

MINUTES
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
CALAIS TOWN HALL
TOWN OF CALAIS, VERMONT
JULY 8, 2021

PRESENT: Anne Winchester (Chair), Ryan Edwards (Vice Chair), Margaret Bowen, Ruth Porter, Art Edelstein, Stephanie Kaplan, Dot Helling (Clerk).

The meeting was called to order by Chair Anne Winchester at 7:02pm.

In preliminary comments, Art Edelstein asked Board members to discriminate when it comes to “reply all” with emails so as not to unnecessarily clutter mailboxes.

MINUTES. The June 24, 2021 meeting minutes recorded by Stephanie Kaplan as acting Clerk were approved with two slight revisions. The Clerk to make the revisions and file.

HARVEY/WOLLAEGER DECISION. The final Findings and Order in the Harvey/Wollaeger application 2021-13, Tax Parcel 451155 was presented for the completion of signatures by participating DRB members. After a discussion initiated by Ruth Porter on the process of preparation and revisions to the document, the document signing was completed. It was noted that the entire process relating to this application was unnecessarily protracted, in great part due to Covid restrictions and the coming on Board of new members. To ensure legality, a new vote was taken and the Order for filing was approved unanimously. The final Order will be filed with the Town Clerk by the DRB Clerk imminently.

RULES OF PROCEDURE AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY. A final draft of the proposed DRB Rules of Procedure and Conflict of Interest Policy (hereinafter the “Rules”) was presented by Chair Anne Winchester for discussion and action. The members reviewed the Rules section by section and made some additional comments and changes, none of which were substantive but all of which were either editorial or clarifying. Two questions were raised to be presented to the Town Attorney: (1) is it legal to combine a meeting notice and agenda into one publication? and (2) as further discussed later in the meeting, what are the actual legal restrictions on email discussions between DRB members as regards the public meeting law when a quorum of members are involved in the exchanges? Before entertaining a motion to adopt the Rules, the prospect of term limits raised by Dot Helling was briefly discussed. It was agreed that the determination of term limits was legislated to the Selectboard pursuant to 24 V.S.A Section 4460(c). Thus, the members determined to take this matter up separately from the Rules. Accordingly, Stephanie Kaplan moved to adopt the Rules with the suggested revisions. Motion was seconded by Ryan Edwards and the Rules were unanimously approved. Chair Anne Winchester will make the revisions and file with the Town.

TERM LIMITS. The issue of whether or not to make a recommendation to the Selectboard regarding term limits was presented for discussion. Dot Helling had raised the issue of term limits for DRB member and officer terms. Helling indicated concerns about “too few people wearing too many hats” and that having the same in incumbents in office might serve as a disincentive for new faces to step up and take Board seats. Helling also thought that we should be grooming new people for membership and offices. Anne Winchester read statements from alternates Jan Ohlson and Denise Wheeler, who

were not in attendance, addressing this issue. They gave the perspective that the reality in the Town of Calais is that it is difficult to find people to serve and that those willing to take on more than one position are appreciated. Discussion included the value of having institutional memory and the valuable commitments of those in service. Art Edelstein and Ryan Edwards raised the question of recruitment, eg. how to get the word out about the needs and obligations of the Town boards and commissions to induce others to come forward. Although the Selectboard recently had a contested race for a vacant seat, it was noted that the Selectboard is elected whereas the board and commission members are appointed. Also brought up was the long tradition in Calais of overlapping the Planning Commission and the DRB. Anne Winchester suggested the revival of annual meetings of boards. The group agreed that recruitment is key and Ryan Edwards recommended soliciting new members with public relations information about what we do and what service means to the community. A committee was formed consisting of Edwards, Helling and Edelstein to address vacancy recruitments and to draft a script for publication in forums such as Front Page Forum.

PEG BOWEN STEPS DOWN. During the discussion on term limits, Peg Bowen gave notice of her resignation after serving on the DRB 30+ years, many of those years as Chair. Peg was thanked by all for her incredibly valuable service and commitment. Her resignation was effective immediately leaving a vacant DRB member seat to be filled.

TERM PERIODS. The group discussed term periods as the published information on board and commission members only lists the year of each person's expiration. Presumably the three year and vacancy terms are decided by the date of appointment, however, this is unclear. Ruth Porter pointed out that the earlier policy was to tie terms to the March Town Meeting Day and to have all terms commence as of the first meeting of the respective body following a given year's Town Meeting Day. This issue too was determined to be within the authority of the Selectboard. No decision was made whether or not to take further action on this.

OTHER BUSINESS.

Dot wondered whether the Board needed to address the matter of Rules in virtual settings given what recently happened during Covid. We do have the authority to have virtual meetings provided one person is present in the publicly called meeting place and the meeting is recorded. Since the most recent Covid lockdown situation was managed by the Governor's orders and dictates, it was thought that addressing this was not necessary at this time.

Ryan told the group that he appreciates being copied the communications between Board members. With that it was decided that we would further pursue the Town Attorney's advice on the matter of Board email discussions (see above) and that we would minimize unnecessary "reply all" responses.

The meeting adjourned at 8:22pm.

Respectfully submitted, Dot Helling, DRB Clerk