Letter to the Cape Vincent Planning BoardApril 4, 2024

Dear Planning Board Members,

I'm writing this letter in opposition to granting Mr. Clapp a special use permit and a variance permit to commercialize Carleton Island.

I have been a resident on Carleton Island now for 25 years. We purchased and invested on the Island because of the Island District Codes that were in place and the land under conservancy with TILT. We have also purchased additional property as we were financially able to keep more land forever wild.

The commercialization of the Island will destroy one of the most pristine Islands in the Thousand Islands Region. This commercialization will have an adverse effect on the quality of life on the island and thus have an adverse effect on property values. If this occurs we will be seeking redress from the town. The small increase in tax revenue from a Glampground will not come close to the decrease from the tax revenue in loss of property values to the already existing cottages.

I'm also concerned about a high concentration of people in a small space. The idea of open campfires and transients worries me not only for the well-being of Island residents but for the campers. Accidents happen even with the best safety concerns and a quick response for medical or fire emergency is not feasible on Carleton. We support and respect Cape Vincent's volunteer firefighters but they do not have the resources to protect Carleton Island from a disastrous fire.

Reputable local contractors have estimated that it would take in excess of $20+ million to do a proper restoration of the Villa. I have done research on Mr. Clapp and have been unable to find anything in his background or track record that demonstrates he has the experience or the financial wherewithal to complete a project of this magnitude. Furthermore, anyone with a basic business background will quickly understand that a Glampground on an island will not come anywhere close to funding the restoration of the Villa. At a board meeting Mr. Clapp stated "the income from the Glampground is not meager", and could bring in three hundred thousand dollars a year if 100% occupied. That spin on the facts is very misleading as his $300,000 figure is based on 100% occupancy which any business person knows is not a realistic assumption. And he tries to make revenue sound like net income which would be used as a funding source for the Villa restoration. Very misleading and not credible.

If Rezoning and Special Use Permits are ever granted for a Glampground, there should be a stipulation that the Villa must be restored within a reasonable amount of time or the permits will be revoked, and the zoning will revert back to residential use only. In addition there should be a stipulation that the property must be restored to its former condition and all cabins and structures removed by the Developer. The Town should also require that the proper funds be escrowed for this eventuality.

If Mr. Clapp fails to complete this project, the Town of Cape Vincent would most likely be faced with substantial costs to secure the site and clean up his mess in order to ensure the safety of nearby residents and property owners. I strongly suggest that the Town does a thorough "due diligence" to properly vet Mr. Clapp and his ability to do what he claims to be able to do. The town should not leave itself vulnerable for remediation costs if the project can't be completed.

My last concern is the impact on the Island's pristine environment. This concern includes trespassing, littering, noise, disturbance to the Eagle's nest and increased boat traffic.

It is my sincere hope that the Town will take both me and my neighbors concerns in a constructive manner and not put its tax paying citizens at risk by approving a rezoning of the property for a Glampground based on nothing more than promises from an out of state developer.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely
Eileen Comerford