



Southwest Region Planning Commission

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July 9, 2021

John Kieley, Chair
Temple Zoning Board of Adjustment
P.O. Box 10009
Temple, NH 03084

Re: Stepping Stones Farm and Event Center

Dear Mr. Kieley:

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to review the proposal for the Stepping Stones Farm and Event Center development pursuant to RSA 36:56. Based on the information that was submitted to the Temple Zoning Board of Adjustment, this review will provide a perspective on the potential regional impact of this proposed change of use.

Background

The proposal is for a farm and event center for property located at 19 Putnam Road (Lot 14) and 11 Pony Farm Lane (Lot 15) located in Temple, New Hampshire. The proposed development will replace a previous business that was primarily an equestrian center for therapeutic riding, summer camp and veteran training business. The information provided indicates that there will be no new structures and that several existing sheds will be removed. Parking for events is proposed to remain on-site and no change in drainage is proposed. Total acreage is 27.04 acres and total building coverage is approximately 3%.

Regional Comments

The comments provided in this transmittal are primarily from a regional perspective as opposed to site-scale impacts. Regional impacts are those which may affect an adjacent community or a regional facility or both. As part of its review, SWRPC staff referenced the following documents submitted:

- Town of Temple Zoning Board of Adjustment Application for a Special Exception
- File documents referenced 1-11
- Emergency Fire Lanes and Gatherings
- Event Traffic Flows (2)
- Report for noise level testing on 5/24/21 by Ben Rogers
- Scope of Business at Stepping Stones
- Stepping Stones Farm & Event Center Business Plan

Staff also referenced the following resource materials:

- *Town of Temple Zoning Ordinance, as amended through March 9, 2021*
- *Monadnock Region Future: A Plan for Southwest New Hampshire 2015*
http://swrpc.org/files/MonadnockRegionFuture_RegionalPlan_FINAL.pdf

- *Trip Generation: An ITE Informational Report, 8th Edition, 2008*
- *Trip Generation for weddings:* <http://www.mikeontraffic.com/estimating-trip-generation-distribution-wedding-venue/>

Aquifer Related Comments

Based on the information submitted, it appears that the proposed use will have a reduced impact on the aquifer in comparison to the former use. The former use had heavy daily use during the summer months with camps, training and equestrian events. The number of horses and vehicles for drop-off and pick-up of campers likely created hard packed impervious areas which may compromise groundwater recharge. In addition, the amount of animal waste produced by 60 - 70 horses was a significantly larger amount than will be produced by the proposal of a maximum of 10 horses. The decrease in building square footage by the removal of several sheds also is a reduction in the amount of impervious surface on the property.

Noise Related and Light Trespass Related Comments

The Town of Temple is fortunate to have both a noise ordinance and a night sky ordinance to limit the impacts to nearby properties of new development and change of use proposals, as is the case in this proposal.

The noise report conducted by Ben Rogers suggests that noise levels will be within the limits of the Temple noise ordinance at the property lines. Likewise, Document 6 indicates that all lighting will be in accordance with the Temple Lighting Ordinance. Noise and light concerns can be reinforced with conditions added to any approval if the Zoning Board deems appropriate.

Transportation Related Comments

To understand transportation-related regional impacts of the proposal, SWRPC reviewed possible traffic generation and trip distribution as well as impacts to highway infrastructure and safety based on available data and reference materials.

SWRPC conducted a traffic generation analysis based on the proposed uses described in the materials submitted by the Stepping Stones Farm and Event Center. It is our understanding that the applicant has identified four existing structures that will involve introducing three new types of land use activities and these activities are the focus of the Zoning Board of Adjustment's review. These include activities that would have a nexus with existing on-site buildings named the Lodge, the Homestead, the Cottage, and the Historic Barn. The Lodge and the Homestead are proposed to be used as lodging, the Cottage represents Stepping Stones' employee housing and the Historic Barn will host wedding events. SWRPC did not account for other potential traffic generation activities on the property such as the traffic generation of the owners or other staff that may not be associated with the land uses identified above, however, we expect those numbers to be negligible based on our understanding of the proposal.

For the purposes of estimating trip generation, it is SWRPC's opinion that the Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) description of a Hotel (Land Use Code 310) is the best available reference for the applicant's proposed lodging and the ITE description of a Single Family Detached Housing (Land Use Code 210) is the best reference for the employee housing.¹ Unfortunately, the ITE does not offer trip generation figures for special events like weddings. However, SWRPC was able to find a methodology for estimating wedding traffic based on information posted by professional traffic engineers and used that information as a basis for estimating wedding related traffic.²

¹ Trip Generation: An ITE Informational Report, 8th Edition, 2008.

² <http://www.mikeontraffic.com/estimating-trip-generation-distribution-wedding-venue/>, accessed 6/30/21.

Key assumptions that were taken from the wedding trip estimation methodology include the number of guests per vehicle (we used the engineers' more conservative 2 guests per vehicle) and the ratio of vendors (caterers, entertainment or other special event staffing) to guests (10:90). The engineers' suggested calculating for 75% of the facility's capacity, and suggested reduced traffic generation for guests and vendors exiting the venue during the peak hour (40%), but for illustration purposes, SWRPC is showing 100% capacity for the wedding and 100% traffic generation from the wedding party during the peak hour. In other words, the traffic figures show the highest likely traffic generation expected from the facility for a given time period. The analysis also assumes that the peak hour associated with lodging and employee housing are the same as the peak hour for the wedding event. The Zoning Board of Adjustment is advised to recognize that typical traffic generation is likely to be lower. This is the worst-case scenario.

In the table below, a number of time value metrics (typical weekdays, Saturdays, Sundays and their respective peak hours) are provided for each land use individually and then there is a total combining each land use together. For peak hour traffic, the proposed land uses are estimated to be no higher than 74 to 76 vehicles. Days with the highest traffic generation are Saturdays reaching almost 300 vehicles at the most.

Traffic Generators	units	# of units	Weekday	Weekday a.m. peak hour	Weekday p.m. peak hour	Saturday	Saturday peak hour	Sunday	Sunday peak hour
The Lodge	occupied rooms	11	98	7	8	116	10	93	8
The Homestead	occupied rooms	6	54	4	4	63	5	51	5
The Cottage	dwelling units	1	10	1	1	10	1	9	1
Subtotal (no wedding)	n/a	n/a	161	12	14	189	16	153	14
Historic Barn	Guests	99	99	50	50	99	50	99	50
	Vendors	11	11	0	11	11	11	11	11
Total	n/a	n/a	271	61	74	299	76	263	74

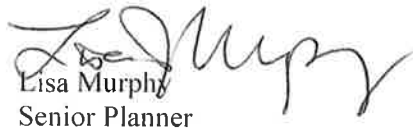
It is SWRPC staff's opinion that traffic patterns associated with vehicles entering and exiting the Stepping Stones Farm and Event Center will largely depend on vehicle origins and destinations. A rudimentary analysis of travel time and distance using Google Maps suggests that most people entering and exiting the facility with origins or destinations to the east are likely to travel through Wilton along NH Route 31 and the Burton Highway. Traffic coming from or going to the north or south and using I-293 are likely to use the Wilton roads as well. People entering and exiting the facility with origins and destinations to the west are more likely to travel through Temple via the Webster Highway. SWRPC does not have reliable data regarding the condition, geometrics or level of service of either Webster Highway or the Burton Highway but notes that traffic appears to be very low (226 Average Daily Traffic on Webster Highway near the facility in 2019). Based on the traffic volume data, it's unlikely that traffic associated with the site would cause serious capacity or congestion issues to the highways leading to the facility.

SWRPC also examined historic crash data in the vicinity of the facility on Webster Highway and Burton Highway using data from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. Crash incidence rates are fairly low as expected for low traffic rural highways and there were no fatalities or serious injuries based on records from 2002-2019 in the area that SWRPC examined (NH 101 in Temple to Forest Road in Wilton). During the 17-year period, there were 63 recorded crashes (3.7 crashes per year on average) and among the crashes there were 2 incapacitating injuries, 2 possible injuries and 2 suspected minor injuries. Nearly half of the crashes occurred in conditions that included observed ice, snow or slush.

In Closing

The information and comments contained in this submittal have been generated by the staff at Southwest Region Planning Commission. They are advisory in nature and are intended to assist the Town's land use boards and others involved in the review of this development proposal. In making decisions regarding this proposal, the Town should balance regional impacts with local considerations. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or to discuss further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lisa Murphy".

Lisa Murphy
Senior Planner