



TOWN OF CALAIS

3120 Pekin Brook Road
East Calais, Vermont 05650
802-456-8720
calaisvermont.gov

DRB Meeting DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

6:00 pm Calais Town Office

Attendees:

In-person: DRB Members Willa Farrell (chair), Harris Roen, Gabrielle Malina, Toby Talbot, Philip Matheson, Emma Marks (DRB Alternate), and John McCullough (Zoning Administrator)

Via Zoom: Ruth Cohan and John Tsibert (Applicants)

Farrell called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm. All attendees introduced themselves.

RE: Public Hearing on Conditional Use Request for modifications to camp at 25 Mirror Lake Road in the Town of Calais, Application #2025-36.

Farrell asked if any Board members had any conflicts of interest or ex parte discussions regarding the application. All members replied they had none. Farrell explained the hearing process and then swore in those intending to testify during the proceedings.

Farrell named the *Calais Land Use & Zoning Regulations* that the Board will apply during the hearing,

- Table 2.2 Rural Residential
- Table 2.4 SHROD (2.4 standards subsection I, J, K, L)
- Section 3 (3.5, 3.8, 3.14, 3.15)
- Section 5 (5.2, 5.3)

She noted board members may identify others.

Farrell summarized additional information provided by McCullough including that a State of Vermont permit is not required because a public road separates the proposed area from Mirror Lake.

McCullough explained that the property is located in the Shoreland Overlay District (SHROD) and the camp straddles the Vegetative Buffer Zone and Upland Zone of the SHROD. The proposed replacement roof is in the Vegetative Buffer Zone and the proposed porch would be in the Upland Zone.

Applicants Ruth Cohan and John Tsibert described their plan to modify their camp. They stated that the camp roof is old and in poor condition, and contractors have advised re-roofing is not advisable. Currently, snow has to be shoveled off the roof so they propose to build a new roof with a steeper pitch allowing snow to shed off the roof. In addition, they would add a 8' x 10'

screened-in porch to one corner of the camp to be built on piers without excavation. They may add windows to the gable ends of the camp, which is surrounded by trees. When they bought the property they had trench drains built around the camp, which have proved effective. They have not had any erosion even during the two recent floods.

The board reviewed the zoning regulations identified above and heard testimony from the applicants.

The proposed porch, in the Upland Zone, would be placed on three Sonatubes which would require some digging. It will not be enclosed or heated. No change to the driveway or lawn is proposed, nor do the applicants plan any landscaping or anticipate removing a tree. Farrell advised that if during the process, it is determined a tree needs to be removed, Cohan and Tsibert should contact McCullough as Zoning Administrator (ZA).

McCullough explained that the proposed porch roof would create an increase in impervious surface that is minimal relative to the size of the 41+ acre lot. The zoning regulations allow impervious surface of approximately 10 percent of a lot in the Upland Zone.

Cohan and Tsibert said the proposed new roof would increase the pitch from a 4/12 to a 6 or 7/12 pitch. McCullough calculated that this change would increase the height of the camp by about one foot. The camp height would remain well below the maximum 35' height in the underlying Rural Residential District.

Board members discussed the possibility of some erosion when piers for a new porch are installed despite the applicants' and contractor's best intentions. McCullough suggested that using a silt fence or hay bales and then sowing grass seed and/or covering the area with hay would be good practice. He said a general condition of zoning permits is use of some kind of surface water erosion control.

McCullough said that the DRB may waive certain application requirements such as a map drawn to scale if the board decides the requirement is not relevant or needed for the application. Farrell suggested it would be helpful for that to be explicit in the regulations.

Cohan and Tsibert stated that their proposal would not affect any community facilities, the neighborhood character, traffic on the road, or renewable energy resources.

In reply to the applicants' question, Farrell explained that after the hearing is concluded, the Board has 45 days to issue its decision. McCullough as Zoning Administrator, issues permits which are sent by US postal mail and email to applicants. Permits are valid for 180 days and may be extended by the ZA.

Motion to close the public hearing (Talbot/Malina) was approved at 7:00 pm.

Minutes recorded by Willa Farrell, Chair