

TOWN OF SANTA CLARA PLANNING BOARD

5367 State Route 30
Saranac Lake, NY 12983

November 20, 2025

PRESENT: Planning Board Members: Scottie Adams, Beth Hall, John LaHart, Mike Ritchie, Bill Young, Alternate Board Member Connie Rockefeller. Code Enforcement Officer (CEO), Todd David

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Scottie Adams at 9:00 AM.

Beth Hall moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Bill Young seconded the motion. All members present were in favor of the motion. The minutes from the Planning Board meeting on 10-21-2025 are approved.

Site Plan Review Application:

APPLICANT: Harrison Flynn, Dock Doctors, for CHEERS, MF Holdings NY LLC

PARCEL ID: 442.2-9-13.600

LOCATION: 87 Saranac Inn Lane, Upper Saranac Lake

This application is for the replacement of an existing dock with a new dock and a boathouse with a deck on top. Harrison Flynn, the Dock Doctors representative described the project and the challenges involved with the existing pumphouse and getting APA approval of the project.

The Franklin County tax rolls shows the property as 0.83 acres with 125 ft. of shoreline. The property is in an area designated R-1-1.3. The current dock is shown as an "E" shape with room for 2 boats to dock, one "slip" is covered. The dock is approximately 40 ft. wide. The dock lies within the 25 ft. setback on one side. Town code specifies that no waterfront structure can occupy more than 15 % of the shoreline (18.7 ft.). The current dock is non-conforming. Additionally, there is a concrete well/pumphouse located within 75 ft. of the shoreline, also a non-conforming structure. The proposed dock is reported as 294.67 sq. ft, the boathouse is 576.43 sq. ft, total sq. ft. = 871.1, all of which meet Town Code. The structure is situated so it would meet both sideline setbacks. The structure projects 30 ft from the shoreline which also meets Town Code. However, the whole structure is 31.5 ft. wide, greater than 15% of the shoreline. Additionally, the pumphouse still exists. Because the boathouse/dock structure does not meet Town Code, the Planning Board cannot approve this Site Plan Review Application. This structure would require variances in order to obtain a building permit. One possibility would be to build the new boathouse/dock on the same footprint as the old docks. However, most felt that moving the location so a sideline variance was not required would be better. Removing the non-conforming pumphouse would be an improvement and eliminate another variance requirement.

After discussion, Mike Ritchie made a motion that the application cannot be approved as submitted because it does not meet Town Code, but recommend that the applicant submit a revised plan to the Variance Board.

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The motion was seconded by John LaHart. All members voted in favor of the motion. Motion passed. The site plan application is denied. The chair will provide a formal letter of to the applicant and a copy of the minutes to assist in making changes that might make a variance application acceptable.

Variance Application:

APPLICANT: Mark Hall for Mike and Wendy Lincoln
PARCEL ID: 463.-2-2.100
LOCATION: 417 Gilpin Bay Rd, Upper Saranac Lake

This application would require variances for the construction of a new boathouse and dock. The new structure would exceed what is allowed by Town Code in size of the boathouse, total area, height above MHW and extension from land. The proposed boathouse is 32 ft. wide by 32 ft. long (1024 sq. ft.), the dock is 30 ft. long, 7.5 ft. wide with an 18 ft. by 8 ft. wide extension on the end, (368 sq. ft.) The total dock length is 38 ft. The combined square footage of the boathouse and the dock would be 1392 sq. ft. The peak of the boathouse is 15 ft. from the dock/boathouse foundation, but reported as 16'6" above the mean high-water mark (MHW).

The Moss Ledge property is recorded on the Franklin County Tax Rolls as 28.4 acres with 1299 ft. of shoreline. The property is in an area designated by the Town as R-1-2.3. The boat house and dock meet the Town code for 15% shoreline requirement, the sideline setback requirements and the dock square footage, but not for boathouse size, total area of boathouse and dock, extension from land and height above the MHW level.

The proposed boathouse/dock is part of a historic restoration project undertaken at Moss Ledge. Moss Ledge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and received the Adirondack Architectural Heritage Association's "Historic Preservation Award" in 2018. A jurisdictional determination has been received from the APA stating that no permit or variance is required from the APA. Four letters of support were received from neighboring camps including one from a camp immediately adjacent to the Moss Ledge property. No negative comments were received to date. The Planning Board must point out that one of the letters contained an erroneous comment. It stated "The Lincolns purchased Moss Ledge in 2016, before the Town adopted its 2019 Land Use Code restricting boathouse size." Section 7.215 of the Town of Santa Clara Land Use Code adopted 7/17/2003 outlines boathouse/dock regulations. At that time the maximum size of a boathouse was 500 sq. ft. The Town Code adopted on December 14, 2015 increased the maximum boathouse size to 625 sq. ft. to accommodate issues of larger "pontoon" boats. The Town Code adopted on January 13, 2022 increased the maximum distance a boathouse could extend from the shoreline to 33 ft. to accommodate DEC/APA requests for boathouses to be off shore to promote Shoreline Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) and fish habitat.

Planning Board members are sympathetic to the historic preservation efforts at Moss Ledge. One board member remembers the original Ballantine boathouse looking very much like the drawing of the proposed new structure. The increased size of the boathouse was not considered to be detrimental taking into account the size of the property and the amount of undisturbed shoreline.

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Additionally, the proposed location of the new structure in a small cove would minimize its appearance when seen from the water. The Planning Board usually considers the actual height of the boathouse, which is 15 ft. when considering boathouse construction because of the large variation in water level on the lake.

The members of the Planning Board did find the total length of the dock – 38 ft- vs 33 ft., extending 5 ft beyond the length of the boathouse to be objectionable. The extended length of the dock does not appear to add to the historic value of the project. Aerial views of the property show another dock already on the property. It's possible that this aerial view is not up to date, but if it is, then the second dock would have to be removed to consider making the new structure acceptable. The artistic rendering of the new structure shows white garage doors on the boathouse. Painting the doors brown to match the boathouse would render the structure much less visible from the water.

After discussion, Beth Hall moved that the Planning Board report to the Variance Board that there is no objection to approving the variance if the dock were shortened to 33 ft. to meet the Town code and the additional dock is removed. The motion was seconded by Mike Ritchie. All members voted in favor of the motion. Motion passed. The chair will provide a copy of the draft minutes of the meeting to the Variance Board chair and secretary within the next few days.

Trash Situation

John LaHart wrote a letter to send to the owners of the trash containers that have been living in the Town ROW all summer, creating a health and traffic hazard. The letter provides alternate trash haulers who will come to their homes to pick up their trash on a weekly basis, rather than every 2 weeks as is the current schedule. It was suggested that contact information be provided in case they have any questions. It was also suggested that the letters be sent by registered mail to ensure that they are received. The CFO will provide the names and addresses of those to be contacted. See letter attached.

TSC Land Use Code Section 8.3

Following up on the issue discussed at the last Planning Board meeting, the Chair was able to determine, by searching prior versions of the Land Use Code and emails, that the original code contained a shorter version of 8.3 than what is currently in the code. The addition to 8.3 was added in 2019 when there were 10 amendments to the Land Use Code approved. 9 were from the Planning Board, 1 was from the attorney based on information from the CEO at the time. The chair contacted the town attorney about this matter on October 27, but has not had a reply yet. The chair will contact the Town attorney again.

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STRs

The most recent town board meeting minutes indicated that the Town Board passed a motion to have the Planning Board review the STR law with the idea of providing the Planning Board with data to be able to reassess the current law. The CEO reported concerns expressed to him by STR permit holders concerning permit fees and the 60-day rental limit. The CEO expressed the opinion that there were some areas in the current law which could be revised. Another concern was the frequency of inspections. He pointed out that there have been no complaints received over the past two years either directly to the Town or through the Hotline. The fee structure was reviewed. The CFO will outline his concerns and suggestions in a memo to the Planning Board. The Chair read an email received from Guy Middleton, the Executive Director of the Upper Saranac Lake Foundation who was unable to attend the meeting. He expressed the Foundation's continued support for STR law, particularly the provisions related to septic inspections. He suggested it would be useful to have accurate data concerning septic system replacements due to the STR regulations. Town Supervisor Curry was in the audience and reported that he will provide data obtained over the first two years including a financial analysis. He suggested that now that an initial legal challenge has been resolved, any surplus in a reserve fund might be used to reduce fees.

Open Discussion

There was no public comment at this meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be scheduled as needed.

John LaHart moved that the meeting be adjourned. Mike Ritchie seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 10:01 AM.

PSA

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Letter

John F. LaHart
Planning Board Member

Hello Neighbors,

The Santa Clara Planning Board was asked to address the ongoing trash situation on Hoel Pond Road.

Trash cans (with and without locking lids) are left on the shoulder of Hoel Pond Rd all week long. This is an issue especially in the summer months. Critters enter the cans and spread trash all over the roadside, resulting in an eyesore & health issue, requiring residents to pick up the trash. Containers are close to the shoulder resulting to one minor accident. The Town Highway plow operators, plow the containers off the shoulder, leaving an eyesore when the snow melts. To address these issues, we ask that everyone place their trash out the night before pickup and remove the containers from the road, once pickup is complete.

Adding to the problem is your current trash removal company. They only pickup once every two weeks and will not leave the public highway to empty their cans.

There are additional trash collectors.

Demarco Disposal.....518-354-8237

Duffs Trash Removal.....518-524-6520

Oddy's Trash Removal ...518-524-3447

It is my understanding that these companies will provide containers, pickup weekly and come to your home for pickup.

Your co-operation will make Hoel Pond Rd. safer and more attractive to all who use it.

Questions or comments may be directed to planningboard.tosc@gmail.com.

Thank you again:

John and the Santa Clara Planning Board