

Town of Caratunk

Office of Selectmen
P O Box 180 Caratunk, Maine 04925
207.672.3030
caratunkselectmen@myfairpoint.net

Tuesday, April 11, 1:30pm
Maine Housing Committee

Greetings Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Elizabeth Caruso. On behalf of the Town of Caratunk, I am here to testify in support of

LD 214 – An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Zoning and Land Use Restrictions to Limit Certain Requirements to Municipalities with a Population of More than 10,000
LD 665 – An Act to Extend the Date by Which Compliance is Required for Affordable Housing Development, Increased Numbers of Dwelling Units and Accessory Dwelling Units
LD 1154 – An Act Regarding Accessory Dwelling Units and Municipal Zoning Ordinances
LD 1358 – An Act to Clarify Density Requirements for Affordable Housing Development

We submit that changes must be made to the Affordable Housing law to meet the reality of small, rural Maine towns which have **minimal municipal services**, limited residential areas, roads, staffs, budgets, and rugged topography

For example, Caratunk is remote - located along the Route 201 corridor in the Upper Kennebec River Valley, 60 miles north of I95, 53 miles south of the Canadian border by Jackman. Caratunk is approx 53 square miles of land area with 17 lakes, ponds (including a high elevation Great Pond), numerous streams, brooks, and of course, the Kennebec River. (The town got its name from the Indian word "Carriontonka" which means "rough and broken").

The majority of Caratunk's land is zoned Resource Protection or Management including Tree Growth, or Conservation. With only 5.5 miles of local municipal roads, there is little public access, yet our road expense is the largest burden on our tax base. Knowing the following development limitations, the state of Maine approved our recent comprehensive plan. We ask that local be reinstated and that small towns be exempted because not all laws can be one size fits all.

Our town has:

- **no public infrastructure** beside the town office (converted from a 1-room schoolhouse) and a small, yet vacant firehouse.
- **no public water or sewer**
- **no public transportation**
- **no fulltime staff or town office**
- **no local school system, law enforcement or fire protection.** Fire protection is contracted from a town over 20 mi away. Sheriff and State police presence is minimal at most.
- **no local store, shopping, medical or health care for 20 miles (small town of Bingham) or 44 miles (large town of Skowhegan)**

- Job are mostly seasonal or self-employment.
- Most of our residential area consists of **older housing stock on undersized lots** – many of which are **well under the 40,000sf minimum lot size or lack the necessary topography** in the residential area to accommodate another dwelling unit, let alone 4 dwelling units.
- Some of our current structures even **struggle to meet the state's current plumbing rules**. Not only do you need to take in consideration your own lot, but you need to consider the location of and distances from the neighbors' well and septic system.
- Due to narrow roads dictated by topography and building structures, we **have no public parking, sidewalks and no on-street parking** allowed due to an ordinance adopted to protect public health, safety, and welfare and to allow two-way traffic and passage of fire trucks and ambulances.
- Finally, these rules impose fines. That may be doable and logical for Maine cities and the idealist vision you may have of local law enforcement, but **we don't have any local law enforcement or a way to enforce the fines.**

Simply, **small towns struggle to understand how to manage these unrealistic and ambiguous changes or how to geographically and financially meet these mandates while still remaining financially solvent, maintaining environmental and resource protection, level of municipal services, and preventing undue tax burdens on our taxpayers.** Meanwhile, citizens expect their towns to comply with their democratically enacted comp plan and land use ordinances.

We ask you to simply exempt Maine's small towns from this mandate and to allow all towns the extra time to develop these changes once the verbiage has been corrected.

Thank you for your time, for your consideration, and for changing this law to actually be realistic and not destructive to Maine's citizenry and small municipalities, townships and plantations.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Caruso

Elizabeth Caruso

Chairman, Board of Selectmen

Town of Caratunk