

Calais Roads Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, June 13, 2013
Calais Town Office 8:30 pm to 10:00 pm
Approved June 27, 2013

Committee members present (clockwise around the table from the Chair): J.C. Myers (Chair)(member of the 1st Roads Committee), Peter Harvey (Secretary), Stephanie Kaplan (Vice Chair), Trey Martin, Craig Line, Barbara Weedon, Conrad Smith, & Doug Lilley.

Also in attendance: Scott Bassage (Selectboard member)

The Calais Selectboard appointed the 1st Calais Roads Advisory Committee April 11, 2011 as a result of discussion raised from the floor about the town roads at the March 1, 2011 Town Meeting. The Calais Selectboard appointed the 2nd Calais Roads Advisory Committee at their Monday, June 10, 2013 meeting as a result of continued complaints that were brought to a head when road side trees were marked with red paint. The 2nd Calais Roads Advisory Committee (from here on referred to as the Roads Committee) met for the first time at 8:30 pm at the Town Office, Thursday, June 13, 2013. All meetings are open to the public. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend and participate under the guidance of the Committee Chair.

Bracketed [words/numbers] are the secretary' additions for clarification.

8:30 pm The Roads Committee got off to a jovial, lively, friendly, energetic start with its first meeting.

Conrad nominated Craig to be Chair
Craig declined and nominated J.C. (seconded by Peter)
J.C. was voted to Chair the Committee 8-0

Stephanie volunteered to be Vice-Chair (seconded by Conrad)
Stephanie was voted to Vice-Chair 8-0

Conrad nominated Peter for the secretary (seconded by Craig)
Peter was voted to secretary 8-0

Scott handed out copies of the Calais Trails Overview Map from the Town Trails Committee. Donna left copies of the Road Erosion Site map for Calais for each of us as well as several large maps for us to use in the office.

J.C. recognized that not everyone knew each other and asked each to say who they are and why they "want to be part of the Calais Roads Committee. What I am interested in hearing is what is it about the situation with Calais roads, or what has transpired before with the first Roads Committee that brings you out to be activists in this way and what do you want to achieve in this group?" J.C. summarized what each member said as we spoke. He kept the meeting moving along and made sure all at the table spoke and were respectfully listened to with very few interruptions.

Below are short summaries of their responses. An audio recording of the meeting is available from the Town Clerk:

Peter – "...The roads are our main public space that we all use every day and I think our most important [built] resource... And how we use that is greatly dependent on how they are maintained, how usable they are... How the roads are maintained limits or expands how the roads can be used... I want to see the roads work for the people who live here..."

Stephanie– "...It's really important to me that the roads be accessible and useful for these purposes [running and bicycling] as much as vehicles... [The roads] just keep getting wider, drier, with less shade... I'm really upset with it. I really

want to be a part with coming up with ways to have some way to affect how these roads are maintained... I believe a lot of people in Calais agree that the roads should be maintained...for people as well as cars..."

Scott – "I'm from the Selectboard and I'm here to help you! [lots of laughs] ...to remind us to follow the VT Open Meeting Laws...If I had one hope, it would be that this committee would come up with a special Calais interpretation of Road Standards...Broadly, the committee came about because we wanted help in ways of taking care of our roads..."Scott recommended that we all listen to an interview with Mike Garand at <http://www.rumblestripvermont.com/> .

Trey Martin – "...I'm interested in considering all the different factors that go into making the decisions. It is quite complex to balance aesthetics and scenic character with water quality best management practices with good 5-season maintenance. I work at Agency of Natural Resources, but I am speaking for myself as a new resident in Calais. I hope I can lend my experience as a government and private practice attorney to this Selectboard in adapting what state government has given us to our local needs. I think this is possible for us to make decisions that reflect the preferences expressed in our town Plan, but also have the support of state government."

...I recognize that for municipalities the one size fits all [solutions] to any town from Montpelier [state government] does not work very well and those Road and Bridge Standards don't take into account a lot of the local factors that we have going on. I work at ANR. But before that I worked in private practice. I worked with a lot of selectboards trying to make decisions about how to move forward on lots of kinds of issues. I would like to lend that experience too...I've talked with a lot of people at ANR and the Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation, including commissioners, who said, 'you shouldn't cut those trees down. And if not for these Road and Bridge Standards, figure out how to do it.'

Craig – "...I have been assuming, or I guess that I hoped, over the years, that there would be some sort of systematic approach to road care, maintenance, rebuilding, whatnot and I was surprised when I learned in fact no there isn't. And there are no logs to keep track of what the road crew does, how much gravel goes where..."

Barbara - "...I'd like to think that that Town Plan is something we can depend on. The Town has voted on it, hours and hours were spent on it. We should be able to use that as some guidance. It shouldn't be superseded by these standards from some agency. I'd like to think that when we have constraints, such as we want to keep the trees, but need to have a road that's not going to be muddy and is going to drain well...that those are the constraints. You figure out some other solutions, creative alternatives..."

Conrad – "...when AOT and the Water Quality folks, VT Back Roads, the Local Roads folks, and even our Lakes and Ponds folks, and everybody starts saying, this is the way you have to do roads, I'm beginning to say, there is something not right here..."

Doug – "...I am a tree hugger, but I do know that some of those trees that are marked on Adamant Rd need to go... he [road commissioner] is going to put in a ditch and he's going to expose the roots and he's going to kill the trees behind it. That's what my problem is... They widened the road. They filled that ditch in...thin some of those trees, the other trees will get healthier...and you'll have a better looking road...Don't we own this land. Don't we own this town. Let's take this town back..."

J.C. – "...the roads are a lot more than a pathway for the automobile....I work for the Central VT Community Land Trust. I'm a facilities director. I think the roads in Calais are observably worse than the roads in the surrounding towns, the back roads...and that bothers me because we spend, I think in 2011 \$687,000 [2011-12 actual \$644,065.65; 2012-13 budgeted \$687,904; 2013-14 proposed \$833,042.] I think that the Town of Calais can do better in the way that it does business, in the way that it operates, because I think that the road is like a business. And I don't think it's managed like a business... Times are changing. Expectations are changing. The population is changing. People want different things. They want to be able to drive without bottoming out. So the Town of Calais, through its Selectboard sends the road commissioner to the State of Vermont for training, and has done for a number of years running. In those trainings that person is going to be impressionable because he's talking with experts about road building, is taught how to build roads. The way that that

person is taught, Alfie in this case, or whoever, is taught to build roads, is not compatible with a lot of the values that people who live here in the town have...We have to take those standards and say, how does this apply to our individual situation? For me I'm not always going to be the tree preservationist. I think you have to make individual decisions and I think there are guidelines that we can come up with that are clear ... the one major aspect is how to do business, how do we run this?...how do we judge that performance? How do we say whether we have been successful or not?...I don't think that we have accountability...I'm hoping that we can achieve that in a way that is implementable, that doesn't kill the Selectboard. And I think that maybe we might actually get down to talking about some more administrative muscle for the town of Calais because I think this is an administrative task....I don't think there is a systematic plan...I don't think it's ever been analyzed how to best use the resources we already have...if we really want to improve the roads, we're going to have to probably, in the end, allocate additional resources to it. It's going to be hard, but first, before we do that, we have got to be sure that we are using the resource we have allocated in a very efficient way, so we can go back in hard economic times and high property taxes to ask the town of Calais to put more into their roads. You better demonstrate that you are doing everything you can with everything you've got first. And I don't think we're doing that..."

18 minutes of follow-up discussion best understood by listening to the recording (8 minutes). Unfortunately the battery died on my digital recorder and didn't record the last 10 minutes of the meeting.

Stephanie added "I am also representing the Conservation Commission as well as myself personally. The Conservation Commission supports what this Committee is doing and is especially concerned about making sure that any road work is done so as to prevent erosion and storm water runoff from polluting our lakes and streams."

J.C. recommended that we not meet as a whole group every time. He suggested that we meet again in two weeks, each with a list of "five headings" to form sub-committees that will meet between Full Committee meetings. "Our goal is to produce a set of recommendation and guidelines. If we break down our efforts in a way so that people go away from that [full] meeting, do some of that work, and come back and present it to the meeting for the sort of group feedback and how would you change it, so that we are not all of us trying to work on the same thing at once and having this massive round table on every single subject, but rather having people do what is essentially committee work, going and looking at specific topics. And maybe the initial work of the committee is to decide what those topics are. What are those things that we are going to specifically be producing? We are not going to ultimately be an advisory group that meets on Monday mornings with the road crew to tell them how they are going to act that week. Eventually, if there is a person that does that, that person will be armed with what our standards are... And our written standards will be the result of a process that is open that has opportunity for input, that has some expert opinion, and that draws from different sources of real information. For example I think we can look into what is the Town's relationship to the State Highway Grants? How do we get them? Are we maximizing them? How do we apply them? What are the restrictions on them? That's a big subject. Two people could go and do research on that, come back to the committee, make some recommendations, we could adopt those and they could go into the main set of recommendations. Does that sound like a good approach to this?"

We agreed to meet in two weeks with each of us bringing a list of 5 ideas that we want to work on. After that we may only meet as a whole committee monthly to bring our work together while the subcommittees work together during the month.

The next meeting of the Roads Advisory Committee will be Thursday, June 27, @ 8:30 pm at the Town Office. As always, per Vermont Open Meeting Law, all meetings with a quorum (a simple majority present, 4 or more of the full 8 members) are public meetings. The full board meetings will be advertised in the Front Porch Forum, the town website <http://www.calaisvermont.gov/>, the Town office, and the three stores.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.

These minutes submitted by the committee secretary, Peter Harvey

The Selectboard's charge for this committee is attached.

Calais Roads Advisory Committee Operation Standards – 6-10-2013

- Committee members will be appointed by the Calais Selectboard at a regularly warned meeting
- The Committee will generally operate under Robert's Rules of Order (see website: <http://www.robertsrules.com/>);
- The Committee will appoint by a majority vote of the Committee quorum all officer positions including the positions of Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary;
- The Committee will establish a proposed schedule for regular meetings of at least 1 time per month, with the draft schedule to be approved by the Selectboard;
- Meetings will be held in a public place so that members of the Calais general public may attend;
- The Committee will allow for public input during a portion of the meeting as determined by the Committee;
- The Committee will develop and make available before each meeting a committee agenda and will develop and distribute minutes of the committee meetings;
- The Selectboard will participate in committee meetings with at least one Selectboard member attending each meeting;
- The Committee will consider the charge of the previous Calais Roads Advisory Committee approved by the Selectboard on March 12, 2012;
- Committee Charge: the Committee will consider and report out their findings and recommendations regarding the following topics of importance:
 - Scenic roads and maintaining the scenic character of Calais Roads
 - Scenic shade trees and approaches for their protection and reestablishment
 - When and under what circumstances should shade trees be removed
 - Evaluate road maintenance standards to be applied on Calais Roads, with sensitivity being given to roads of a scenic or rural character;
 - Evaluate and develop a categorization system for Calais roads based upon criteria to include level of use, speed of travel, road width, scenic/historic character, safety, impact to residents, environmental protection, sprawl, traffic calming, and ease/cost of maintenance;
 - Evaluate possible variations between roads and applicable maintenance standards to the road category
 - Evaluate roads that require upgrades
 - Evaluate roads that may be downgraded

- Evaluate road conditions and maintenance with respect to non-motorized traffic (e.g. bicycle, pedestrian, animal powered transport).
- Other matters that may come to the attention of the committee through public input or from the Selectboard