

Dear Members of the Temple ZBA:

As an Abutter we have reviewed the application of Stepping Stones Farm & Event Center, LLC. The purpose of this document is to respectfully express our concerns for your consideration.

Our most significant concerns with this application for a Special Exception for Commercial use are consistent with those we expressed to the Planning Board:

- The application proposes to expand an existing large scale, multi business commercial use on the property, that is already not typical for a residential/agricultural zone.
- The application is focused on the addition of a large scale Wedding Party Center, it is silent as to the cumulative impact on the neighbors and the community of the total commercial activity that if approved, will result from this business expansion.
- The application, while incomplete, (see detailed comments below), also does not contain a Survey completed by a licensed professional engineer. Without this professional survey -- mapping and detailing each location of each commercial use, occupancy and traffic management, health, fire, and safety considerations, and detailing the required setbacks, parking spaces, screening, etc. -- we do not have an accurate or permanent record for review. This is needed now to accurately assess if the application meets the requirements of Section 13A and 13B of the Zoning Ordinance, will be needed in the future in monitoring compliance.
- As we presented to The Planning Board when we were first made aware of this business expansion in February of this year, this application, in our opinion, has a substantial regional impact. As we are not Lawyers or Planners, we respectfully recommend that the ZBA consider the impact that this commercial operation will have on the Town of Wilton, and our surrounding community.

Below is a partial list of specific areas of our concern with the Stepping Stones Application. We report these you in "bullet form" as we think the application has enough incomplete information as to make a unified response difficult.

1. The applicant's name is Stepping Stones Farm & Event Center, LLC. The property tax records show that the Stepping Stones Farm & Event Center, LLC owns neither lot 14 nor lot 15. The application I saw on line does not set forth what property is the subject of the special exception. Is it both the Isabella Hagner Trust property (Lot 14) and Isabelle Martin Trust property (Lot 15)? See Tax Cards attached. If it is both, then both entities need to be on the application.
2. The application in our opinion has significant regional impact. We had suggested to the

Planning Board that it give notice to the Town of Wilton and to the Southern New Hampshire Regional Planning. We do not know whether that was done. If in fact that was not done, then the Board needs determine on whether it is regional impact and then give the notice. If the Board determines it is regional impact, which we think it has no choice on, then, until the necessary parties have been noticed, there should be no further proceeding on the application.

3. The application does not specify which of the ten (10) buildings identified in document #1 are the subject of the special exception application.
4. The application appears to specify only one (1) commercial business on site. Currently There is a Residential Real Estate Rental business, an AirB&B rental business, a Hotel Business, and Events Business. This past Friday, we were informed that there will also be a Riding School business. All of these businesses will be operation on site in addition to the new expanded large scale wedding party business. In view of this incomplete application, we urge the ZBA to consider the full set, scale, and scope of commercial activity embedded in this application.
4. The Board should require some explanation and Professional Survey to determine what the other buildings that are not part of the special exception application are used for. We believe that Ms. Martin or any other owner does not live on the property. As there are at least four (4) buildings which appear to have a residential use then the Board should review what those are being used for and whether they are part of the special exception application.
5. The indoor riding arena (and now with the addition of a riding school), if it is part of the special exception, does not comply with Section 13B.1, as all buildings need to be set back one hundred (100) feet from the lot lines. Screening may be necessary. This is a

technical point and could be satisfied if the parcels are merged. Other buildings, fencing, light poles, etc, related to the wedding venue may also be impacted by the 100-foot setback and screening requirements.

6. The Board should reject in our opinion the sketches or “kitchen table” diagrams and plans and request a surveyor’s site plan. The confusion in 2000 over the arena being on Lot 14 or Lot 15 warrants a surveyed plan. See Temple Planning Board August 2, 2000.
7. The plan that is submitted shows three (3) driveways, (Doc. 4) which is contrary to the zoning ordinance which again raises the question of what parts of this property the special exception is applied for. Document #2 shows two (2) new driveways which apparently do not exist, or at least Document #4 does not show them clearly.
8. With respect to certain standards under Section 13A, the following issues are raised:
  - a. Parking, traffic flow, setbacks, and screening are not delineated in any fashion. It appears to be based on a computation done by the applicant as opposed to an engineer. Document 4 demonstrates the confusion as to which properties are involved. All the parking appears to be on the property associated with the homestead and the historic barn, #6 and #7. The computation of parking with lanes and meeting requirements such as a 25-foot aisle between parking echelons, is not apparent from the plan. The parking total does not deduct for parking required for any residence or other use on either Lot 14 or Lot 15.
  - b. The discussion of traffic ignores the support personnel necessary for the operation of a wedding venue such as band members, caterers and wait staff. The traffic also ignores what other commercial uses might be occurring on the property at the same time, which would contribute to the traffic load. This again circles back on what exactly is part of the

property of the special exception application and what uses occurring on the property generate traffic for which this special exception is not sought.

c. Section 13A.3) speaks of “excessive noise,” “light,” “glare,” and “other conditions” associated with the intended use, but not typical of permitted uses within the area. To our knowledge, no permitted use in the area has music that would be audible during an otherwise quiet evening, particularly in the late spring, summer, and early fall. While the decibel level may meet the noise standard, the character of the noise is not such as is associated with a permitted use in the area. A constant low level background of rock or hip-hop or techno pop is in no way typical of any permitted use.

d. Also under 13A.3) are issues of light and glare, and noise. With respect to light, parking areas require illumination. Although downward structures are required, they still cast a horizon light. Glare would be generated from traffic coming to and from the site, particularly at night when the events break up. In that conjunction, also noise may well be a factor as the end of a wedding reception at times does break out into the sounds of horns or the like, particularly

if the bride and groom are leaving on their honeymoon from that reception.

e. Section 13A.4) requires the site to be an appropriate location. In considering whether this is an appropriate location, the existing uses of the site need to be understood and assessed

as to whether they are legally permitted uses under the zoning ordinance, such as they should be allowed to continue if the special exception is also granted.

f. Section 13A.6) talks about traffic generation. As weddings and wedding receptions have a defined start and generally a defined ending, there will be a high volume of traffic in a fairly short period of time on Webster Highway and/or Burton Highway. With respect to Webster Highway, the horizontal and vertical alignment of Webster Highway

from Route 101 to the intersection of Putnam Road is deficient in our estimation for the amount of traffic that would occur in a short period of time. In other words, using the discussion in Ms. Martin's application, you would be having at least 75 vehicles or more traversing Webster Highway/Burton Highway within a window of probably 30 minutes before the start of the event. Again when the event is over, possibly not all, but certainly a major portion of that traffic will be exiting over Webster Highway. My caution is that people tend to leave an event by my observation in a more staggered fashion than they do when they arrive.

g. An added consideration which possibly falls under 13.A.6) is whether alcohol would be permitted to be served. Certainly having a "dry" event can make the traffic generated from the site, particularly at the close of the activity, more safe.

9. Section 13.B. 1) [Paragraph 5] as discussed above presents some possible issues depending on what buildings on the site are defined to be part of the wedding event application.
10. On Document 1 there is a white quadrilateral immediately adjacent to Putnam Road which appears to be the same as the two (2) designated parking areas #6 and #7 on Document 4.

What is the white area adjacent to Putnam Road? Is that to be used as part of the wedding event application?

As we started out at the beginning with this, because of the omissions in the special exception application and the lack of information of exactly what buildings and how they are situated would be used for it and the other commercial uses occurring, there are possibly other comments that could be made, but those will only be developed with that additional information.

We do think the ZBA should require a survey of the property professionally done and not rely on the “kitchen table” sketches that have been provided as part of the application. I point to the fact that Stepping Stones Lodge had received a site plan approval back in the early 2000's for an indoor riding arena on Lot 14 and today it appears on Lot 15.  
Respectfully,

George Russell

Julie Russell  
As Abutters