

The Public Hearing opened at 7:06 PM.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Doug Dubitsky (Chair), Pete Fiasconaro (Vice-Chair), Randy Godaire, Dave Garceau (virtually online), Eric Beer, Helen Weingart, Alternate Ken Fortier, Alternate Bill Ireland.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Alan Burdick.

**ALTERNATES SEATED:** Seat Ken Fortier for Alan Burdick.

**ALSO PRESENT:** First Selectman Bill Rose, Zoning Enforcement Officer (ZEO) Jay Gigliotti, Town Attorney Dennis O'Brien (virtually online) and Recording Clerk Kathleen Scott.

Doug Dubitsky read the Legal Notice that was published twice in the Chronicle. There is an extensive number of letters and emails (posted on the website) that are in the record and have been read. This is an application for a change to the zoning regulations only and if approved will require a special permit application.

**SUBJECT OF HEARING:**

**RC20-131 – Proposed Text Amendment – Jocelyn Bennett – applicant, proposed amendment to Section 5.2.B of the Chaplin Zoning Regulations – Addition of Section 13 “Semi-Primitive Campground”:**

ZEO J. Gigliotti reported that the record is current through today and the hearing must be closed by the next meeting.

Applicant Jocelyn Bennett of 146 Singleton Rd presented the background that led to the proposed text amendment. An incident with trash from a wedding being dumped on neighboring property was resolved. The property was rented out through Airbnb and was extremely successful (received many positive reviews), not realizing that it wasn't legal. She worked with the ZEO to develop guidelines that scaled way back down to a smaller number of people.

First Selectman Bill Rose expressed concerns with the stress on Infrastructure, Ambulance Service, EMTs, Fire Department, Police Patrols, Eastern Highlands, Public Works (involved in cleaning up the trash) and enforcement difficulties for noise. There are many campgrounds on Route 198 that pay taxes and contribute to infrastructure. Semi-primitive campgrounds are counterproductive to town infrastructure and he would personally not want them within 100 feet of his property line. He is opposed from a town standpoint and a personal standpoint.

Public comments were opened.

Public comments in favor of the Proposed Text Amendment to the Chaplin Zoning Regulations:

- Juan Roman of 161 Singleton Rd lives across the street from the applicant and commented that he likes the idea of a primitive campground, not a campground per se. There was an event that was out of control and the road was covered with a large number of cars that was upsetting. Other times you could not hear people that were there. He would support a small venue as part of Airbnb with a limit to the number of people.

- Alexa Kollbeck of 128 Singleton Rd commented that someone is always home and she and her family have not been bothered by noise or anything else in the 2-1/2 years they have lived there.
- Linda Roman of 161 Singleton Rd commented that there are more issues than a “campground” and would like to see more people like Jocelyn living in the community. Airbnb is all over Chaplin for people who elect to sleep outside and she doesn’t see an issue with having people there any more than friends or relatives. A big concern is with people that camp and have a large number of tents with dirt bikes, no sanitary facilities and no running water. She doesn’t see any reason to deny Jocelyn from making a living.

Public comments in opposition to the Proposed Text Amendment to the Chaplin Zoning Regulations:

- Dan Rogers who lives on 58 acres that abuts Singleton Rd, Nutmeg Ln and state forests read a letter about commercial businesses including campgrounds on a residential zoned property. He expressed concerns with the state of the forests with many dead trees due to insects, limited access for vehicles, the difficulty in containing a forest fire and liability and injury issues from visiting strangers. He believes the Commercial Zone with identified areas of development should be adhered to.
- Dan Rogers also read a letter from his wife regarding the proposed primitive campground request on Singleton Rd. She has owned and lived on the property over 30 years and it has always been residential and private. She is in opposition to the town allowing a commercial zoning change in a residential area. They have already experienced garbage dumped on their property and noise and light pollution from the proposed campground that has been rented out for weddings and camping. The Rogers family owns property that abuts the proposed site and they disagree with the proposal.
- Ann Lewis on Singleton Rd commented that a campground is not an appropriate activity for a neighborhood that is zoned for residential and agricultural use. It would likely detract from property values and the rules outlined in the proposal such as campfires, noise levels, and number of vehicles would be very difficult to monitor and enforce. Getting together with 20 people outdoors could get out of hand and be an invitation for a party atmosphere.
- Adele Swart on Tower Hill Rd expressed concerns with the following issues: the forests that have been decimated by insects, monitoring inspection of firewood brought in, trash and water use.
- John Meyer on 151 Singleton Rd commented that a lot of people have campgrounds on their property. 10-20 people at any site is a party. He agrees with the POCD strategy that encourages home based businesses. Most residential lots of 5 acres are long and narrow and would be close to neighboring property. A fire would be difficult to control, there would be liability and security risks and noise would be difficult to monitor with a negative impact to the neighborhood.
- Charlene Meyer on 151 expressed concerns about the decision that affects the whole town.

Applicant Jocelyn Bennett reiterated that she has done rentals on her property for three years with no issues except one bad incident. There is one site, one firepit, running water and a porta potty. It is a semi-primitive site, not a campground. Bill Rose asked about the reference to local swimming holes in the Airbnb reviews. They abut personal properties that would require permission from the owners.

**Motion to close the Public Hearing at 7:45, was made by E. Beer, seconded by H. Weingart. All in favor, motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted by,  
Recording Clerk Kathleen Scott