office in person.**

We have frequently used online municipal records as the initial starting point for adjoining identification and have found it extremely useful as the online resources are typically searchable, maps are more user-friendly, and there is no need to make physical copies. We have also found it to be a significant time and cost savings where Town offices are willing to confirm the online records and a physical trip to the Town Office can be avoided.


**7. In your experience, are online databases that allow you to search for the names and addresses of adjoining landowners widely available in Vermont municipalities, or is the availability limited? Please estimate how widely available these resources are.**

We have found that town databases containing grand list information or other interactive parcel mapping are not widely available, though more are becoming available over time and are most common with larger/more populated towns as would be expected. Some towns have online databases available that are very outdated, even as far back as 2016, which is not helpful for adjoining research. However, most towns have parcels delineated on the VCGI mapping, which we have found to be a useful starting point and many towns are receptive to helping provide list information based on the parcel mapping (as opposed to just the address of the project site).

**8. Given any difficulties you have experienced in identifying adjoining landowners as a result of town clerks' offices either being closed or operating by appointment only, what recommendations do you have for ensuring that adjoining landowners receive proper notifications, either in advance of a petition being filed or at the time a petition is filed as currently required under statute or Commission rule?**

We would recommend that the PUC temporarily amend the requirement to access the current grand list information within 60 days. While Petitioners should still be required to use best available efforts to identify adjoiningers accurately, this should, for the time being, include relying on VCGI mapping and available municipal database listings to the extent that information is available. Alternatively, if Petitioners have previously submitted a 45-day letter that included an adjoininger list that was based on the grand list as it existed 60 days prior to 45-day letter, Petitioners should be permitted to use that same list when submitting a subsequent petition until Town Offices are reopened.

Dated at Burlington, Vermont, this 21<sup>st</sup> day of April, 2020.

By:   
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