

21313 Holmes Circle
Venice, Florida 34293
December 8, 2025

TI Sun
Letter to the Editor,

Why Cape Vincent Should Not Resume SEQR on Carleton Island

Recent statements by Town of Cape Vincent officials suggest they intend to restart the SEQR review for the proposed Carleton Island project, even though the Town attorney has advised that all action remain paused until the ongoing litigation initiated by the Thousand Islands Land Trust (TILT)—in fulfillment of its legal obligation to uphold and enforce the long-standing conservation easements on the island—is resolved. Officials have publicly claimed that “TILT’s lawsuit has nothing to do with the Town,” but this contradicts both the Town’s own actions and the basic requirements of SEQRA.

The Town already placed the application on hold and has kept it on hold for more than a year. The Planning Board’s minutes from October 9, 2024 make clear that the Carleton Island application was paused, and that status has been reaffirmed at every monthly meeting since. That decision was prudent, appropriate, and fully aligned with the Town attorney’s legal guidance. Reversing course now, without any change in circumstances, raises serious concerns about why the Town would abandon a cautious and legally sound approach.

The lawsuit unquestionably affects the Town’s SEQR responsibilities. The court will determine what activities are allowed under the conservation easement, whether violations occurred, what restoration may be required, and whether the developer’s proposal is even legally feasible. SEQR cannot meaningfully evaluate environmental impacts until the Town knows which actions are actually permitted. If the court rules that certain uses are prohibited or require remediation, the project may need major revisions or may become impossible altogether. Any SEQR work done now could quickly become irrelevant and invalid.

Restarting SEQR under these conditions invites legal and practical problems. The Town risks analyzing a project based on assumptions the court may reject, issuing determinations vulnerable to challenge, and wasting taxpayer resources on a review that may have to be repeated. It also undermines public confidence in the Town’s commitment to a lawful and transparent process.

A SEQR review built on unstable legal footing is a SEQR review destined for challenge and failure.

The responsible course is the one the Town has already been following: keep the application on hold until the court clarifies what is legally permissible on the property. Only then should SEQR resume, grounded in accurate facts and a legally viable proposal. Rushing ahead serves no one—not the Town, not the public, and ultimately not even the applicant.

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Cape Vincent can avoid needless conflict simply by following its attorney's guidance and maintaining the pause until the court rules.

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Venice, Fl. and Cape Vincent