

Town of Temple, NH

ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

July 14, 2021 Public Hearing (Con't)

APPLICANT- Stepping Stone Farm and Event Center LLC

ZBA Members Present: Emily Sliviak, Deb Harling, Allen Pickman

Others Present- 30+ Interested people.

Deb Harling called the hearing to order at 6:18 P.M. as the acting chair.

The applicant made the decision to move forward with only three members present. Harling asked if anyone had any issues with being audio and video recorded. There were no objections from the board, applicant or any member present in the audience. Harling stated that the video would be posted online for public record. First order of business included the applicant Martin's presentation.

Boo Martin (applicant) spoke first stating that her application has been since January 2020, thanked everyone for being there and that she is excited to present her material in hopes that all standards have been met. Martin then introduced her son Alec McDaniel to continue the presentation.

Alec McDaniel began the presentation and introduced himself and summarized the case.

John Catlin (licensed architect) stated that this presentation has no legal bearing and includes information where stepping stones is in the process, what they have done along the way to mitigate a lot of the concerns the community has and show the new information in the case.

Deb Harling stated tonight is a ZBA hearing but more informational due to tonight's circumstances with four resignations.

Alec MacMartin stated his concern with new members and would like to make sure members had enough time to get up to speed and that tonight should include only the presentation.

Deb Harling stated the board would allow questions only concerning the presentation tonight.

John Caitlin continued presenting on the site plan from 1977 that was presented and approved by the planning board in Temple (1977). He explained the fire departments role in helping with safety concerns and parking. Parking included 93 total spaces, (3 HCP, 1 Van HCP, 89 normal spaces).

Caitlin explained the completed fire safety and exit plans.

Alec McDaniel discussed 13 A standard 3 of the ordinance and showed sale data in Temple since 2005. Stating that there is no evidence to suggest any decline in property values and they feel strongly that their property will only be a benefit to surrounding properties.

Alec McDaniel continued to discuss sound concerns from abutters and stated the event center would not create any excessive noise, traffic, light or other disturbances. Eric Router was hired as a sound expert and helped conduct sound tests while mimicking an event in order to test new equipment.

Caitlin went on to state that sound must stay under 35 dBA outside and 80 dBA inside the event center.

Alec McDaniel further explained that in order to keep it below 35 dBA within the entire property they have purchased I-Test 2 Microphones from studio 6 to help enforce the sound standard. These microphones will constantly measure sound around the property and will be hardwired and made a permanent feature. This will ensure levels remain below the maximum of 80 dBA inside the event center. One feature that helps staff members monitor sound is a light module connected to an i-pad. This measures the sound level and displays green at 0-75 dBA and orange at 75-80 dBA and red over 80 dBA.

Alec McDaniel explained the event centers expectation of guests and the specific terms in the contract. There will be a noise policy and guests will lose their security deposit if sound ever goes above 80 dBA. The \$1000.00 security deposit if forfeited by the guest will be donated to the Temple Police department. There will also be an on-site staff member there to enforce this policy.

Alec McDaniel then presented on traffic and explained a 35% reduction in traffic trips by having this as an event center compared to its previous use. The South West Regional Planning Committee submitted an in depth traffic study and found the proposed use would have a significantly less impact on traffic and local highways and little congestion on roads leading to stepping stones. (Traffic Study posted on Temple Website for review).

Alec McDaniel stated the Temple police department verified only 5 traffic accidents since 2011.

Boo Martin spoke on the event centers newly installed lights that meets Temple's dark sky ordinance. The location of the lights are referenced on the site plan.

Boo Martin discussed the priority water shed over the aquifer and stated the event center is not located on the priority area. She feels strongly that the farm will have less traffic, less animal waste and fewer heavy equipment. Touchstone farm previously had up to 75 horses in the summer and 35-40 in the winter. Martin stated that with the help from NCRS there is now more care in conservation and less impact with only a few farm animals now at Stepping Stones. Pictures show the changes in the property and improvements made by Boo Martin.

Alec McDaniel read a letter submitted by Philip Suter (Greater Keene and Peterborough Chamber) in support of the event center.

Liz Calabria (President & CEO - The Greater Merrimack-Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce) then spoke in support of Stepping Stones event center.

Deb Harling announced that because of the circumstance of tonight's meeting we need to continue on questions in regards to the presentation only.

George Russell first asked Caitlin if he was a licensed architect. Russell then asked when a complete and up to date survey would be made to include all businesses on the property. Caitlin stated that the property has not changed since the last survey done in 1977.

George Russell asked when his concerns will be addressed, Harling responded that the scope of the meeting is to remain on the presentation only. Russell's concerns can be found online under Martin files. Russell believes this business will have a significant regional impact and that the Town of Wilton has added its concern as well.

MacMartin asked who is supplying sound equipment (d.j band, etc). Alec McDaniel replied that no matter who supplies the sound system it still has to abide by the scope of allowed dBA.

MacMartin asked if there was a list available of future events that would be held by Stepping Stones. Russell added that there were 3 listed because of the fire watch requirements but was unsure where to find the future events and dates. Boo Martin replied that she would ensure the availability of information on upcoming events/dates.

Deb Harling thanked everyone for their patience tonight and proceeded to discuss a date for the next meeting.

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Deb Harling, second by Allen Pickman, until Thursday August 5th at 6 p.m.

Hearing adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Minutes by Sliviak