**December 3, 2024**

**Dear Members of the Cape Vincent Town Board,**

My wife and I have been tax-paying property owners on Carleton Island for more than 25 years. I am writing to express my deep concern over the Board’s decision to again support a Restore New York Grant application for a controversial project on Carleton Island.

Many taxpayers, both on Carleton Island and the mainland, are perplexed as to why elected officials would prioritize the interests of a developer over the voices of numerous tax-paying citizens who strongly oppose this project.

As you are aware, there is significant opposition to the commercialization of Carleton Island, specifically the proposed installation of a campground. Since Town officials allowed Mr. Clapp to jointly submit a zoning variance and special use permit for a campground alongside a proposal to restore the Carleton Villa, these two projects are now inextricably linked. Supporting one effectively means supporting both.

It is well-documented that Mr. Clapp violated conservation easements on the property by clearing trees and vegetation without authorization. These actions resulted in a court-imposed restraining order, halting further work until legal proceedings are resolved. This blatant disregard for established rules and regulations—which other Carleton Island property owners respect and abide by—raises serious concerns.

Given this context, it is difficult to understand why the Town Board would prematurely support Mr. Clapp’s grant application without first allowing the legal and regulatory processes to play out.

The prudent course of action for the Town Board would be to withhold full support for the grant application until:

1. The court case regarding Mr. Clapp’s violations is resolved.
2. The Planning Board and Zoning Board have made their decisions on the zoning variance and special use permit.

Premature support for this grant risks creating the appearance of undue influence on the Planning and Zoning Boards. Such actions could pressure these boards into approving Mr. Clapp’s proposals without conducting the thorough “due diligence” expected of them. This would undermine their impartiality and erode public trust in the decision-making process.

If the Board is genuinely committed to supporting the restoration of the Carleton Villa, I urge you to recommend that the developer decouple the proposed campground from the Villa restoration. Each proposal should be evaluated independently and succeed or fail based on its own merits.

Furthermore, I strongly recommend that the Town Board refrain from publicly endorsing Mr. Clapp’s proposals until all necessary permits have been granted in accordance with the Town’s Comprehensive Plan and established zoning laws.

The Board’s role is to serve the interests of the entire community, not just those of a single developer. By prioritizing the voices of residents and upholding the integrity of zoning and conservation laws, you can ensure that decisions regarding Carleton Island are made responsibly, transparently, and in alignment with the long-term goals of Cape Vincent.

I strongly urge the Town Board to reconsider its current course of action. Supporting a developer seeking taxpayer-funded grants before he has complied with all existing laws, adhered to conservation easements, and obtained the required permits from the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, would be a disservice to Cape Vincent taxpayers. Such action would amount to granting special treatment to the developer and placing undue pressure on decision-making boards.

Let us ensure that any public support for development projects reflects the will of the community and adheres to the principles of responsible governance.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Comerford

Carleton Island

Venice, Florida