

**Calais Selectboard Special Meeting**  
**August 15, 2016, 7pm**  
**Calais Town Hall**

Present: Selectboard members Scott Bassage, Toby Talbot, Denise Wheeler, Rose Pelchuck, John Brabant absent; Conservation Commission members Stephanie Kaplan, Julie Hand, Larry Bush; Road Commissioner Alfred Larrabee; Margaret Bowen, Cathy Kashanski, Eric Sorenson.

Chair Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7pm.

**Conservation of Armstrong Farm**

Jon Ramsay, Vermont Land Trust, reported that about 50 people attended the open house for the Armstrong farm. The next open house is Saturday, August 20, 10 – 2:00. Anyone can attend.

Jon and the Selectboard reviewed suggested changes and concerns expressed at a previous meeting which Jon had addressed. Jon said he had experience with other towns (Stowe and Charlotte) where there were many parties of interest, including the town. The changes reviewed included:

**The Easement:**

- The character of neighborhood and rural character
- Clarification that renewable energy would be onsite, with minimal excess sold back to the electric company.
- River corridor is 50 feet on either side of the brook, with public access a one-rod strip on both sides of the brook.
- Beavers – Conservation Commission was not satisfied with Agency of Natural Resource solution (killing). Jon suggested a rewrite: to the extent possible the grantor shall make reasonable attempts to remove beavers without killing. He will fine-tune the wording with VLT legal help so that it is not open to interpretation. Toby suggested listing the eradication methods.

**Grant of Executory Interest:**

Denise said the town's attorney (Stitzel, Page and Fletcher) will review this document. Jon briefly reviewed: there will be no amendments without the town's input; the easement cannot be transferred; VLT will annually monitor the farm onsite with the farmer; the town can request a monitoring report. Larry Bush asked about the town's relationship with VT Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) which also holds an interest in the property. Jon explained VHCB designates VLT as the primary steward. The Grant of Executory Interest is a standard document used in recent VLT purchases.

**Letter from CC to SB:**

The Board reviewed the Conservation Commission's letter regarding the proposed conservation and their recommendation that \$30,000 from the town's Conservation Fund be put toward the

project. Jon said he was happy to share proposals for purchase of the Armstrong Farm, but the Conservation Commission and Selectboard needed to be aware the proposals contain confidential information. Toby asked the Commission why the amount proposed from the Conservation Fund is twice the amount that has been committed to Bub's Best (Pete's Greens) easement on the Legare Farm. Stephanie said the Commission did not compare the Armstrong property to the Legare property. Julie Hand noted the town has been involved in the Armstrong easement from the beginning while the town was brought into the Legare Farm easement at the "last minute." Jon explained the Armstrong Farm is part of a VLT program specifically focused on bringing farm land back into production; there is a higher level of investment and more risk taken on by VLT as well as more ongoing support being offered to the incoming farmer. Stephanie pointed out that 45 acres of the Legare Farm was not conserved. Cath Kashinski said she supported Ella Armstrong's choice to go this route (conservation); it is a value to the community. She noted that Pete Johnson (Legare Farm owner) is a well-established farmer, which may not be true for the buyer of the Armstrong property. Larry Bush reaffirmed that with the Armstrong Farm the town had been a partner in the conservation efforts from the beginning.

Denise noted the board's support is contingent upon legal review of the Grant of Executory Interest, the rewrite of the beaver section and wording of a reference to scenic vistas.

Scott moved to support the project to conserve the Armstrong property (parcel 030008) with \$30,000 from the Calais Conservation Fund under provision V.S.A. 24, 77 and 2804 based on the review and recommendation of the Calais Conservation Commission and contingent upon review of the Grant of Executory Interest by the town's attorney. Toby seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

Jon noted that if the buyer has requests he will come back to the Conservation Commission. The VHCB and the Federal government will review the easement. In late fall or early winter, he will provide a document for signing. The VHCB meets October 5.

**North Calais Wall Bids:**

Toby presented the four bids: Lamberti excavating \$192,660; G&N Excavation \$240,800; RJ Piche Excavating \$172,000; Woodbury Mountain Site Works \$177,425. The project will begin as soon as possible. The estimated cost is \$194,000 with the town paying 10%. The grant amount is \$175,000. Rose made a motion to award the North Calais wall bid to RJ Piche of Essex Junction. Scott seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10pm

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Fitch, Clerk