

Dear Zoning Board members,

Re: Stepping Stones Event Center

I am corresponding as a long time resident of the Town of Temple with concerns about the Stepping Stones application.

My concern starts with my perception that the Board intends to approve the application despite the legitimate concerns expressed by residents.

If you do approve this application I urge you to include restrictions that keep this business aligned with the vision of the community, our Zoning Ordinances and the rights of all nearby residents.

I question how many years that Boo is going to operate the Event Center. There could be the possibility that she will run it for 3-5 years and then sell it once it has become an established business.

Buyers could come from California, New York, Florida, etc. who are accustomed to less restrictive business regulations so the restrictions that you put on the business now will be what protects the town in the future. The thought of outside interests moving in with big money and legal backing could be a real possibility, especially with much of the surrounding land being owned by the same family.

When Boo first proposed this to the Planning Board, it was presented as just another small business in town, but as time went on and more was learned about the scope of the Event Center it became evident that this was going to be large, complicated and impactful. The applicant's requests over time have been a moving target, which in my opinion, small towns like Temple are ill equipped to deal with.

It should be recognized that Temple has no enforcement staff, which needs to be addressed and put in place in a timely manner to protect the town's best interests as we navigate through changes like this. I want to be sure that the town is secure that this business cannot grow out of control into a huge facility and that the town is staffed and willing to enforce its rules, regulations and decisions now and in the future. Any further future expansion and growth of this business needs to be subject to the necessary town approvals.

Once the horse has left the barn and we don't have adequate protection then the die is cast and we will have to live with the impact the Event Center eventually has on the local community over the coming years.

As a REALTOR I see that the percentage of people who don't care if they are near a business is much lower than the percentage of families looking for a home in a residential/rural area when they choose to purchase in a country setting.

Being near a business which brings strangers into the area on a regular basis could be a deterrent for some buyers.

There are always factors that affect sales of single family homes and to say that a business has no impact on value is naive.

A rule for buyers has traditionally been location, location, location indicating that location does matter to many.

This is a decision that needs time and caution. We need to look through the microscope so any changes the Event Center makes to our town are well thought out with few regrets now and in years to come.

If you do approve this application, I urge you to place strong and defined restrictions that protect the town and nearby residents by keeping the scope of the business to a scale that reflects the rural New England character of Temple. That is what we are trying to preserve, that is what makes Temple, Temple.

If done thoughtfully, I know we can embrace changes but it is up to us to do our best to insure that the details are addressed sufficiently.

Kind regards,
Kathy Boot
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