



*Town of Van Buren*  
*51 Main Street, Suite 101*  
*Van Buren, Maine 04785*  
207-868-2886 / FAX 207-868-2222

Gateway  
To The  
St. John Valley

December 4, 2017

Billie J. MacLean  
Regional Supervisor  
LUPC Permitting and Compliance Division  
45 Radar Road  
Ashland, ME 04732

Dear Billie and LUPC;

The Town of Van Buren wishes to share the following concerns and comments with you about the impact of the developments along the southern side of Long Lake in T17 R3 proposed in the Fish River Lakes Concept Plan.

Our primary concern is the impact on the following roads: Lake, Champlain and Castonguay. The only public access to the current camps and the proposed additional camps is over these roads. Both Champlain and Castonguay are currently State Aid roads, Lake Road is not. The Van Buren portion of Lake Road past the paved portion and the last Van Buren residence is approximately 3 miles of gravel up to the south line of T17 R3.

Other than a small beach, called Van Buren Cove, that is open in the summer, there is no other public facility or destination accessed by this road. Historically, the camps on the Long Lake were used only seasonally, but over the past two decades, more people have moved to their camps and consider them their primary residence. The change from camps to homes has resulted in increased traffic year-round and a demand from residents of T17 R3 for more road repairs and more frequent maintenance (grading) and snow removal. During 2017, Irving Woodlands harvesting operations in T17 R3 and the surrounding area resulted in increased heavy truck traffic which had a significant impact on the Van Buren portion of the road. Irving did respond to our request to help with grading the road during this period of high truck traffic.

As outlined in the Concept Plan, the road maintenance in the new developments will become the responsibility of the camp/lot owners through a road association, as is the case in the existing developments. Fixing and repairing their section of road and snow removal on the Irving portion of Lake Road will be paid for by the camp/lot owners.

But, there is no system in place for the camp/lot owners to contribute to the cost of the repair, maintenance, and snow removal of the Van Buren portion of the road. Van Buren will also not be receiving any property tax revenue from this development to help cover the same costs.

For every lot that is sold and developed, there will be increased road use during the construction process for the transport of materials and workers; followed by increased traffic from the owners and their guests well into the future. We recognize that there may be economic benefits to the Town of Van Buren if materials and contractors are purchased locally, but these funds will not directly go to pay for the additional maintenance and repairs that this road will need.

The position of the citizens of Van Buren is divided.

First position: Citizens who own camps, or have friends or families that own camps feel (to varying degrees) that the Town needs to spend more money on this road. At a Special Town Meeting held in August of 2017, a small group of people (as is always the case at Special Town Meetings) voted up to \$50,000 to repair, rebuild and fix gravel roads, including the Lake Road. This vote was interpreted by many at the meeting to mean that we would spend \$50,000 to gravel and grade the 3 miles of road to Long Lake. \$50,000 is almost one mil in Van Buren and more than we can normally spend on all roads in a single year, especially with our mil rate near 29. We are doing everything possible to fix and repair these roads without spending the entire amount.

Second position: Citizens who have no connection to camp owners at the lake and are uninterested or unlikely to be able to purchase and build a camp in the new developments proposed, are strongly opposed to spending any money on this road because it does not meet their criteria as serving the general public by providing access to an essential public resource. Other residents may not be as strongly opposed, but they do want more attention paid to repairing roads in Town that serve the citizens who are paying taxes.

The population of Van Buren has been declining for years and the loss of rate paying homes far exceeds the rate at which new homes are being built. The FEMA buyout of a dozen or more homes damaged in the flood of 2008 and the buyout of additional dozen or so homes in 2011-2012 to build our new International Port had a measurable impact on our property tax base. In addition, between 10-15% of our population live in Federal Housing Units, and like the large new International Port and the new Border Patrol Station, we can not collect property taxes on federal land in our town. We are also looking at the possibility of having to file for slum and blight designation for a portion of our Main Street in order to qualify for funds to help remove the derelict buildings.

IN SUMMARY: The Town of Van Buren welcomes and encourages economic development and growth in our area. But if the growth results in an increase in our costs of maintaining and repairing our infrastructure without a corresponding increase in our revenue/resources to pay for these costs, we will either: a) be unable to maintain and repair the infrastructure affected, or b) have to raise taxes or reduce services. We welcome a plan or strategy that will address these concerns and still provide for development in T17 R3.

Nancy Troeger, Town Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Troeger" followed by the date "12/4/2017". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.