



## Memorandum

**To:** Town Board

**Cc:** Town Clerk, Town Attorney,

**From:** David Sprout, Planning Department

**Subject:** Special Use Permit Camp Earth Connection - Campground, Retreat Center & Day Camp, Tax parcels 63.-1-15.2 and 63.-1-15.3

**Date:** April 17, 2018

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Susan Rausch wishes to expand her 'Camp Earth Connection' facility, located in a Conservation Zone zoning district, at 63 and 129 Hammond Hill Road. The proposed expansion involves building a 600 square foot cabin this year and, over the next five to ten years, adding an 800 square foot lodge and eight additional cabins ranging in size from 300 to 600 square feet each. A Special Use Permit (SUP) is required since this is a pre-existing nonconforming use as explained below.

The facility was owned by the Ithaca Council of the Campfire Girls until 1995. The Cayuga Nature Center owned and operated the camp from 1995 until 2002 when Ms. Rausch purchased the properties. The site has been in use as a campground, day camp, environmental education center, and recreation and retreat center since the 1970s.

Camp Earth Connection is a hybrid of a campground, a retreat center and passive recreation facility. The facility meets the Town's definition of a retreat center but it is not exclusively that. And, despite being inspected annually by the Town, as a campground, and despite acquiring annual campground operating permits from the Tompkins County Health Department, Camp Earth Connection does not meet the Town definition of a campground. That definition envisions a facility without permanent structures such as the existing lean-tos, pavilions and cabins or the proposed cabins.

As a hybrid of multiple uses, it is considered a nonconforming use. A pre-existing nonconforming use may be expanded or enlarged by SUP (see Zoning Law, Article XVI). The Town Board may impose reasonable conditions and restrictions that are directly related to and incidental to the proposed use of the property.

In addition to a SUP, this project also requires Sketch Plan or Site Plan Review (SPR) approval. NYS Town Law section 274a defines a site plan as a rendering of the arrangement, layout and design of a proposed use of a single parcel of land. Regarding SPR, each parcel must be considered separately.

A 'Simple' stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) is required. A Simple SWPPP is a generalized plan, provided by the Stormwater Management Officer (SMO), describing the erosion control measures to be implemented to minimize the impacts of the land development activity. For this project, each phase of development will be addressed when a building permit application is submitted to the Planning Department.

***SEQR, County Review, Ag & Markets***

For the purpose of environmental review, this is an ‘Unlisted’ action. The applicant has provided Part 1 of the Short Environmental Assessment Form (SEAF). The Town Board is the lead agency. This action is subject to Tompkins County Planning 239 review. A copy of the application has been forwarded to the Tompkins County Planning Department. The project site is outside Agricultural District #1. No Agricultural Data Statement is required.

***Sketch Plan Review***

As mentioned above, each parcel needs to be considered separately for SPR. Two survey maps are included with the application documents. One map showing the existing and proposed buildings on the larger (48.0-acres) parcel will be referred to as Site ‘A’. The other map, showing the layout of existing and proposed structures on the smaller (16.52-acres) parcel, will be referred to as Site ‘B’.

**Site A:** The map shows the approximate location of six proposed cabins and the proposed lodge, the existing cabin and garage, the existing pavilion and lean-tos and open lands and woods. A separate contour map identifies adjacent landowners and roadways. A brief narrative is provided in the SUP application. Stormwater management will include erosion and sediment control practices during construction, as deemed necessary by the Stormwater Management Officer. Post-construction stormwater practices are not required but the use of rain barrels will be encouraged.

It is the Planning Department’s opinion, based on materials provided, that further Site Plan Review of Site A can be waived with conditions. The Planning Department recommends that the Board accept the Sketch Plan as Final Site Plan conditioned on Ms. Rausch indicating on the map where fruit trees will be planted and that screening (fruit trees, perhaps) be provided between Hammond Hill Road and the cluster of cabins proposed on the northern end of the property.

**Site B:** The map shows the approximate location of three proposed rustic cabins, existing sheds and lean-tos, pavilions and privies, ponds, streams and woods. A separate contour map identifies adjacent landowners. Stormwater management will include erosion and sediment control practices during construction, as deemed necessary by the Stormwater Management Officer. No post-construction stormwater practices will be required.

It is the Planning Department’s opinion, based on materials provided, that further Site Plan Review of Site B can be waived without conditions. The Planning Department recommends that the Board accept the Sketch Plan as the Final Site Plan.

***Special Use***

In order to review the project, the requirements of Special Use Permit should first be considered based upon the Sketch Plan and letter of application for Special Use Permit, and understanding that any issues can be further addressed in conditions or by requiring Full Site Plan Review. The factors to consider for Special Use Permit, according to state and local law are listed in the table below.

<b>SUP Standard</b>	<b>Planning Department Notes</b>
Compatibility of the proposed use with the other permitted uses in the district and the purposes of the district set forth in this Ordinance.	The purpose of the Conservation District is to protect areas of the town that contain a variety of ecological and Open Space assets that warrant protection from the impacts of development. Residential uses and agriculture will remain the primary land use activities. The properties have been used as a campground since the 1970s. An

	increase in fixed campsites (cabins or yurts) does not mean there will be an increase in the intensity of use. Other permitted uses in the district include congregate care facilities, car washes and contractor yards.
Compatibility of the proposed use with the adjoining properties and with the natural and manmade environment.	Adjoining properties are state forest, a single-family residence and vacant private land. The single-family home is over 500' from Site 'A' and screened from the site by an expanse of trees.
Adequacy of parking, vehicular circulation, and infrastructure for the proposed use, and accessibility for fire, police and emergency vehicles.	One parking space is required for each of the cabins containing full amenities (cooking, toilet, bath). The proposed lodge requires four parking space. Overnight parking is permitted in the public parking lot adjacent to Site 'A'.
The overall impact on the site and its surroundings considering the environmental, social and economic impacts of traffic, noise, dust, odors, release of harmful substances, solid waste disposal, glare, or any other nuisance. (Note: this standard should be considered carefully with the environmental assessment form)	The proposed cabins will be sited to eliminate or minimize cut and fill and utilize sensitive construction practices and erosion control. Natural drainage ways, contours, and landforms will be respected. Traffic will not significantly increase. During construction there will be an increase in the typical noise associated with residential construction
Restrictions and/or conditions on design of Structures or operation of the use (including hours of operation) necessary either to ensure compatibility with the surrounding uses or to protect the natural or scenic resources of the Town.	No restriction on the operation or hours of operation are necessary. Conditions of SUP approval might include limiting further expansion of the camp, consideration of what will happen if one of the parcels is sold
Compliance with the requirements for sketch plan or site plan review.	To the extent practicable, the application complies with sketch plan and site plan review requirements. See SPR, above.
Compliance with Commercial/Residential Development Guidelines	<b>Access and circulation:</b> Past the camp, Hammond Hill Road turns into a seasonal use road. Most automobile traffic stops at the public parking lot adjacent to the camp. Trails provide circulation throughout the camp. <b>Service &amp; Roof Screening:</b> Not applicable. <b>Building Materials: Wood</b> construction materials will match existing structures and the natural setting. <b>Signs:</b> No signs are proposed. <b>Natural Site Design:</b> Cabins will be sited to avoid or minimize cut and fill, and to maintain existing natural landscaping. <b>Lighting &amp; Utility Placement:</b> No lighting is proposed. Building Code requires illuminated means of egress. <b>Landscaping:</b> No new landscaping is shown on the plans. Natural landscaping will be retained. Fruit trees planted. <b>Access to Public Transit &amp; Trails:</b> Camp Earth Connection is surrounded by State lands with an extensive trail system.