



Zoning Board of Appeals Planning Board

Minutes of Thursday, September 22, 2016 – 7:00 PM

Board of Appeals members present: Charles Dudek, Osa Flory & Marcianna Caplis

Absent: Gerry Mann

Planning Board members present: James Locke, Robert Barker, Stephen Snow, Kathleen McKeown

Applicants Present: Susan Fortgang, David Nehring

Public Present: Mary Dudek, Chris Flory, Amanda Emerson, Ed Etheridge, Philip Merritt, Jason Connell-Fire Chief, Louis Hasbrouck-Building Inspector, Linda Rowley, John Hoogstraten, Andrew Irwin, Michael Wayne-Police Department, Kenneth Taylor, Carmen Taylor, Tom Masters, Rebecca Robbins, Cassandra Holder, Kyle Humstead, Ann Walsh, Melissa Adams, Tom Adams, Jim Moran, and Paul Zononi.

Joint Public Hearing for Site Plan Review & Special Permit for 16 Walpole Road

Jim Locke, chair of the Planning Board called the public hearing to order at 7:02 pm. The joint public hearing is being held after application for a Site Plan Review and Special Permit was received by Susan Fortgang and David Nehring of 16 Walpole Road to open an event venue at 16 Walpole Road. He stated the procedures of the hearing to the public present. He noted that the paperwork had been submitted and was complete. He stated the Planning Board had 45 days to give their recommendations regarding the Site Plan to the Zoning Board of Appeals to use in considering the Special Permit.

Jim Locke noted they had received six letters in support and one letter in opposition. He also stated the Planning Board has opinions from the Police Department, Fire Department and Highway Department as the main concern is access up and down Walpole Road. The road is 1600' long and 33' wide by statute but it is 12' wide at its narrowest point. The Board has a traffic study report that was submitted by the applicants also.

Charles Dudek, chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals asked to speak. He told the public present that the secretary for the Zoning Board of Appeals is recording the public hearing. He asked if any members of the public present were taping or videotaping the hearing to let the Board know. No one spoke.

David Fortgang spoke of his history with Williamsburg and growing up in Williamsburg and the history of the land at 16 Walpole Road always being a farm.

Susan Fortgang spoke next. In 2013 they bought the farm at 16 Walpole Road. She spoke about disappearing farm land and the need to preserve the land. She spoke of the farm stand they currently operate and the maple sugar they produce. They have had farm related events on the farm. They have gotten a permit for a winery. They have held cider making days and pumpkin picking events. She told how they have moved a historic Skinner barn to the property from South Hadley and have reconstructed the barn on the property at 16 Walpole Road. She noted the history of the property to the Board. They plan to use the historic barn for events for up to 200 guests. They would like to hold up to 50 events a year to be held year round. All food and liquor would be prepared by caterers. The closing time for the farm would be 10p.m. She noted for now amplified music would be restricted indoors in the barn and be over by 10 pm. The noise would be restricted to the land by siting of the building and the tree screen. She told the Board a full fire and safety plan has been submitted to the Town.

Paul Zononi is on the Agricultural Commission and spoke in favor of the proposed use. He stated farms are being sold and developed. This use would preserve the farm and the public would be able to enjoy the property. He

noted it is difficult for farmers to make a living on the farm and they need creative ways to survive. He stated it would bring tourists to our town.

Rebecca Robbins from South Street is also a farmer. She raises vegetable for use in her café she owns in Northampton. She spoke of the economic difficulty trying to keep a farm sustainable. She is in support of the project.

Amanda Emerson of the Agricultural Commission also spoke in favor of the project. She spoke how beautiful the property is and how nice of a job Susan and David have done in upgrading the property. She spoke in favor as members of the Commission and also as a resident of the community of Williamsburg.

Jim Locke stated the Board has a sound study that was submitted and will consider the testing in their report. He noted the Planning Board can recommend conditions to the Zoning Board of Appeals to be incorporated into the decision. Noise is difficult to measure.

Marcianna Caplis asked what Ms. Fortgang meant when she stated “for now” in regards to the amplified music being indoors.

Kyle Humstead, a civil engineer working with Ms. Fortgang and Mr. Nehring with their plans asked to answer that question. He stated the music will remain inside for now but the applicants may come before the Town in the future to hold musical events outdoors.

Jim Moran spoke in favor of the project. He noted he can hear noise and music from Look Park, the golf course and the American Legion at times. The proposed use will be good for taxation for the Town. Businesses are good for the tax base for the Town.

Mary Dudek asked about the plans in place in case of fire at the property. Jason Connell, the Fire Chief sent a letter to the Planning Board addressing emergency plans in place. Jason Connell spoke to the hearing. An emergency plan is being developed that would ensure crowd control managers must be in attendance at any event and would ensure that people would not be leaving the property until doing so is cleared by the emergency services in case of any type of emergency. The amount of managers would depend on the size of the event.

Jim Locke noted a 12” water main feeds the property and there is a sprinkler system in place in the barn with more than adequate water pressure.

Linda Rowley asked about the lighting on the property. Jim Locke stated a lighting plan has been submitted. The lights will be downward lighting. The shades cover the bulbs.

Melissa Adams spoke in support of the farm. She works with farms around the State and thinks the project is a diversified use of the land and adds value to the Community.

Several other residents present gave their support for the project also.

Jim Locke stated that once the hearing is closed no other public input may be received by either Board.

Charles Dudek, Chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals, asked for the applicant to clarify which time of the year these events would be and the total amount of events. Ms. Fortgang answered year round, mostly on the weekend, and up to 50 events. She also noted May through September would be busier. Winter months would be slower.

Osa Flory asked the applicants how they would keep it to 50 events. Ms. Fortgang stated she would be in charge of the calendar. If they need to have more events, they are aware they will need to come before the Board again.

Charles Dudek asked the Building Inspector about maximum occupancy. There are state statutes regarding the occupancy.

Osa Flory asked about consumption of alcohol. No alcohol would be served after 10 pm.

Motion made to close Site Plan Review hearing and adjourn (RB) and seconded (KM). Motion so voted.
Motion made to close ZBA Public Hearing (MC) and seconded (OF). Motion so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Lessard, Secretary