

# BARRE TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

The Town of Barre Planning Commission held their regular meeting on **Wednesday, May 17, 2017** beginning at **7:00** p.m. at the **Municipal Building**, Lower Websterville.

## **Members Present:**

Cedric Sanborn     John Hameline     Charlie Thygesen Sr.  
Debra Pierce     Chris Violette     George Clain  
Claire Duke

## **Members Absent:**

NONE

## **Staff Present:**

Emily Marineau

## **Others Present:**

Pierre Couture @7:15pm

### 1) **CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

NONE

### 2) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A motion to approve the April 19, 2017 meeting minutes by George, second by John. Meeting minutes approved unanimously at 7:01PM.

### 3) **ALLOWED USE DETERMINATION (PUBLIC HEARING)**

**Request by Pierre Couture for allowed use determination in accordance with Barre Town Zoning Bylaw Article 2, section 2.4 (c) to operate a commercial campground (expanding an existing primitive campground) on property located at 59 Little John Road; Parcel ID: 006/053.02; Zoned: medium density residential; AU-17000001.**

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## **STAFF REPORT/REVIEW COMMENTS FROM CHRIS VIOLETTE, PLANNING OFFICER**

This is a warned public hearing for the purpose of allowed use determination in accordance with the Barre Town Zoning Bylaw as referenced in the title block above. The applicant is proposing a use that is not specifically allowed by permitted or conditional use in a medium density residential zone.

The applicant is proposing to upgrade a portion of his existing primitive campsites to more traditional campsites that would have direct access to a bathhouse. Campgrounds are allowed by conditional use permit in highway commercial and low density residential zones. The original 12 campsites have existed for approximately 10 years and were created as part of the Millstone Lodge which is also operated by the applicant and located on the same property. The original sites were and are essentially used by people attending weddings at the lodge for overnight accommodations. There are others that also use the campsite including an annual visit by the Boy Scouts.

The applicant is proposing to construct a new bathhouse that will have bathroom and shower facilities. The bathhouse will only serve 6 of the 15 sites, the remaining 9 sites will remain primitive. The bathhouse will have a state permitted (already done) septic system, water supply will come from the existing service at the lodge. Each campsite has its own parking available.

The campground will operate from May to October only.

The lodge is an old barn converted into a house and later into a five-bedroom lodge that are rented like a bed and breakfast. All rooms are furnished with antiques and has its own distinct character. The lodge is used to host weddings and other group gatherings.

The Planning Commission must use the criteria below to determine the following:

The proposed use will not alter the characteristics of the area and will not cause an undue burden on the community.

I have provided brief comments of my own based on my understanding of the proposal and knowledge of the area.

**GENERAL REVIEW STANDARDS FOR ALLOWED USE DETERMINATION:**

**1. Emergency services:**

While a campground will bring people that may need to rely on Barre Town Emergency Services at some point or another, the demand and impact is likely minimal given the relatively small scope of this request. It is unlikely that the services could not accommodate the use.

**2. Water, sewer, or other municipal utility systems:**

There will be no impact to Barre Town's public utilities because an onsite septic system is going to be installed for 6 of the 15 sites, the remaining sites will have access to bathroom facilities at the lodge as they do today where a permitted onsite septic system exist. Water will be supplied by the existing onsite water supply from the lodge.

**3. The character of the area affected and the impact on neighboring uses as defined by the purpose(s) of the zone within which the project is located, and specifically stated policies and standards of the municipal plan;**

The subject parcel is in a medium density residential zone that includes the following purpose statement:

This principally residential district is designed to provide areas where moderate density residential development may occur in a rural-suburban setting. This district is similar to low density residential with the primary difference being that Medium Density Residential is located around the more developed areas of town and conditional uses vary. Municipal water and sewer may or may not be available.

The project site is located well below the existing lodge on a small portion of the nearly 30-acre parcel. The general area as shown on the enclosed map is mostly open and wooded land. The site is further isolated from neighboring uses by an abandon quarry and associated grout pile. The closest residential use to the project site is approximately 700' away, all other residential uses are over 1000' away.

As noted in the purpose statement above, the medium density residential zone is similar in a lot of ways to the low density residential zoning. Low density residential zoning allows campgrounds.

It is also important to point out that the primitive sites have existed for over 10 years with little or no impact on the neighboring uses. The proposed upgrade of six of these sites will be used similarly to the primitive sites, they will just have better access to facilities.

Given the location and history of the campground, with its bit of remoteness and manmade barriers, it seems unlikely that the proposed campground will have an impact on the existing character of the neighboring uses.

**4. Traffic on roads and highways in the vicinity:**

Access to the campground will be from Littlejohn Road which is a Town gravel class 3 road. Littlejohn is accessed on one end by Donahue Road and at the other end Church Hill Road, both Town paved class 3 roads.

The 15 sites are unlikely to cause a traffic issue on the Town road network and certainly haven't to date.

**5. Zoning bylaws and bylaws then in effect:**

Campground are not allowed in a medium density residential zone but the applicant is seeking approval as an allowed use determination afforded in Article 2, section 2.4 C of the Barre Town Zoning Bylaw. Whereas if it can be determined that the proposed use will not alter the characteristics of the area and will not cause an undue burden on the community the Planning Commission can approve the use.

**6. Minimum lot size:**

The minimum lot size for medium density residential zoning is 2 acres. The lot subject to this request is just under 30 acres well in excess of the minimum required.

**7. Off-street parking requirements in accordance with standards outlined in Article 3, Sec. 3.9 of this bylaw;**

Each campsite has parking like any campground would have. The applicant can likely provide more detail on this but it appears as though parking should not be an issue given the abundance of land associated with the use.

**Summary and recommendation**

A combination of reviewing the criteria above and the history of the existing use, it is my opinion that the proposed use of a 15-site campground will not impact the nature of the area where the project site is located and will not cause an undue burden to the Town of Barre. I recommend approval of this request.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

Duke questions if the septic system only service 6 sites then how are you going to control the other 9 sites from using the bathroom. Violette states that it is a State permit and for whatever reason the State only approved 6 sites to use the septic system. The 9 other sites are told they have to use the bathrooms and bathhouse at the main lodge. The 6 sites are going to be closer to the bath house. Duke questions why he didn't go for the all the sites to use the bath house. Violette states that he is not sure and he thought Couture would be here to explain the reasoning behind only going with 6 sites to have a bath house. Violette states that he thinks that most people coming to camp are attending a wedding at the lodge.

Clain ask if they can bring camper trailers. Violette states that it is not allowed, only tents. Primitive camping means no facilities and only tenting.

Pierce clarifies that the only change in use is he is adding a bath house and on-site septic for 6 sites. Violette states that is right and that since he was adding a bath house with on-site septic that it was a step up from the primitive camping that Couture should get the proper permitting for the camp ground. Violette doesn't see any impact to what is already there.

Sanborn questions if there would be an increase in traffic and people using the location since Couture is now offering 6 sites with access to a bath house instead of everyone having to use the lodge.

Violette states that he thinks they are pretty busy now, again he isn't sure because he thought Couture would be here to answer these questions. Violette states that 6 sites that have the bath house will no longer be considered primitive.

Hameline ask where the people camping are going to park, Violette states that there is parking at the camp site or at the lodge and walk down.

Sanborn would like to put a limit on the number of site Couture can have and on parking.

Couture arrives at 7:15pm for the meeting.

Sanborn asks if the camping site has one or two parking spaces. Couture states that each site has one parking space.

Clain ask if the lodge served all the primitive camp ground before and if the septic system is up-to date at the lodge. Couture states that the lodge did serve all the camping sites originally and that he does not have a one site septic system for the lodge. He has town sewer, when he opened the lodge he had installed the sewer line to connect from the lodge to the town sewer.

Sanborn asked how many sewer units he has for the lodge. Couture states that he is not sure how many sewer units he has because the camp site users have access to a portlet and outside shower. Violette clarified that the camp site users do not use the bathroom in the lodge. Couture states that they have a portlet down at the camp sites. Couture also states that the camp ground has been very low key and has been used primary by people attending the weddings at the lodge. He is prepping the camp sites for just the wedding business. Couture states that if people want more the "camping experience" then he will recommend they use the Lazy Lion. Couture states that they only charge \$10.00 a night for the camping. Couture states if the wedding is bigger than 75 people then they must bring in their own portlet.

Duke states that if something goes wrong than it's a State permit therefore making it Couture's problem and not the Towns.

Hameline asking how only 6 out of 15 sites can only use the bath house. Couture states that he has been in a long 3-year battle of trying to sell some of the land to the Vermont Land Trust and the proposed septic system was going to be on part of the land that was being sold to the Land Trust and 3 days before the deal was about to close the Vermont Land Trust asked for the septic design. The design was only done for 6. Couture had been going back and forth between 6 and 12 units but in the end, it was easier to just say 6 units. Couture wasn't willing to hold up the 3-year long deal over the septic system.

Couture states that he is not looking to make this a big camp ground. He does not have any intentions of making this any bigger. He states he is 62 and is not sure how much longer he will be doing this, if the next person that comes along wants to make it bigger than it will be their deal to get the permitting for a bigger camp site.

Thygesen wants to make sure if something went wrong than Couture would be able to hook onto the Town sewer. Couture states it is possibility but the septic is only going to be used 6 months out of the year and the design is planned as if it was used for all 12 months.

**MOTION:**

*On a motion by Clain, seconded by Pierce, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve Request by Pierre Couture for an allowed use permit for a total of 15 camp sites, 6 with on-site septic and 9 primitive sites located at 59 Little John Rd; Parcel ID 006/053.02; Zoned; Medium Density Residential; AU-17000001*

**4) SECOND DRIVEWAY CUT REQUEST (PUBLIC HEARING)**

**Request by Pierre Couture for a multiple curb-cut request in accordance with the Town of Barre Highway Ordinance to add a second driveway on property located at 29 Little John Road; Parcel ID: 006/051.00; Zoned medium density residential; AU-17000002.**

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**STAFF REPORT/REVIEW COMMENTS FROM CHRIS VIOLETTE,  
PLANNING OFFICER**

This is a warned public hearing for the purpose of considering allowing the applicant a second curb-cut (access) from Littlejohn Road. The subject parcel currently has a single-family residential structure as well as an old barn located on it. There is currently one access to the property.

The applicant is currently seeking a conditional use permit from the Development Review Board (DRB) to convert the existing barn into an event venue. Events would mostly likely be limited to weddings. As part of that proposal, the plan is for parking to be located behind the barn. This parking configuration creates the need for a second curb-cut from Littlejohn Road.

Littlejohn Road is a Town class 3 paved road. The proposed second curb-cut will be across from Sabetto Street. Littlejohn road is fairly straight in this location with what appears to be adequate site distances. The second access will be approximately 200' to the East of the existing driveway.

Harry Hinrichsen, the Town Engineer grants access to municipal roads. Harry commonly weighs in on these types of request and has done so here as well.

**Comments from the Town Engineer, Harry Hinrichsen**

I have reviewed the sketch plan submitted for the application by Pierre Couture and have several comments.

This driveway as proposed will enter onto Littlejohn Road at a point where it is paved. The new entrance will need to have a paved entrance off the main road which has a minimum of a 15' paved apron and will have a maximum width of 24'. Drainage near the new driveway appears to fall away from the road into the field. Any drainage from the road and the area uphill of the new drive will need to be directed into the field rather than along or into the roadway. The new driveway will need to comply with the B-71 Standards that the Town has adopted for Residential and Commercial Drives from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTRANS).

The primary concern is what impact the second driveway will have on this lot, the remaining land and any abutters. The new driveway is close to the intersection with Sabetto Street. This second driveway is also over 200' from the existing driveway that serves the homestead. The new driveway is about 25' from the property line with the adjoining parcel which is currently owned by Pierre. I do not see a negative condition created with this new driveway at its proposed location.

I would recommend that if any landscaping occurs near this new entrance onto Littlejohn Road, the types of trees or shrubs be kept well back from the edge of the Right-of-Way to maintain good sight distance.

If the driveway and the rest of the parking lot are to be paved, there will need to be erosion control and run-off assessment. Currently there aren't any dimensions on the parking lot but if the site is fully paved there may be concerns regarding the amounts and impacts of stormwater run-off.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

Pierce questions if Sabetto street hooks around to Brook Street. Violette states that Brook St hook onto Sabetto with access to Little John Rd.

Clain ask how many parking spots there will be in the parking lot and if it will be paved or gravel in the parking lot. Couture states that there will be 60 parking spots and the parking lot will be gravel with a paved apron coming off the road.

Clain clarifies if the event space is only going to be seasonal. Couture states that the venue will only be summer and early fall weddings, the barn for the most part will not be insulated.

Sanborn states that he thinks that this is a third driveway request. Sanborn points out that he has the driveway coming to his house then the second driveway accessing the barn, making this a third driveway. Couture agrees with Sanborn. Violette states that it is a second because the

driveway entering the barn is not a real driveway, but Couture states he intends to use that as a one of the driveways to access the barn. Couture states that he will use that driveway as a handicap drop off and for the caterers to use as food drop off. The next driveway entrance will be used by everyone else to get to parking and enter the venue.

Sanborn questions if Couture the existing driveway that is there can be used to loop around to the back of the property to access the parking in the back. Couture states that it will go through the quiet area of the house and the B&B and the flow will not be great. Couture cannot imagine the driveway going there. Couture states that he is trying to separate the house from the wedding venue.

Duke would like a little more information on the handicap entrance. Couture states that the plan was to have a drop off the handicap people who cannot climb stairs to be dropped off in the front of the building. Therefore, they would be able to enter onto the second floor where the wedding and restrooms are located. The kitchen will also be on that level making it easier for the cater to drop off their stuff. Everyone else will enter from the back and walk up a set of stairs to enter the main floor.

Clain ask if there was a way for the second driveway that's there to be used as the drop off and access to the parking lot. Couture states that it couldn't because the cars will be parked at the top blocking the access to the parking lot out back. Couture also states that then the B&B would not have any place to park.

Clain ask if any of the 60 parking spaces will accommodate any of the B&B parking. Couture states it will not because the parking will be out back round the barn and he cannot ask people to park out there and then walk up to the B&B.

Violette states that he thought that this was the second request for the driveway and thought that the house and the barn used one driveway not that this was the third request.

Couture states that there is one gravel driveway to the main house and then the old farm driveway is now having grass grown over. Hameline ask if it was an actual curb cut and couture stated that they don't have a curb but yes, it is used as a driveway.

Duke states that she would rather see the driveway in the middle go away but she can see why he would want to keep that one.

Sanborn questions if the driveway to the main house can be altered to allow access to the front of the barn. Couture states that he needs to think about everything that has been said and see what he can do about the driveway.

Sanborn states that he would like to see a revised plan for next month. Couture states that rock fire is a few days before next month's meeting and would like to come back in July. The board is fine with him coming back in two months.

**MOTION:**

*On a motion by Sanborn seconded by Hameline, the Planning Commission voted to continue the request by Pierre Couture until July 19th for an allowed use permit for a second curb cut located at 29 Little John Rd; Parcel ID 006/051.00; Zoned; Medium Density Residential; AU-17000002*

5) **ZONED CHANGE REQUEST**

Chris has brought back 7 of the zone amendments' that he proposed to change at last month's meeting.

**Sec 3.8 OUTDOOR STORAGE LIMITATIONS:**

The board was happy with the changes that were made from last month. Sanborn had one house-keeping item where it says "trailer" in items 1-5 if it could say "trailers". Violette will make those changes for final review for next month's meeting on June 21, 2017. Duke ask if the trailers are taxable and Violette states that he did check with the accessor and it is a taxable item.

**Sec 4.2 ACCESSORY DWELLING:**

The board was happy with the changes that were made from last month. Violette added a definition for accessory dwelling. The board would just like the amendment to make sure there is adequate water supply for both dwellings. Sanborn would like it to be clear that the owner must be owner occupied and maintain ownership of both places. Violette will make those changes for final approval next month's meeting on June 21, 2017.

**Sec 4.22 RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE LIMITS:**

The board was happy with the changes that were made from last month. The board would like the amendment opening sentence to say's "Only one residential structure shall...". Violette will make those changes for final approval next month's meeting on June 21, 2017.

**Sec 5.5 CONDITIONAL USE REVIEW:**

The board was happy with the changes that were made from last month. The board would just like to fix a type-o to the last work in the amendment where it says "residence" to "resident". Violette will make those changes for final approval next month's meeting on June 21, 2017.

**Sec 5.6 SITE PLAN REVIEW:**

The board was happy with the changes that were made from last month. No changes needed for final approval next month's meeting on June 21, 2017.

**Sec 6.5 PUD STANDARDS AND REVIEW CRITERIA:**

The board was happy with the changes that were made from last month. The board had a short discussion on the PUD standards. George would like PUD to be spelled out once, making sure

people know what PUD stands for. The board would also like to add to section 4 last paragraph where it is talking about the driveways for the driveways to be paved and limit to 4 houses. Violette will make those changes for final approval next month's meeting on June 21, 2017.

Sec 7.10 WAIVERS:

Violette cleaned up the wording in the description. Violette feels that if something was built before zoning came into effect than the homeowner should be able to get a waiver instead of a variance if the house was built after zoning was in effect than they should have to get a variance. Duke brings up if zoning is changed than what should the person do. Violette states that in that case when the zoning is changing then the person should fight the zone change request. After discussion, the board would like to add "in conformance to zoning bylaw in effect at the time."

**MOTION:**

*No motion was made. The Planning Commission will review the changes and move to final approval on June 21 2017.*

6) **MISCELLANEOUS:**

Chris states that he has not heard anything from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission and will update everyone as he is updated.

7) **FOLLOW-UP**

6) **CORRESPONDENCE:**

7) **ADJOURN:**

*On a motion by Claire Duke, seconded by John Hameline, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting of May 17, 2017 at 9:05pm.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Marineau

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Cedric Sanborn, Chair

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John Hameline

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Charlie Thygesen Sr.

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Chris Violette

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Claire Duke

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George Clain

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Debra Pierce

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