

April 15, 2021

Dear Temple Planning Board,

Recently, I had the opportunity to tour Stepping Stones Farm and Event Center and did so with two different hats and sets of eyes. One was as a realtor that specializes in equestrian and farm properties in NH and MA, and the other as a neighbor, which was special. As a resident of Temple, I've had the pleasure of driving by this farm on a regular basis for the past 20+ years. I've seen the yard full of children during summer camps, horse trailers and equestrians arriving for horse shows, and the parking lot and riding arenas full of students for lessons.

In 2001, we moved to Temple and fell in love with the small-town charm and quaint rural setting. It very much reminded me of the town I grew up in, prior to farmland being turned into housing developments. Having grown up on a 300-acre dairy farm, which was converted into a family farm with an array of animals including a large herd of bison, I shall confess that my heart goes pitter patter over the sight of rolling pastures, old barns, active farms and animals grazing. For all those reasons, coupled with an old fashion home town atmosphere, I love this town and what it represents.

The preservation of farms is of much importance to me. Once our farms and lands are gone, they are gone forever.

In my profession as a realtor, I'm always asked what the highest & best value is when offering an opinion about the value of farm properties. Most often, the highest value would be subdivision, yet I personally have a hard time saying that is "best". The thought of any farmland being subdivided into house lots, is in my opinion, a sad day. If it were to happen to Stepping Stone, it would break my heart to see 3-4 houses instead of fields and grazing pastures.

I know firsthand, through my personal life and my profession, the deep appreciation farm families have for their land and farms. The owner of Stepping Stone Farm and her family is not an exception to this love affair. They share a true love of their land. When she speaks of her farm, it is from the heart and with a desire to preserve the integrity of the property and be good stewards of the land.

As a prior equestrian facility and summer camp, the property is accustomed to having activities, events and traffic associated with operating. If there is an opportunity for this farm and historic barn to be kept in its entirety by transitioning to a different use, I applaud them, their energy and creativity. Already, their efforts can be seen. The historic barn has come to life, the grounds are being tidied and freshened up, the outbuildings are getting facelifts and the owner has organized the parking so it is well off the street and won't be a nuisance. As a realtor, the upkeep of the property and ongoing improvements not only enhances the curb appeal, but will have a positive effect on the property's value. As a neighbor, that is good thing!

I've always had the impression that the owner is a person of integrity and is governed by the desire to do things right. She remains connected with the community with a long history of

hospitality. As a neighbor, the owner has always been welcoming and accommodating. All these traits work well for a farm transforming into an Event Center.

In summary, as a resident and neighbor, I'm an advocate of the preservation of this farm and support the transition to an Event Center. As a realtor, the changes and improvements on the property will increase the property value. Based upon the prior use of this property, the distant proximity to neighbors, the improvements and ongoing upkeep that will be required and the owners willingness to cooperate with any issues that may be concerns, it is my opinion that the value of neighboring properties will not be affected.

I do look forward to the return of animals to the property! Seeing a few well cared horses grazing in open green pasture will add to the spirit and rural feel of the North side of town. It will be a welcomed site.

Regards,
Sally

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