

Selectboard Special Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 8, 2019 at 7pm at the Calais Town Offices

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Vice Chair), Clif Emmons (Member), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), David Schütz, Dot Naylor, Scott Bassage, Larry Bush, Margaret Bowen (DRB Chair), Jan Ohlsson (DRB), Anne Winchester (DRB), Barbara Weedon (DRB), Walter Amses (DRB)

1. Call to Order: A quorum of the Selectboard attended the Calais Development Review Board (DRB) meeting. The DRB public meeting was scheduled for the purpose of discussing the 5/2/2019 Calais Town Hall change of use permit application (#2019-15) hearing. The DRB Chair began the meeting at 6:58 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. The DRB Chair noted that the meeting was not a continuation of the 5/2/2019 hearing; the Selectboard acknowledged their understanding and presence at this public meeting to provide follow up documentation.

The DRB Chair expressed her concern over the Selectboard applying to change the use of the Town Hall (to include “cultural” purposes) without a vote of the town, and questioned whether the 2015 survey to gauge public interest and feedback had been taken to a vote. The Selectboard clarified that it has the right to decide on all real estate transactions without public approval, including changes and adjustment to town buildings; however, the Board’s transparency and regular communication on the progression of the project has been available to the public for years. The Selectboard Chair provided a stack of printed meeting minutes that include updates between the Town Hall Renovation Committee and the Selectboard going back a few years. The Selectboard also provided the RFP put out for the renovation from 2017 and the information on the town vote for the Town Hall loan. The Town Hall Renovation Committee’s Town Meeting presentation at the time of the \$200,000 loan vote included communicating its intended use by the public and for cultural purposes. The Calais Historic Preservation Committee also published updates on the project and intended future use in the town report. The groups agreed that the question of ownership of the Town Hall building will be answered by the deed which Dot Naylor is working on locating.

The Calais Historic Preservation Committee, represented by David Schütz, commented that they have been involved in five grants for this project since its inception. As a historian, David Schütz remarked that the Town Hall has always been utilized for “cultural” purposes and nothing proposed for use of the building is unique—town halls are, throughout Vermont, used as gathering places and spaces for concerts, dances, poetry readings, lectures. All of these are

the things that are envisioned for Calais' Town Hall and have periodically taken place there throughout the building's entire history.

The groups considered the space's ability to charge for events. David Schütz pointed out that charging for cultural events is routine. The Friends of the Town Hall will be a non-profit set up entirely for the purpose of benefiting the Town Hall. Revenue could be used to cover routine costs such as trash pickup, cleaning, painting, septic pumping, etc. An anonymous donation of larger than \$200,000 was given with the cultural facility very much in mind.

The DRB chair commented that all pieces of info that she had requested except for the deed have been given.

The DRB requested a statement from Don Marsh (septic engineer) confirming that the only location for a septic system mound is as planned across the street (approved by the state).

David Schütz commented that he does not understand the testy attitude coming at the Historic Preservation Committee and Selectboard from the DRB, and his understanding that all have worked tirelessly to accomplish the same end goals as the DRB. He confirmed that the Don Marsh request can be accomplished. Discussion turned to details of the site plan, earth work, overall layout, septic/parking configuration, soils and proximity to the stream. A DRB member's husband's comments and parking layout concerns were discussed. John McCullough and Road Commissioner Alfred Larrabee's work on this were shared (a printed email thread). The Selectboard provided a road ordinance to clarify regarding road parking.

Conversation moved to many details of the parking and traffic flow. The DRB asked the Selectboard to vote at their meeting to approve road parking.

John Brabant commented his appreciation for the DRB's feedback including in their roles as residents, and that if there is significant concern over the project the Selectboard has not yet heard about, they want to know to move forward. Denise Wheeler added that all should focus on working together.

Details discussed included the future possibility of holding Town Meeting at the Town Hall, and that stair spacers have been removed from the plan because they are not historically accurate. David Schütz reported that the Design Advisory Board met last night because of their understanding of what had been proposed at the 5/2/2019 meeting, and will submit a written note to the DRB stating their strong opposition to moving a driveway to the opposite side of the building (the Selectboard Chair noted environmental concerns that this change would contribute; additionally, the second curbcut would not meet VTRANS standards).

The concern of disability access for drop-off, location of the propane tank, and a potential blind spot were raised by the DRB. Barbara Weedon called the parking design a clumsy solution, unsafe, and not the only one. David Schütz pointed out that this is an attribute shared by the Old West Church, the Kent Tavern, and many Vermont public locations that do have clumsy parking; solar lights, well-positioned steps (not currently in the budget), signage, and

parking attendants could be appropriate solutions for the project. Denise Wheeler added that the Edible Gardens project has considered intentional plantings to help designate walk ways. Barbara Weedon continued discussing her concerns around parking and safety. David Schütz reminded the group that design professionals were involved in determining the plan that was submitted. He hoped the DRB would acknowledge the Design Advisory Board's communication and refrain from significant redesign before understanding the professional work brought to bear on the project already.

Barbara Weedon defended her critique of the project as appropriate at this time.

Mirror placement, traffic cones, and temporary signs were discussed as a possibility. The "additional" lot's seasonal use was discussed. The Selectboard Chair commented that meeting space for town commissions is hard to come by, and the renovated Town Hall will be utilized for this purpose year-round. The DRB Chair reiterated the remaining requests of the Selectboard from the DRB:

- the reason for the siting of the septic and if there is any potential for moving it;
- proximity for cars to park near the septic;
- a Selectboard vote on the number of cars that can park on the road.

David Schütz commented that in this learning process, moving through the first season of selling the space to prospective users and learning how many events happen will inform thinking. Denise Wheeler commented that the groups involved are working from a place of planning to have ongoing discussion and dialogue about what works and does not work, and make adjustments from there. The Plainfield Town Opera Hall, for example, has been heavily used for the duration of its history, and yet parking has always been a major challenge; people are used to walking quite a distance from their cars.

4. Adjournment: The DRB meeting was planned to be continued on Thursday, May 30, 2019 at 7pm at the Town Office. The Selectboard adjourned their meeting at 8:25 pm.

Date: 5/9/2019 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the 5/28/2019 meeting

Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1TXCeGJwEjc66Z183p0UNoAQwEyH7jueN>