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Letter: Carleton Island has been thoughtfully developed, campground does not fit with zoning or intent of previous development

Dec 15, 2023



Ronald Clapp, owner of Carleton Villa on Carleton Island, is proposing to renovate the villa into a bed-and-breakfast with campgrounds/glampgrounds on the back portion of 6.9 acres between the north and south bays. Courtesy of the town of Cape Vincent

Much has already been written and reported about the proposal to restore the Wykoff Villa and develop a campground on the head of Carleton Island. Summer cottages are often places of refuge and the idea of change is not always well received. Carleton Island has experienced many changes over the years: it was once part of Canada, was once governed by the British, and was once a single farm. The most recent change, from that of a single farm to many subdivided parcels for summer cottages, was considered carefully many years

ago, and through an effective collaboration amongst the former owner of the island farm, a developer, and the Thousand Islands Land Trust, a sensible balance was found for preserving habitat and landscapes, while also inviting development, providing employment and enlarging Cape Vincent's tax rolls.

Further change amongst the Thousand Islands is inevitable, particularly as the region becomes more popular. Change need not however be rushed or haphazard, and need not be at the expense of carefully considered zoning laws and conservation easements.

The proposal's application for a Special Use Permit and for zoning law variances appears rushed and incomplete and does not align with Cape Vincent's zoning laws, existing conservation easements, or existing rights of way. Before Cape Vincent considers any such application, detailed plans and assessments for the following should be required of the developer:

- How the proposed plan would conform to zoning laws, conservation easements and rights of way;
- How water, power and sewage would be provided to the campsites;
- How guests would be transported to and from the island, and what facilities would be required on the island and on the mainland to allow for docking, parking, etc.;
- How the comfort and safety of guests would be assured, and how they would be fed and entertained;

- How adjoining property owners' quiet enjoyment of their properties would be protected;
- How historic areas at or near the campground would be protected; and
- How natural habitat and shorelines would not be unduly disrupted.

Certainly, the foregoing would require the work of experts and at some expense, but such are the responsibilities of a successful developer. And if the community's interest in this project rests upon the expectation that the Carleton Villa will be restored, perhaps the feasibility of that should be assessed as well.

Sixty years ago, as a child, I enjoyed Carleton when only a small camp, a few cottages and a farmhouse were on the island. I now enjoy the island just as much as the island's development has been thoughtful and measured. Cape Vincent has done well managing development and making significant improvements to the village's waterfront. Let's make certain that a thorough and thoughtful review of any proposal for the head of Carleton Island is undertaken, and that Cape Vincents' laws and values are not be compromised.

Sincerely,

Todd G. Atkinson

Carleton Island

