

# **TOWN OF TEMPLE ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**

## **APPLICATION FOR A SPECIAL EXCEPTION**

Revised June 2019

Applicant Name: Stepping Stones Farm & Event Center, LLC



# Special Exception Standards: 1

**The proposed use shall be set back at least five hundred feet from any existing dwelling of another owner; provided, however, that, at the discretion of the Board of Adjustment, this distance may be reduced in any amount to a minimum of two hundred feet, but only if written permission is obtained from the abutting owners affected.**

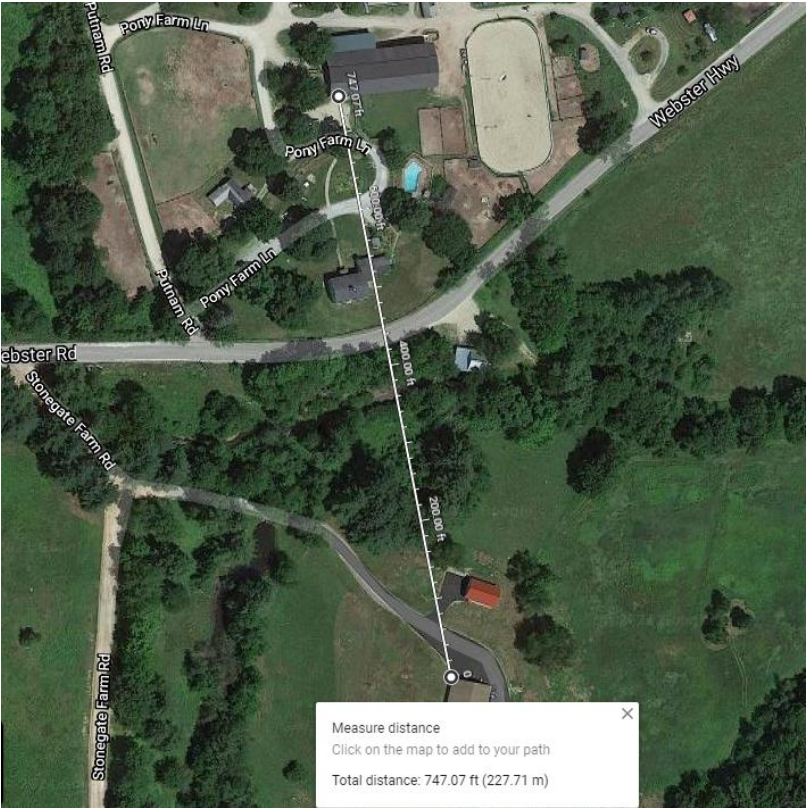
All existing dwellings on Lot 14 and 15 are sufficiently distant from the Ezell and Mac Martin homes. The Russell and Martin properties adjacent to the farm do not have any existing dwellings. Please reference **Document 1** for the property map and **Document 3** for more Abutters information and measurements.

# Document 1: Property Map



# Document 3: Abutters Information - Ezell

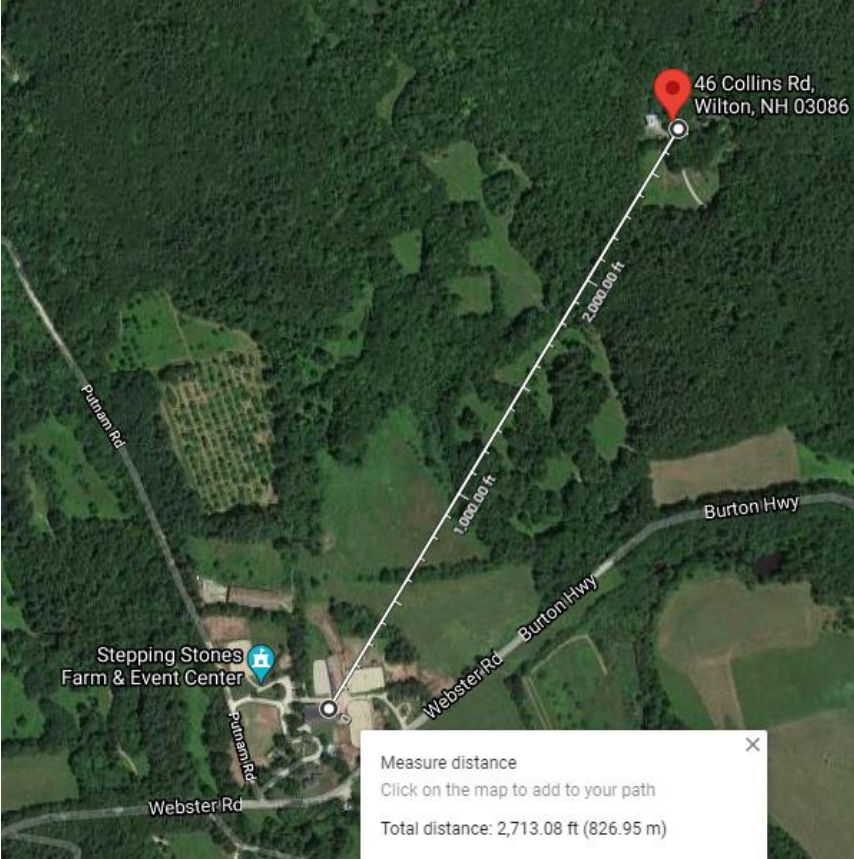
747' from Ezell





# Document 3: Abutters Information - MacMartin

2,700+ ft from MacMartin



# Special Exception Standards: 1 - R. Martin and Russell

There are no existing dwellings on either lot.

# Special Exception Standards: 2

The proposed use shall have off street parking which will be ample to serve the proposed use; provided, however, that any such off-street parking shall, at a minimum, be set back at least fifty-five (55) feet from all lot lines.

We have plentiful off-street parking that is at least 55 feet from all lot lines. Total vehicle parking is 103 spots, exceeding the required 75 vehicle capacity for events under 99 people. Total number of Handicapped Vehicle parking spots is 3 Handicapped Assessable Vehicles and 2 Handicapped Assessable Vans, exceeding the required 4 spaces for events under 99 people. Please see specific designated areas on the Parking Map in **Document 4**.



# Parking - Ring

Ring Parking Area: 93' wide and 194' long. To abide by the 55' setback from the lot line, 14' need to be deducted from the length of the ring allowing for 180' of useable parking space (see marker on picture.). 180' long allows for 20 vehicles on each side for a total of 40 vehicles with 72' needed for length of cars (18' each side X 2 sides=36' + 25' required lane=61', leaving 32' of empty space: Sub Total: 40





# Document 4: Parking Map

1. Lodge Parking Area of 86' long allows for 8 vehicles (72') and 1 handicapped assessable vehicle meeting the required 9' wide parking space and 5' lane (13') adjacent to the Handicapped Ramp onto Entrance Porch by Kitchen at Lodge: Sub Total: 9
2. Homestead Parking Area of 31' long allows for 3 vehicles by front entrance to Homestead by pool: Sub Total: 3
3. Homestead Parking Area: 140' long, excluding 55' from Lot line, allows for 13 vehicles (124' for 13 vehicles) and 1 Handicapped assessable vehicle (11' with 5' lane) across from Homestead ramp entrance by Stage Coach Waiting Room: Sub Total: 14
4. Handicapped Parking Area by Main Barn entrance Parking Area: 50' long for 3 Handicapped Vehicles. Handicapped Van would take 11' plus 5' lane (16') to left of tree and 2 handicapped vehicles could each have a 9' space with one 5' lane between them. This totals 43' in a 50' space. Sub Total: 3
5. Bungalow Parking Area: From the edge of the driveway to the fence line on the North side is 40' allows for 2 cars: Sub Total: 2
6. Jumping Ring Parking Area: 93' wide and 194' long. To abide by the 55' setback from the lot line, 14' need to be deducted from the length of the ring allowing for 180' of useable parking space (see marker on picture.). 180' long allows for 20 vehicles on each side for a total of 40 vehicles with 72' needed for length of cars (18' each side X 2 sides=36' + 25' required lane=61', leaving 32' of empty space: Sub Total: 40
7. Hacking Ring Parking Area: 97' wide and 149' long: 16 vehicles on each side for a total of 32 vehicles with a 25' lane,  $18 \times 2 = 36'$  plus 25' lane = 61', leaving 36' of empty space: Sub Total: 32

Grand Total of vehicle parking is 103, exceeding the required 75 vehicle maximum possible capacity for events.

Grand Total number of Handicapped Vehicle parking spots for 3 Handicapped Assessable Vehicles and 2 Handicapped Assessable Vans, exceeding the required 4 spaces. These will be marked with signage that is at least 5' from the ground on the lower end of the sign.

# Special Exception Standards: 3

**The proposed use shall not adversely affect the value of adjacent property. An adverse effect on adjacent property is one which would be obnoxious or injurious or limit the use of neighborhood property by causing such problems as excessive noise, odor, smoke, refuse matter, vibration, traffic, dust, fumes, light, glare, drainage, or other conditions that are associated with the intended use but are not typical of permitted uses within the area.**

The proposed use will not adversely affect the value of adjacent property with odor, smoke, refuse matter, vibration, dust, fumes, or drainage from the operation of business. We understand that even the small events that we've proposed will generate noise, light and traffic, however do not feel they will adversely affect adjacent property values, especially compared to the previously accepted use.

- **LIGHT**
- **NOISE**
- **TRAFFIC**
  
- **REALTOR OPINION**

# Special Exception Standards: 3 - Noise and Light

## **EXCESSIVE NOISE** (pursuant to Temple Town Commercial Noise Ordinance Section 31):

We will carefully conform to the Temple Noise Ordinance detailed in Section 31 and require that all parties agree, in writing and subject to penalty and/or eviction, to the following conditions:

- We will require guests to agree, in writing, that all music for events stating compliance of Table 3 for Rural and Agricultural districts of 35 dba (10-min L10) as measured from neighboring homes.
- We will position the placement of the amplified speakers in the southeast corner of the barn, pointed at the dance floor and away from abutters to minimize the noise impact.
- All weddings will require an on-site event manager that will monitor the sound decibel levels to ensure compliance using a digital sound meter.
- All amplified music will cease at 11:00pm. There is a zero tolerance policy for violation of this condition. On-site staff will intervene immediately if needed.

## **LIGHT** (pursuant to Temple Town Dark Sky Protection Ordinance Section 30):

- All lighting will be compliant with Temple's Dark Sky ordinance and subject to review and approval by the Temple Planning Board. Additional information and specifications are included in **Document 5**.

# Document 5: Lighting Information

--Red arrows indicate existing lights.

--Red arrows surrounding the event parking areas will be voluntarily upgraded with shrouds to conform with Dark Sky Ordinance.

--White dots indicate low output solar lights that are DSO compliant.





# Special Exception Standards: 3 - TRAFFIC

## **TRAFFIC:**

The proposed use includes accommodations for small events of less than 100 guests, most of which will be daytime use for corporate events, retreats, healing workshops, family reunions, artist retreats, educational and therapeutic organizations, etc., which will be very similar to the previously approved use of the property. We also plan to host a number of small scale weddings during warm weather months for a select group of qualified and vetted guests whom we feel embody the values of our community and family farm. Based on the data available to us from inquiries we've gotten to date, we anticipate the average size of our weddings to be 50-75 guests, many of which will travel as families or small groups and be staying on-site throughout the weekend. We also strongly encourage that any wedding guests who will not stay on-site arrange for alternate group transportation. This limits the number of vehicles leaving events late at night.

We anticipate that we will only host weddings during the temperate months. These will include small, concentrated arrival and departure windows of groups around start and end times of events rather than the constant traffic that existed as a result of previous use. The rural and quiet nature of the Town's roads and surrounding community will be better preserved.

The small numbers of vehicles that will leave after an event will not adversely impact neighboring property values and will result in significantly less traffic than previous use.

# Special Exception Standards: 3 - PROPERTY VALUE

## PROPERTY VALUE:

- Stepping Stones Farm will be run as an event center and a working farm. This requires scrupulous care of the grounds to attract business. We believe our grounds upkeep will be significantly better than the previous business and appearances will be much improved.
- Additionally, Stepping Stones will only have up to 10 horses on the property year-round. This is a significant reduction compared to the previous renters who kept anywhere from approximately 60 to 70 horses on the property for the summer months and 45 horses for the rest of the year.
- In reviewing property values of abutting lots that neighbor similar businesses in the area, Allrose Farm in Greenfield for example, an abutting home at 10 Early American Drive in Greenfield actually increased in value by an estimated \$78,000 since 2016. This venue has been operating since at least 2017 during which period these housing prices have increased. Several additional examples can be found in **Document 9**.
- **Please see letter from Andrew Peterson of Sotheby's Realty included.**

Our new business will increase the curb appeal of the neighborhood. We remain committed to being good town citizens and will diligently work with our neighbors, in good faith, to ensure a healthy and safe community at the farm as we have done for fifty years.

# Letter from Andy Peterson dated May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – pg. 2

Town of Temple  
Zoning Board of Adjustment  
423 NH Route 45  
PO Box 191  
Temple, NH 03084

May 5, 2021

**RE: Special Exception Application of Stepping Stones Farm and Event, LLC**

Dear Chairman Kieley and Honorable members of the board,

This letter offers my opinion as an established real estate professional in the Monadnock region, on the above application regarding Article 13A (3) in your standards, which requires that in granting a special exception surrounding property values shall not be adversely affected.

The board is no doubt familiar with the history of use and worthwhile stewardship of the property by the applicant which is widely appreciated as a credit to your town and to our region. A brief chronical of this history is included with the application. Particularly relevant to the current application is the fact that both the Pony Farm and the Timberdoodle Club have for decades sponsored events attended by the public and guests, and property values of surrounding properties during that time have more than kept pace with other desirable areas in our region.

Regarding the specific nature of this application, it is also useful to consider the effect on surrounding property values of similar event venues which have been created in the Monadnock Region in recent years. In this regard, Harrisville now has three wedding venues: Aldworth Manor, Cobb Hill Estates and Mayfair Farm. Since these businesses have opened property values in Harrisville have increased from an average of \$237,781 in 2018 to an average of \$338,218 over the past year. This compares favorably with the Cheshire County average selling price over the past year of \$249,696.

Similarly, the Grandview Inn, The Woodbound Inn Conference Center in Jaffrey and the newly created Cranberry Meadow Inn on Old Street Road in Peterborough have also not decreased, and have indeed had a demonstrably positive effect, on the value of surrounding residential real estate.

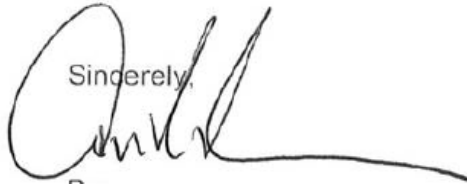
# Letter from Andy Peterson dated May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – pg. 2

The effect on real estate values reflected by recent sales on Stonegate Farm Road are particularly relevant to your considerations. According to MLS statistics, three of the top ten selling prices recorded over the last year in Temple were within the development directly adjacent to the Timberdoodle Club, including the most recent sale of 179 Stonegate Farm Road for \$750,000.

Due to the considerations and data referenced above and based on my experience and personal inspection of the premises and application before you, **I have concluded that the proposed use will not adversely affect surrounding property values.**

I trust the foregoing is satisfactory for your purposes, but if anything further is required do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Peterson', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

By:

Andrew R. Peterson CCIM

Four Seasons Sotheby's International Realty

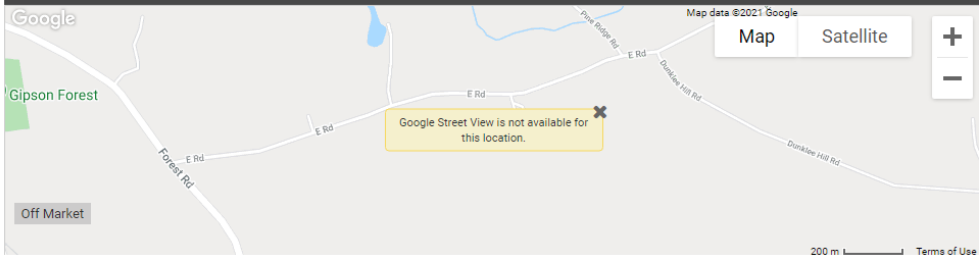
(603) 496-9172



# Document 9: Property Value Comps - Example 1

realtor.com® Buy Sell Rent Mortgage Find Realtors® My Home News & Insights

< Back Greenfield, NH New Hampshire > Hillsborough County > Greenfield > Early-American Dr



Map data ©2021 Google

Map Satellite + -

Google Street View is not available for this location.

200 m Terms of Use

Be Ready to Buy. [How Much Can You Borrow?](#)

**3** beds **1.5** baths **1,472** sq ft **3.37** acres lot

Est. **\$268,400**

Commute Time 10 Early American Dr, Greenfield, NH 03047 [View up to 3 home estimates](#)

FEMA Zone X (est.) • Flood Factor 1/10 **NEW**


[Get Up To 4 Free Moving Quotes](#) [Refi Rates](#)

**Property Overview** - 10 Early American Dr, Greenfield, NH 03047 is a single family home built in 1985.

According to the Greenfield public records, the property at 10 Early American Dr, Greenfield, NH 03047 has approximately 1,472 square feet, 3 beds, 1 [Read More](#) ▾

<b>43.15%</b> More expensive than nearby properties	<b>\$78.50K</b> Since last listed in 2016	<b>\$1,400</b> Rental Estimate
--	--	-----------------------------------


# Document 9: Property Value Comps - Example 2

**REDFIN**  

---

[← Search](#) **Overview** [Public Facts](#) [Listing Details](#) [Sale & Tax History](#) [Schools](#)

**OFF MARKET**




[Street View](#)

Listing provided courtesy of HKS Associates, Inc. Sold by RE/MAX Properties/Hollis.

**8 Early American Dr, Greenfield, NH 03047**

<b>\$183,431</b> <small>Redfin Estimate</small>	<b>5</b> <small>Beds</small>	<b>2.5</b> <small>Baths</small>	<b>2,445</b> <small>Sq Ft</small>
--	---------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------



**Off Market**  
This home last sold for \$128,199 on Jun 15, 2015.

---

**Redfin Estimate for 8 Early American Dr**

[Edit Home Facts to improve accuracy.](#)

[Create an Owner Estimate](#)

**\$183,431**  
+\$55K since sold in 2015

[Track This Estimate](#)


1 year 5 years

# Document 9: Property Value Comps - Example 3

**REDFIN** City, Address, School, Agent, ZIP

[← Search](#) **Overview** [Public Facts](#) [Listing Details](#) [Sale & Tax History](#) [Schools](#)

**OFF MARKET**




**Street View**

Listing provided courtesy of Gallo Realty Group. Sold by Keller Williams Realty-Metropolitan.

**10 Early American Dr, Greenfield, NH 03047**

<b>\$210,416</b> Redfin Estimate	<b>3</b> Beds	<b>1.5</b> Baths	<b>1,472</b> Sq Ft
-------------------------------------	------------------	---------------------	-----------------------



**Off Market**  
This home last sold for \$186,000 on Apr 22, 2016.

---

**Redfin Estimate for 10 Early American Dr**

Edit Home Facts to improve accuracy.  
Create an Owner Estimate

**\$210,416**  
+\$24K since sold in 2016

**Track This Estimate**  
1 year 5 years

# Special Exception Standards: 4

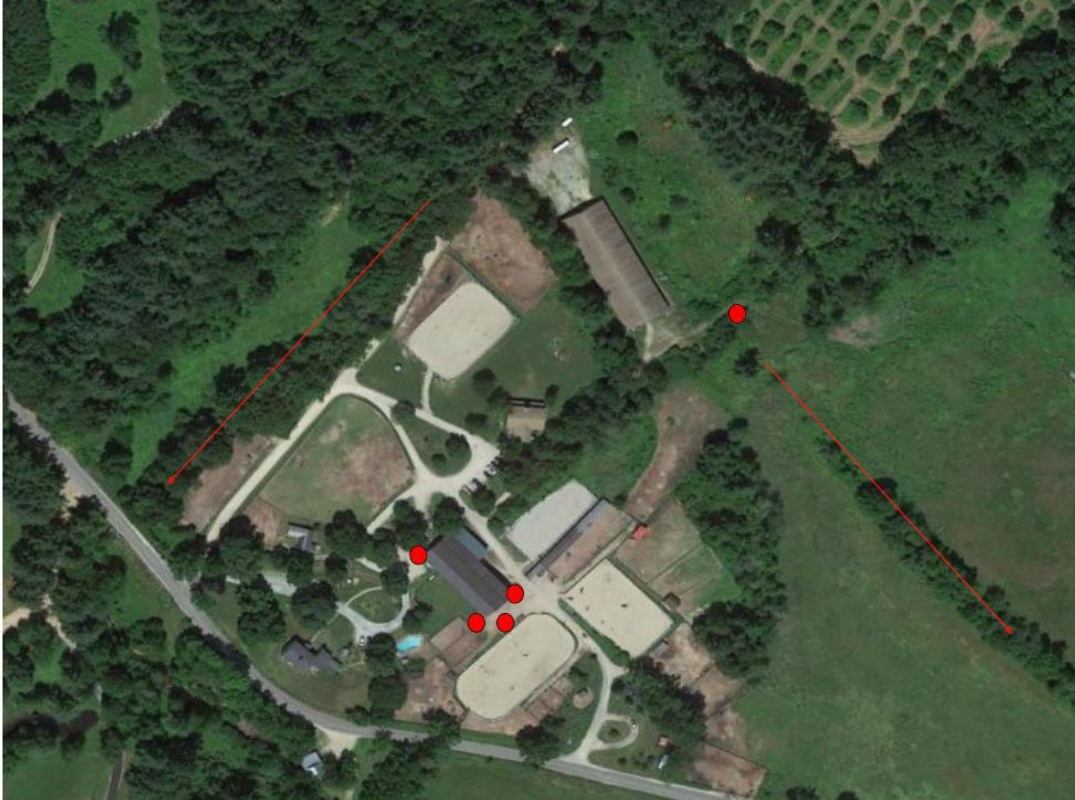
**The proposed site shall be in an appropriate location for the use. Among the factors the Board of Adjustment will consider are: lot size, topography, soils, water resources, road access and locations of driveways, condition of existing structures and other relevant characteristics such as whether the proposed use is compatible with the surrounding land uses.**

Lot 14 on 19 Putnam Road has a total of 3.54 acres and Lot 15 on 11 Pony Farm Lane has 23.5 acres. Together these lots have ample space to accommodate an event center serving up to 99 people. The locations of the existing buildings are appropriately situated to prevent interference with soils and appropriate drainage was added in 2015. Public access is from two driveways which have been there for decades. One large well installed in 1977 supplies ample drinking water for both guests and animals. It is important to note that no new buildings will be built and that existing structures are suitable for proposed use and have been used for similar size and type of events in the past without issue.

Please see **Document 6** for drainage and road access map, **Document 7** for additional driveway information and **Document 8** for footprint and measurements.



# Document 6: Drainage and Road Access Map



## Key:

--4 red dots around the barn are the placement of the underground drainage grates, professionally installed in 2015 to prevent erosion.

--1 red dot to left of indoor arena is the location of a pre-existing stone culvert under the road which feeds into a preserved drainage ditch. -- This has remained untouched since 1975 and will remain untouched.

The red arrows denote naturally occurring drainage ditches which have remained untouched as well.

# Document 7: Additional Driveway Information

No drainage will be modified because no new buildings will be built or driveways changed. See above/Document #6.

Ample driveways exist to offer easy access to vehicles while maintaining open access in the event of a fire.

o Driveway Widths as follows:

Entrance to The Homestead and The Bungalow: 19'

Entrance to The Lodge: 33'

Entrance to The Cottage: 46'

Entrances to the Indoor Arena: 17' and 25'

Regular use of professional disposal and recycling services for all trash removal will take place routinely. The dumpster will be placed in front of the 3rd floor of the barn and will be kept well maintained with no leakage.

As animals return to the farm, a manure dumpster will be placed behind the outside barn for consistent removal by professional composter. Paddocks will be routinely cleaned. Pastures will not be overgrazed with many less horses and will be well maintained.

Barn roof is currently being replaced to ensure safety for guests during indoor events.

# Document 8: Footprint and Measurements

## Building Dimensions (approximate in square feet):

1. Stepping Stones Lodge: 62' long x 56.5' wide = 3,503'
2. Main Barn: 136' long x 55.6' wide = 7,561.60'
3. Upstairs Barn: 20' wide x 64' long = 1,280'
4. Outside Barn: 240' long x 14' wide = 3,360'
5. Indoor Arena: 200' long x 72' wide = 14,400'
6. The Homestead = 2,160'
  - a. 42' long x 32' wide (main) = 1344'
  - b. 17' long x 28' wide – Kitchen area = 476'
  - c. 17' long x 20' wide – Porch = 340'
7. Small Animal Barn: 28' long x 16' wide = 448'
8. Office: 450'
9. The Cottage: 25' long x 18' wide = 650'
10. The Bungalow: 1,050'
  - a. 37' long x 18' wide (main) = 666'
  - b. 16' long x 18' wide = 288'
  - c. 12' long x 8' wide (porch) = 96'

**Buildings Grand Total: 34,862.60' square feet**

**Property Grand Total: 1,177,862.40 square feet**

**Building % of total acreage: 2.959%**

# Special Exception Standards: 5

**No hazardous waste shall be permanently stored on or disposed of on the property.**

We will not store or dispose of any hazardous waste as the proposed use has no exposure to this type of waste.



# Special Exception Standards: 6

**Traffic generated by the proposed use shall not present a safety hazard to the community for either vehicles or pedestrians, nor shall it cause excessive wear and tear to town roads.**

As stated previously, traffic generated by the proposed use will be less impactful to community safety than the previous operation of the horse farm that operated on this property for 40 years. The number of guests and visitors is significantly less and will be concentrated in short arrival and departure windows, not ongoing flows of traffic as we saw with previous use. Please consider the below facts:

- Kent Perry, Road Agent for Temple, NH, has been consulted. He stated unequivocally that Webster Highway is designed for heavy traffic. It is his opinion that the traffic generated by Stepping Stones will not adversely affect Webster Highway. He will attend the Site Visit and answer any questions which may arise.
- All events that serve alcoholic beverages will require, in writing, the hire and use of a licensed and insured bartender who will monitor alcohol consumption of all guests. Any guests that are unable to drive will be required to stay on-site or arrange for alternate transportation. Guests are not able to serve outside alcohol during events.
- During the summer camp years, each session had 36 children, thus 36 cars, coming and going on Saturdays and Sundays. Additionally, there were twenty staff members and counselors in training who each had a car. Also, the fifteen year-round staff also had cars. Finally, the riding lesson program for both Horse Power and Touchstone often had up to 75 students a week with five instructors and as many as 35 volunteers, in addition to daily farm staff. This totaled many hundreds of cars coming and going per week, often during long stretches of time and consistent traffic flows. In addition, Touchstone Farm also frequently hosted horse shows for outside competitors attracting as many as fifty large horse trailers, vans and accompanying vehicles.
- Events hosted at Stepping Stones Farm will primarily take place in the late spring, summer and fall when road conditions are clear. During mud season and winter, when town roads are particularly vulnerable to wear and tear, the traffic will be minimal due to the cold weather which makes our event space undesirable. Guests will primarily be in private vehicles, not large trucks and trailers.

Based on these factors, we do not feel that the proposed use poses any undue threat or safety hazard to the community nor does it cause excessive wear and tear.

# Special Exception Standards: 7

**Appropriate buffering landscaping shall be provided within the setback areas, of a type and amount deemed appropriate by the Planning Board during Site Plan Review.**

We will comply with any recommendations that the Planning Board deems appropriate. Ample, well established tree barriers exist between our property and the Ezell, Russell and Mac Martin properties. Randall Martin's property does not have buffering landscape and he has no objections to proposed plan. Please see **Document 3** for reference.



# Special Exception Standards: 8

**The Board of Adjustment shall, when appropriate, request a recommendation from the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, Road Agent and/or the Health Officer concerning the proposed use.**

The Planning Board conducted an abbreviated Site Visit on Saturday, January 9th of 2021 with a positive outcome and informal approval. The Health Officer, Peter Caswell, has signed off with his approval. John Kieley expressed that there was not a need to go to the Conservation Commission. An on-site inspection with William Wildes as the Town Building Inspector has taken place and his recommendations are being implemented (details to be provided upon request). As noted, Temple Road Agent Kent Perry was also consulted.

Fire Chief George Clark has performed two site visits. We have sought the advice of Triangle Fire Consultant, Alison Brackett, a professional Fire Safety Inspector. We are already beginning to implement her recommendations. She will provide a written summary of her findings.

Please also see the submitted History and Timeline of the farm for reference (**Document 10**) as well as a closing statement from Isabella Martin (**Document 11**).

We are fully committed to fulfilling the requests of the Planning Board.

# Document 11: Closing Statement

Boo Martin