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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
Proposed Amendments to 2016 Calais Town Plan

The Calais Selectboard hereby provides notice of a public hearing to be held in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §§ 4384(d) and 4444 (Public Hearing Notice) for the purpose of hearing public comments concerning proposed amendments to the 2016 Calais Town Plan.

Date: December 13, 2021

Time: 6:30 P.M.

Place: Calais Town Hall, Kent Hill Road, Calais, VT and via Zoom

You will find the zoom connection at the end of this hearing notice. If attending in person, masks are encouraged.

Statement of Purpose: The public hearing is being held to solicit comments regarding the proposed Amendments to the 2016 Calais Town Plan. The proposed amendments affect two (2) sections of the Town Plan:

- Economic Development (pgs. 32-33) and
- Natural Resources, Part II (pg.64-71).

Neither amendment alters the designation of any land area.

If you cannot attend the public hearing on this date, and wish to make a comment on the amendments, please mail comments to:

Denise Wheeler, Chair Selectboard
Calais Town Office
3120 Pekin Brook Road
East Calais, VT 05650

Text of proposed amendments:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: CURRENT CONDITIONS – PAGES 32-33

It is important to develop as much business locally to attain a strong economic resilience for Calais. To begin this process, in 2013 three of our villages – Maple Corner, Adamant, and East Calais – received “Village Center Designation” by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. The Town will seek to renew Village Center Designation for Maple Corner and East Calais with current boundaries. Calais will evaluate a possible change in the boundary of the Adamant Village Center Designation to include the Adamant Community Center and apply for either a renewal or a new designation to incorporate the boundary change. Calais also intends to apply for a new Village Center Designation for North Calais, and will consider applying for a Village Center Designation for historic Kents Corner in the future.

Designation of these Village Centers furthers the Town’s efforts to encourage development within our villages as compact, livable, socially, and economically vibrant community centers by providing State incentives and benefits such as:

- *Historic Tax Credits that allows the owners of qualified buildings to apply for tax credits to restore and renovate Historic buildings that contribute to a Designated Village Center's Historic District.*
- *Building Improvement Tax Credits that allows the owners of qualified buildings to obtain tax credits to make building improvements to meet current regulations such as ADA compliance, fire safety, and infrastructure improvements.*
- *Priority consideration for various State and Federal grants such as State Historic Preservation grants, Northern Borders Regional grants, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board grants, Better Connections to build walking and bike paths within the villages*

An example of how the benefits of Village Center Designation works is the current owners of East Calais General Store Building, within the East Calais Designated Village Center, applied for and received tax credits to help pay for façade improvements and renovation to make the building ADA compliant and meet current fire and safety codes. Retaining and receiving Village Center Designation would make such tax credits and other benefits available in North Calais, Maple Corner, and Adamant, and East Calais.

This designation increases our ability to obtain municipal grants to fund opportunities within our Historic District for improved infrastructure to support small businesses or help Maple Corner and Adamant invest in mixed use residential/business development or improve our ability to have sidewalks or bike paths specifically within the village centers. This designation also assists commercial property owners to obtain tax credits for building improvements. Using this designation will help us achieve the goals as laid out below.

NATURAL RESOURCES: SECTION II, NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS: (Pgs. 64-71)

A. Interior Forest Blocks

Interior Forest Blocks are areas of contiguous forest and other natural communities and habitats (such as wetlands, ponds, and cliffs) that are unfragmented by roads, development, or agriculture. See 23 V.S.A. § 4303(34) (defining "forest block"). Forest blocks were identified, mapped, and ranked by Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department in 2014.

Ecological Function: *Forest blocks provide many ecological and biological functions critical for protecting native species and the integrity of natural systems, including:*

- *Supporting natural ecological processes such as predator-prey interactions and natural disturbance regimes :*
- *Helping to maintain air and water quality and flood resilience;*
- *Supporting the biological requirements of many plant and animal species, especially those that require interior forest habitat or require large areas to survive;*
- *Supporting viable populations of wide-ranging animals by allowing access to important feeding habitat, reproduction, and genetic exchange; and*
- *Serving as habitat for source populations of dispersing animals for recolonization of nearby habitats that may have lost their original populations of those species.*

Guidelines for prioritizing the interior forest blocks in Calais: *The importance of Calais's interior forest blocks is enhanced by the fact that the Town serves as a connecting link between the more expansive forested areas of the Groton State Forest to the southeast and the Worcester Mountain Range to the northwest. Larger interior forest blocks are more important than small ones, which may provide little interior forest habitat. In general, interior forest blocks larger than 250 acres provide interior forest habitat values and are especially important when linked to others. Smaller blocks may provide other habitat or natural resource values, especially if they are part of identified connectivity blocks linking large habitat blocks together. Large interior forest blocks that include other natural resources (such as wetlands, rare species, or deer wintering areas) are more important than similarly sized blocks without these natural resources.*

Guidelines for Maintaining the Ecological Function: *The primary goal is to maintain the interior forest conditions that forest blocks provide by avoiding permanent interior forest fragmentation resulting from*

development. Limited development on the margins of existing large forest blocks may not have significant adverse effects as long as it does not reduce connectivity between blocks and does not encroach into the forest block interior. Forest management that maintains forest structure within the block and results in a distribution of all age classes is compatible with maintaining interior forest conditions over the long term.

Information or data available: *A map of interior forest blocks as they exist today in Calais is appended to the Calais Town Plan. Any future updates to Interior Forest Blocks are available on the ANR Natural Resource Atlas.*

INTERIOR FOREST BLOCKS MAP

GOAL: CONSERVE INTERIOR FOREST BLOCKS IN IN CALAIS WHILE ENSURING THE VIABILITY OF WORKING LANDS ASSOCIATED WITH A SUSTAINABLE FOREST PRODUCTS ECONOMY AND PROMOTING STEWARDSHIP FOR THESE AREAS *Note date changes*

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Time line
Identify interior forest blocks that are at least 500 acres each, are relatively undisturbed, have the most diverse habitat types and have the best landscape context (near other interior forest blocks well buffered from fragmenting features) using public input and Natural Resource Map as resources	Conservation Commission	2016 - 2021
Establish a land and/or development rights acquisition plan drawing upon the Calais Conservation Fund, partnerships with private non-profit conservation organizations, and community fund raising efforts to conserve these large areas of interior forest blocks where landowners are willing.	Conservation Commission	Beyond 2021
Support and promote a sustainable local and regional forest products economy by encouraging landowners who are eligible to enroll in the Vermont Current Use Program through community outreach and educational opportunities.	Conservation Commission	Beyond 2021
Use overlay maps for natural resources, agricultural lands and flood plains as guidance for considering zoning regulations that direct cluster development in areas that minimize impact on natural resources and infrastructures. Please refer to Housing Section of Calais Town Plan for specifics.	Planning Commission,	2016-2023

B. Connectivity Blocks

Connectivity Blocks are the network of forest blocks that together provide terrestrial connectivity at the regional scale (across Vermont and to adjacent states and Québec) and connectivity between all Vermont biophysical regions. See 24 V.S.A. § 4303(36) (defining “habitat connector”). Landscape connectivity refers to the degree to which blocks of suitable habitat are connected to each other. There is a high level of connectivity within individual forest blocks. The proximity of one forest block to another, the presence of riparian areas, and the characteristics of the intervening roads, agricultural lands, or development determine the effectiveness of the network of Connectivity Blocks in a particular area.

Ecological Function: *A network of Connectivity Blocks allows:*

- *wide-ranging animals to move across their range, to find suitable habitat for their daily and annual life needs,*
- *young animals to disperse,*
- *plant and animal species to colonize new and appropriate habitat as climate and land uses change, and contributes to ecological processes, especially genetic exchange between populations.*

Maintaining the landscape connectivity function requires both Connectivity Blocks and Riparian Areas for Connectivity, especially in highly fragmented areas of Vermont. There is general agreement among conservation biologists that landscape connectivity and wildlife corridors can mitigate some of the adverse effects of habitat fragmentation on wildlife populations and biological diversity. Specifically, climate change adaptation is enhanced if the long-distance movements of plants and animals is supported by a combination of short movements within large, topographically diverse forest blocks and short corridor movements between forest blocks.

Guidelines for prioritizing the connectivity blocks within Calais: *All riparian habitat in Calais is important but Calais’s major streams and rivers – including Dugar Brook, Pekin Brook, Kingsbury Branch, and their major tributaries – are particularly significant. Similarly, while small areas of forest and wetland provide important habitat, those areas that connect larger interior forest blocks are likely more significant. Wildlife road crossing areas are locations where there is suitable cover habitat and no physical barriers on both sides of the road, and where vehicular traffic patterns allows for animals to cross with minimal mortality. Wildlife road crossings are likely the most threatened aspect of connectivity blocks as housing construction or other development at crossing locations may effectively eliminate wildlife use of some crossings.*

Information or data available about connectivity blocks: *A map of connectivity blocks as they exist today in Calais is appended to the Town Plan. Any future updates to Connectivity Blocks are available on the ANR Natural Resource Atlas.*

[CONNECTIVITY BLOCKS MAP](#)

Guidelines for Maintaining the Ecological Function of a Connectivity Block: *Similar to Interior Forest Blocks, it is important to maintain the interior forest conditions in Connectivity Blocks by avoiding permanent interior forest fragmentation resulting from development. Connectivity within forest blocks will remain high if they remain unfragmented. For Connectivity Blocks it is also critically important to maintain or enhance the structural and functional connectivity that occurs on the margins of these blocks where they border other blocks. This can be accomplished by maintaining forest cover along the margins and by limiting development in these areas of block-to-block connectivity.*

Riparian Areas for Connectivity (Riparian Corridors)

Riparian Areas are the connected network of areas along streams, rivers, and other surface waters, in which natural vegetation occurs, providing natural cover for wildlife movement and plant migration.

Ecological Function: *In addition to supporting the integrity of the lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams that they border, naturally vegetated riparian areas are especially important for providing cover for wildlife movement and other important wildlife habitat, such as nesting habitat for birds. Many wildlife species use riparian corridors for travel to find suitable habitat to meet their life requisites, but certain species*

are almost entirely restricted to riparian areas, including mink, otter, beaver, and wood turtle. The linear nature of riparian areas contributes to their function as movement corridors for wildlife. Roads, development, and agricultural lands fragment the Vermont landscape. The combination of Riparian Areas for Connectivity and Connectivity Blocks provide the best available paths for connectivity across the landscape, especially in highly fragmented areas of Vermont.

Guidelines for Maintaining the Ecological Function of Riparian Areas that support Connectivity: Restoration is needed to provide a fully functioning network of riparian areas that support connectivity. Restoration of natural vegetation is needed for river and stream shorelines where it does not exist now, and especially in riparian areas that provide the best available terrestrial connectivity between relatively isolated Connectivity Blocks. The width of naturally vegetated riparian areas needed to provide riparian connectivity varies from 100 feet or less on some small streams (50 feet each side) to 600 feet or more (300 feet on each side) for larger rivers or riparian areas that span long distances of otherwise unsuitable habitat.

Information or data available: A map of riparian areas for connectivity and wildlife road crossings in Calais is appended to the Town Plan.

RIPARIAN HABITAT AND CROSSINGS MAP

GOAL 1: CONSERVE IMPORTANT AND FUNCTIONING CONNECTIVITY BLOCKS *Note date changes*

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Time line
Conduct a connectivity block inventory and use the information to identify and prioritize these areas for conservation.	Conservation Commission	2016-2021
Consider establishing zoning regulations that require a heightened level of conditional use approval by the DRB for these areas to protect the function of important wildlife corridors from encroaching development and incompatible activities and encourage density averaging	Planning Commission	2016-2023
Consider using conservation easements, landowner incentives, and overlay districts to establish a network of connectivity blocks within the town that connects all conserved lands, lands under long-term stewardship, or other habitats identified as important.	Planning Commission, Conservation Commission	2016 -2023
Lands being considered for public acquisition or other long-term conservation efforts will take into account important connectivity blocks.	Conservation Commission	2016-2023

Adopt town road management standards designed to conserve wildlife corridor functions by avoiding the installation of guardrails (where possible), avoiding the removal of roadside vegetation, avoiding roadside ditching in existing corridor areas and providing for wildlife crossing where necessary.	Selectboard	2016-2023
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GOAL 2: PROMOTE LANDOWNER AWARENESS OF IMPORTANT CONNECTIVITY BLOCKS IDENTIFIED ON THEIR PROPERTY SO THAT THEY CAN MAKE APPROPRIATE LAND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS FOR PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION *Note date changes*

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Time line
Inform landowners of important connectivity blocks identified as existing on their land and offer a site visit to discuss its significance as a town resource. Provide educational	Conservation Commission	2016 - 2023
opportunities (such as community programs, site visits, and related media materials) to landowners and/or those who work their land, on the important characteristics of connectivity blocks and how to protect those characteristics.		
Invite landowners to consider making a long term conservation easement or stewardship commitment for the connectivity blocks crossing their land. This land will be given high priority in considering land for acquisition or other long term conservation efforts.	Conservation Commission	2016 - 2023
Establish an incentive program that provides recognition to landowners who are managing their property as wildlife habitat. This will be given high priority in considering land for acquisition or other long-term conservation	Conservation Commission	2016 - 2023

C. Physical Landscape Diversity Blocks

Physical Landscape Diversity Blocks (often referred to as enduring features) are the parts of the landscape that resist change. They are the hills and valleys, the underlying bedrock, and the deposits left behind by glaciers. They remain largely unchanged when changes in land cover and wildlife occur, as

plants and animals move, and even as the climate changes. Physical landscape features are either rare in Vermont or are under-represented in the other kinds of blocks identified in Section A and B of Part II Natural Resources [above]. Physical Landscape Diversity Blocks complement the other block types and riparian area in order to more fully represent the complete spectrum of physical landscape diversity that is important for an ecologically functional landscape. However, these physical landscapes cannot continue to drive ecological processes or support plants, animals, or natural communities if they are developed or otherwise significantly altered by human activities.

In Calais, the Highest Priority Physical Landscape Diversity Blocks represent two distinct features. Most of these blocks represent the calcium-rich bedrock of the Waits River Formation. Calcium-rich bedrock supports many rare species and rare communities, such as the Rich and Intermediate Fens of Chickering “Bog”. Calcium-rich bedrock also produces soils that support Rich Northern Hardwood Forests, excellent tree growth, and productive agricultural lands. Calais has an abundance of calcium-rich bedrock. A smaller proportion of the Physical Landscape Diversity Blocks in Calais represent deep sandy and silty soils and some gravel that are found along the valleys of Pekin Brook and Kingsbury Branch. These represent a mixture of origins, including recent alluvial soil deposits, soils deposited into a glacial lake that once existed in the valley bottoms and, further upstream, glacial outwash deposits of sands and gravels that gave rise to Calais’ sand and gravel pits.

Guidelines for Maintaining the Ecological Function of Physical Landscape Diversity Blocks: Similar to Interior Forest Blocks, it is important to maintain the interior forest conditions in Physical Landscape Diversity Blocks by avoiding permanent interior forest fragmentation resulting from development. Forest management that maintains forest structure within and results in a distribution of all forest age classes helps to maintain the physical landscape diversity functions.

Information or data available about physical landscape diversity blocks: A map of physical landscape diversity blocks as they exist today in Calais is appended to the Town Plan. Any future updates to Physical Landscape Diversity Blocks are available on the ANR Natural Resource Atlas.

[PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY BLOCKS MAP](#)

Location where full text of the Town Plan with simple mark up may be examined:

A copy of the complete 2016 Town Plan with the proposed amendments as completed by the Planning Commission on Sept. 7, 2021 can be found on the Calais Town web site: <https://www.calaisvermont.gov/> under Public Notices. In the full text of the Town Plan the amendments are underlined.

Zoom Connection

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85853040485?pwd=Mm1jWWZGM0hORmh2RHRtY01XLzBvZz09>

Meeting ID: 858 5304 0485

Passcode: 126587

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