



TOWN OF CALAIS

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Board of Civil Authority Meeting Tuesday, June 27, 2023

APPROVED MINUTES

Attendees: Charlotte Bassage, Tina Bielenberg, Dillon Burns, Barbara Butler, Michael Loignon, Gabrielle Malina, Jamie Moorby, Anne Toolan, Anne Winchester

BCA Chair Mike Loignon called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Charlotte Bassage moved to approve the Minutes of June 5, 2023 as submitted. Anne Winchester seconded. Motion was approved 9-0.

Barbara gave an overview of the purpose of holding a public vote on August 1, 2023, to ask voters to adopt the 2023 proposed amendments to the Calais Land Use and Development Regulations. She emphasized:

- The Planning Commission (PC) has been working on the proposed amendments for several years and has held a series of public hearings to present them to Calais residents and answer their questions. The most recent PC hearing was May 2, 2023, at which time the PC turned the proposed amendments over to the Selectboard (SB), which held its own public hearing on June 12, 2023.
- At the end of the June 12 hearing, the SB had the option of adopting the proposed amendments themselves, but opted instead to take it to a townwide vote to give voters the opportunity to pass or fail the proposed amendments.
- A vote is needed as soon as possible, because until the amendments are adopted, the PC, the Zoning Administrator, and the Development Review Board (DRB) are required to follow both sets of regulations, which is very confusing as there are point at which they conflict with each other.
- Additionally, until the amendments are adopted, should the Town suffer any catastrophic flooding, we would be considered “out of compliance” and not eligible for the full amount of federal insurance reimbursement we would be eligible for if considered in compliance.

Dillon Burns moved to hold a public vote to adopt the 2023 proposed amendments to the Calais Land Use and Development Regulations on Tuesday, August 1, 2023, 8:00am to 7:00pm at the Calais Town Office. Gabrielle Malina seconded.

Charlotte Bassage expressed concern that voters are not up to speed with the substantial changes incorporated into these amendments, and how those changes will affect their lives.

Charlotte feels strongly that a better effort needs to be made to educate and inform voters of the issue, before asking them to vote. Barbara noted that if voters are not up to speed, it's kind of on them, given the PC and the SB have already held hearings and been available to explain the amendments and answer questions. Charlotte asked that an informational sheet or summary, written in simple language so that the average voter can understand, be mailed with ballots.

It was noted that a 4-page summary of the amendments is already posted on the website, and that a link to that posting can be provided in FPF posts and in hardcopy Warnings around town. Charlotte again emphasized the need for that summary to be written in simple language and easy to understand.

Barbara said that on behalf of the BCA, she will ask for this from the PC. However, the BCA cannot mandate this, nor could Barbara speak on behalf of the PC. Barbara said we will do our best to work collaboratively with the PC to provide a reasonably easy-to-understand information summary.

Tina noted the need to hold a Public Informational Hearing about this vote, and Barbara thanked her for bringing that up. Per state statute, an informational hearing has been scheduled for Tuesday, July 18, 2023, 6:30-7:15 pm at the Town Hall. BCA members felt that 45 minutes was not long enough. Since the hearing date/time was confirmed only today and has not yet been warned, Barbara will let the PC and SB know that we need to extend that hearing to a full hour: 6:30-7:30 pm.

We finally circled back to Dillon's motion to hold a public vote to adopt the 2023 proposed amendments to the Calais Land Use and Development Regulations on Tuesday, August 1, 2023, 8:00 am to 7:00 pm at the Calais Town Office. Gabrielle Malina had seconded. The motion was approved 9-0.

In discussion, Barbara noted that ballots will not automatically be mailed to every registered voter, but will be mailed to any voter who requests a ballot from the Town Office. Tina Bielenberg objected to ballots not being mailed to every registered voter, and discussed ensued, including the cost of postage, printing of ballots and three required envelopes for every ballot, as well as the workload on Town Office staff.

It was noted that early voting will be available at the Town Office starting Monday, July 10, 2023, and every regular Town Office business day until special election day on August 1, 2023.

Barbara made the motion to not mail ballots to every registered voter, but to make them available upon request. Anne Winchester seconded. The motion was approved 6-3.

Mike Loignon asked, "What happens if the vote fails?" Anne Winchester said the Planning Commission will have to start over and rewrite the proposed amendments.

Mike asked if there was any other business. There was none.

Barbara moved the meeting be adjourned; Tina seconded. The motion was approved and Mike Loignon adjourned the meeting at 6:42 pm.

Barbara Butler, recording.