

**To: Castleton Select Board**  
**From: John teRiele Jr., resident Castleton**  
**Date: May 23, 2022**  
**Re: Reconsider Support for Sand Hill Project Permit #8177 – Alignment with Town Plan and Alma Gibbs Donchian Foundation Mission**

I am requesting the Select Board re-evaluate their support of Sand Hill Project Permit #8177. As proposed this project is not aligned with the Castleton Town Plan or the mission of the Alma Gibbs Donchian Foundation.

From the July 21, 2021 Select Board letter of support sent to the Development Review Board, point 4, 6 and 7 state the following:

4. This parcel was given to the Town on 12/21/1996 by then Castleton State College, now Castleton University, for the express purpose of economic development.
6. Three successive CSU/CU presidents, Presidents Wolk, Scolforo, and Spiro, have all expressed their enthusiastic commitment to the planned collaboration.
7. Both the Castleton Planning Commission and members of the Town's Community Development and Economic Revitalization Advisory Committee have supported the project.

I do believe that past CU presidents and past board members would be in support of this project as originally conceived – affordable senior living, enhance the tax base, lower the tax rate, and bring in high paying jobs. But I question if past presidents and board members would support this project as it is currently being proposed. We know this is NOT affordable senior living as defined in our Town Plan, will not bring in lots of high paying jobs. This is high end expensive senior living that most average Vermonters cannot afford. Further, we still don't know if this project will enhance our tax base and lower tax rates, AND if the increased municipal tax revenue will cover the increased municipal costs.

While the Town Plan does state as a housing policy goal to "Enable our aging citizens to remain within the community by providing differing types of housing options" (p. 41), and recommends programs that "Promote the development of commercial or private senior housing" (p. 41), other than that there is not much in the Castleton Town Plan that supports high end expensive senior housing in Castleton. In many ways, the proposed four story 99 unit building with its large parking lot out front is in complete opposition to the goals of the Castleton Plan – for example "fits the character of existing development" (pg 9); "scenic and natural resources are among the town's primary assets" (pg 9); Policy 4 (pg10) "Preserve agriculture, scenic resources and open space" and "preservation of the character of surrounding properties" (pg 10-11).

At the bottom of this letter, I offer many other excerpts from the 2018 Castleton Town Plan where this project does NOT further the goals set forth. Underlined words and phrases are for emphasis of misalignment. Comments are added in parenthesis, but most of it speaks for itself. I'm not going to read through each tonight, the evidence is there. Not only does this project not support the Town Plan; in fact there are many instances where it is in complete opposition to furthering the goals of the Castleton Town Plan.

Another concern I want to bring to Select Board members is the proposed projects alignment with the mission of the Alma Gibbs Donchian Foundation. From their website:

It is the primary mission of the Alma Gibbs Donchian Foundation to provide assistance to various institutions in Vermont, but not limited to Vermont. The Foundation hopes to address the following areas of concern:

- Issues affecting the elderly, particularly those "middle-income" elderly not served by other programs
- Education, particularly as it addresses hearing and/or learning impairments, or reading disabilities
- **Community preservation**
- Programs or agencies engaged in the furtherance of fundamental values, such as: self-reliance, respect for tradition, the value of work, the importance of family, the innate 'goodness' and 'uniqueness' of all persons, and the satisfaction to be derived from religious or similarly uplifting beliefs

As proposed, this project does not address housing issues of "middle-income" elderly in our community, and the proposed building is actually an assault on our community preservation. Further, our Town Plan (pg.3) also states, "In adopting the Town Plan, citizens of Castleton may anticipate the future with the knowledge that a significant step has been taken in the development and **preservation of their community.**"

Finally, I would like to note that there is no mention in the CDERAC minutes for support of this project. It is disappointing that the Select Board letter from July 21, 2021 to the DRB contains inaccuracies, and embellishments.

Direct excerpts from the Castleton Town Plan NOT supporting the Sand Hill Project Permit #8177

Pg 3 - The policies and programs stated within this comprehensive plan were developed to preserve and protect the town's assets while providing a future vision for town officials, businesses, and citizens of Castleton.

Pg. 3 - In adopting the Town Plan, citizens of Castleton may anticipate the future with the knowledge that a significant step has been taken in the development and preservation of their community.

Pg 3 - Surrounding communities promote low-density land development and continuation of resource-based uses (such as agriculture) in outlying areas and higher density and commercial uses in existing built-up areas. (A 99-unit rental building directly next to one of two operating farms in our town is the exact opposite of this!)

Pg 8 - As new development opportunities present themselves, the Town of Castleton must balance preservation of its community and character with support of opportunities for economic growth in order to sustain the town's citizens and services. (Other than CU campus there are no other 4 story buildings in Castleton, and architecturally this building has no Castleton character.)

Pg 8 – Castleton encourages planned growth and concentrated development in those areas of the town which provide for higher density and which can provide the necessary infrastructure to more readily support development than more rural sections of town. (This would not include Sand Hill Road!)

Pgs 9-10

#### LAND USE AND GROWTH GOALS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

##### Goal

Provide for the development that fits the character of existing development, functions in an efficient and coordinated fashion and supports the vitality of the community.

Proposed land use patterns are intended to accommodate future growth in harmony with the natural capabilities of the land and the ability of the town to adequately provide municipal services. Castleton's scenic and natural resources are among the town's primary assets. The unspoiled mountain peaks and ridgelines are a community asset of inestimable value: dollars and cents value to the town's economic enterprise, and emotional value to each Castleton citizen's sense of place, our home.

Pg10 – Policy 2

Encourage orderly and attractive development of commercial uses. (This building is too big, not attractive, does not fit)

Pg 10 – Policy 3

Maintain and protect the quality and character of historic settlement patterns. (unprecedented building size!)

- ❖ Encourage future residential development to be concentrated where community facilities and services are currently provided

Pg 10 - Policy 4

Preserve agriculture, scenic resources and open space.

Pg 25 - Primary agricultural soils are depicted on Castleton Natural Resources Map 2. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has classified Vermont's soils into four categories with respect to their potential for agriculture – highest, good, low and limited. NRCS recommends that highest and good categories qualify as primary agricultural soils as defined in Act 250. As is the case with most Vermont towns, there are a number of active farms in Castleton sustaining families and making an important contribution to the economy and the culture of the town. (Again, why are we putting a 99-unit rental building on a residential street next to one of two functioning farms in the Town of Castleton?)

Pg 29 – Impervious Surface Minimization and Site Design (entire section)

Pg 33 - Open Space and Scenic Resources

In the course of planning for Castleton's future, it is important that the presence of high quality open space and scenic resources, broad scenic areas as well as scenic landmarks, are recognized and the integrity of such resources is preserved. Scenic resources have aesthetic, historical, and economic value. Siting of future construction as well as community facilities and infrastructure should always consider the potential impact on the aesthetic qualities of the community and preserve the undisturbed integrity, wherever possible, of Castleton's quality scenic and open space resources.