December 2, 2024

Town Board of Cape Vincent

Paul Aubertine, Supervisor

Re: Public Comments regarding Town Sponsorship of Carleton Villa Stabilization for Restore NY Round 9.

Dear Board,

I am writing to express my dismay and disappointment that you continue to support this grant application after all the problems disclosed by the Friends of Carleton Island when you sought funding in Round 8. There is growing opposition to this action by both residents of the Island and residents on the mainland. Below are the highlights of why you should not continue to support the application.

* The current residential zoning does NOT allow the proposed development for which funding is being sought. The Special Use Permit that might allow such use has not been granted, and has been tabled indefinitely, pending the TILT lawsuit, a negative SEQR finding, and a Zoning Variance. The variance request submitted in January was rejected as incomplete. There is **no request for Zoning Variance** currently under consideration.
* The only special use permit submitted calls for **both** a boutique hotel and a campground. No mention of the campground and its potential impact was included in the Round 8 application. Any consideration by the grant committee needs to include all aspects of the project that would be part of any future zoning approval.
* The grant guidelines very clearly and definitively state that the sponsoring municipality is responsible for 10% matching funds. There is no signed agreement with the developer indicating that he will take on that obligation. $200,000 is a HUGE liability for a town with the population and budget of Cape Vincent.
* The grant guidelines stipulate that municipalities under 40,000, such as Cape Vincent, are only eligible for $1,000,000 in grant funding, thus making the requested $2,000,000 request ineligible.
* SHPO review, necessary for funding, will not be complete for many months if not years. Per the 10/25/24 letter, the **report submitted by the developer “has significant deficiencies which necessitate major revisions.**” This is just for the initial Phase 1A survey. Ultimately, they will be requiring a Phase 1B study involving shovel tests that cannot be completed until spring at the earliest, but more likely until the TILT lawsuit with its related injunction is resolved. They also point out that “As mandated by Section 106 there will be ongoing consultation with interested Tribal Nations who may have additional comments or concerns.
* The Town (not the developer) has already paid $500 for the first application and is expected to pay the next $500 to reapply. This was not an item that the developer agreed to reimburse the Town for in the agreement finally executed and funded after a 6-month delay.
* The Town will not receive ANY financial benefit from the grant, which is for stabilization only. The $2,000,000 requested is estimated at less than 10% of the total cost to rebuild the villa into a boutique hotel. There has been no business proposal carefully analyzed showing the wherewithal to complete the project. At this point, the town continues to assume financial costs and future obligations without any promise of every seeing a return. The developer publicly made ridiculous claims of potentially netting $300,000 per year from the campground to fund the renovation. He failed to account for a dime of start-up and construction costs, staffing, or any expenses at all. At the same time, he was counting on 100% occupancy rate for 6 months which is outrageous considering the location. Even with that impossible net flow from the campground to the Villa, it would take 67-100 years to fund $20-$30,000,000 realistic restoration costs, not including any operational expenses such as insurance, if that is even available for such a project with no fire protection or emergency services available. **There is no possibility of financial gain to the Town of Cape Vincent.**
* The town website only added the special meeting to the calendar today, 3 days before the meeting for Public Comment. To date, the public has not had the opportunity to review the revised application under discussion.

You may ask why I, and many others, would oppose at least shoring up such a historical building in our community. However, that is too simplistic a view. Those funds aren’t free. Grant money comes from taxpayers, and we expect better care to be used with our hard-earned money. In addition, if this were to be approved, it would put pressure on the Planning and Zoning Boards to support all the other components of the project that have been the source of so much contention over the past 12 months.

I humbly ask you to listen to the people and stop this pursuit of “development at any cost.” The costs of this project to our community are too great already. This process is being carefully documented for anyone who cares to be informed at [friendsofcarletonisland.com](https://friendsofcarletonisland.com/) where you can corroborate every assertion I am making here.

Sincerely,

Christine Martin

Cape Vincent, NY and

Aurora, CO