

From: Hunt Williams <hunt@creamhill.net>
Sent: Monday, September 4, 2023 9:16 PM
To: Land use <landuse@cornwallct.gov>
Subject: letter of support for Ridgway farm & cidery project

A few notes about farming, apple-growing and cider-making to support the Ridgway proposals for cidery, farm store, and accessory apartment:

A cider-making operation and small orchard on Town Street should add no more traffic noise than a milk truck, grain and hay trucks and related dairy farm commerce did in the past. Most likely it would add less noise. The public has not been aware of the disappearing road traffic over the past several years but has become used to the quieter rural residential atmosphere.

The establishment of an orchard made up of old and even ancient varieties of apples is a valuable and remarkable asset to Cornwall. Without this substantial effort these heirloom fruit trees will be lost forever. Grafting of these rare remaining apple trees is a skill that has to be learned and perfected. For a very old surviving but declining tree, it represents the re-establishment of old apple varieties that would otherwise be lost. Furthermore, the combining and blending of the heirloom fruit can produce unusual and superior cider. Cider-making 60 and 70 years ago required only using local and then common varieties which have largely disappeared. Cider from new popular apple varieties is tame and disappointing. The fruit is plain and lacking character.

As a parallel example to the establishment of an orchard and cidery, if a vineyard were to be established in Cornwall, as has been done in numerous towns in Northwest Connecticut, it would require a number of years of planting, pruning and training of grape vines. When ready to produce wine grapes it would involve promoting the wine, offering it for tasting, and eventually selling it to the public. Such a venture might see objections raised also but agricultural enterprises must be able to market the product involved.

Cornwall's significant acreage of agricultural land should be developed and promoted. The Cornwall that appeals to so much of the public is not one of suburban housing but one of natural cropland – whether that be meadows, row crops, orchards, or woodlands. Connecticut has a “right to farm” law, but farming should not have to be threatened and legally protected – it should be encouraged and promoted. It is a highly desirable and enjoyable way of life – for those involved in it and all those who enjoy its natural environment.

Respectfully submitted,

Huntington Williams

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From: Ingersoll Diane <diane@ianingersoll.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 2, 2023 6:02 PM
To: Land use <landuse@cornwallct.gov>
Cc: DIANE INGERSOLL <diane@ianingersoll.com>
Subject: Ridgway Application

August 30, 2023

To the Planning and Zoning Board

In reference to the Ridgway Farm Application

My name is Diane Ingersoll. I have lived at 136 Town Street for the past forty plus years with my husband Ian. We raised our family here. The proposed Ridgway cidery/farm store/event space/parking lot/accessory apartment complex will be located 225 feet from our home. I oppose this application strongly. We chose to live in North Cornwall for many reasons. We were drawn by its historic buildings, beautiful open fields, stone walls and wetlands. We especially loved the protected and peaceful nature of it. We believe there is no other area like it in Cornwall. This commercial building and business especially with a tasting room will permanently affect all that is special about North Cornwall. This application will have "adverse impacts"(10.6.A) on our property and our neighbors' properties. It will add more traffic from cars, motorcycles, trucks, tractors and farm machinery. It will add smells from the fermenting apples. Where there is a bar (excuse me "tasting room") there will most likely be music. They have planned outside patios which will disturb us day and night. We will have no peace from this especially on weekends when they have asked to be open. Sunday night hours, how dare they! The Ridgways are farmers but they are also neighbors.

The proposal for the cidery says that they eventually hope to produce 2,000 gallons of hard cider. To make that amount they will need 15 tons of apples which I guess will be trucked to the site since their apple trees will never produce that amount. Then the apples will have to be moved into the cidery by more machinery. A lot of noise in this quiet residential neighborhood. We have already been experiencing noise problems from the Ridgways. In the Fall they have been chainsawing for hours on end the 15+ cords of wood they need to use for their maple syrup business which is located less than 40 feet from our property line. We have also put up with the constant slamming of car doors from people visiting the farm stand. That is nothing compared to what we will experience if their application is approved by Zoning.

Ian and I have spent a lifetime improving our property on Town Street. We were looking forward to a nice peaceful retirement in this home in North Cornwall that we love. If this building and business are approved our property's value will plummet (I was told this by a real estate agent) and our quality of life will be destroyed and that is not an exaggeration.

I plead with the Planning and Zoning Commission members to reject The Ridgway LLC application.

Diane Ingersoll

From: Anne Zinsser <akka22jz@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, September 1, 2023 1:38 PM

To: Land use <landuse@cornwallct.gov>

Subject: Regarding the Town Street Proposal

Changing the rules and then going right ahead to alter a neighborhood against the wishes of the neighbors is drastic . I worry about cars and motorcycles leaving your proposed building too rapidly on a road - the much used 3 mile loop - full of walkers, dogs, strollers and bikers , often in twos, often in groups.

I hope you will consider making compromise a priority. The compromise would be the selling of hard cider in containers on the premise and the hard cider in a place in town.

Cornwall has always been lauded for its sense of community. This proposal is jarring and so contrary to the spirit that has prevailed here for years and years and year.

Anne Zinsser 15 Town Street

Nancy Berry
45 Lake Road
West Cornwall, CT

September 5, 2023

Dear Planning and Zoning Commission,

I am writing this letter to express my opposition to the special permit application to operate a retail cider operation at 142 Town Street.

The application and supporting documentation and maps indicate a substantial structure will be erected that will include seating for 15 people in a tasting room with overflow seating outside along with a parking lot for visitors. I understand that the produce of the cidery operation to be served in the tasting room will include fermented or "hard" cider, an alcoholic beverage. Given this, it is hard to distinguish a difference between the cidery's "tasting room" and a bar or tavern.

I am concerned that the specific plans for a tasting room are vague and not clearly articulated. A coherent understanding of the tasting room requires more information and answers to several questions such as:

1. Will "tastes" be sold or given away as samples?
2. Will "tastes" be limited to 2-ounce containers?
3. How many "tastes" will a given customer be allowed?
4. Will retail sale of larger (8-16 oz) drinks be for on-site consumption?

Selling alcoholic beverages in an isolated residential setting has the potential to generate some intrusive ancillary activities. For example, entertainment, food trucks, traffic, noise, lighting for a parking lot and driveway etc. Indeed, street lighting might eventually be necessary. All of these will be an unwanted intrusion to and destructive to the relaxed pastoral atmosphere of North Cornwall. All the attendant sounds and light of the operation will be disturbing to nearby residents, particularly Diane and Ian Ingersoll whose house is within a couple of hundred feet of the main structure.

I also feel that the retail sale of alcoholic beverages in the proposed store and tasting room, even though located on a farm, is not a natural extension of agricultural activity. The Connecticut General Statutes similarly recognizes that there is a distinction between retail alcohol sales and agriculture.

A section of the State of Connecticut Liquor Control Act specifically deals with farm-based cideries. C. G. S. Chapter 545 §30-16(d)(2), gives express authority to local Planning and Zoning authorities to prohibit retail or tasting activities:

"...a town may, by ordinance or zoning regulation, prohibit any such offering, tasting or selling at retail at premises within such town for which a manufacturing permit has been issued."

In other words, if tasting or retail sales of alcoholic beverages were a traditional agricultural activity, local authorities would not have been given the power to prohibit such activity. Thus, a tasting room or bar has traditionally been considered a separate business rather than an extension of agricultural activity and should, therefore, be in a business zone.

In summary, (1) the application does not sufficiently or clearly delineate the services to be offered and (2) the Connecticut General Statutes recognize that the tasting and retail sale of alcoholic beverages is not an extension of traditional agricultural activity. This distinction implies that farms and other agricultural entities may not engage in tasting or retail sale of alcoholic beverages by right.

I am asking you to please deny the application for a special permit as it currently reads for 142 Town Street. While some aspects of the application may have merit, the application overall is vague, reflects extreme wishful thinking and commingles issues that should, perhaps, be considered separately. Further, while there may be some benefits to the community, the costs are borne mainly by the closest neighbors. Reducing those costs through re-locating the planned site of the proposed cidery significantly farther from Town Street would be a step in a more acceptable direction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Berry".

Nancy Berry



78 Beaver Road, Suite 2A, Wethersfield CT 06109-2201
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August 28, 2023

Ms. Anna Timel – Chair
Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission
24 Pine Street
West Cornwall, CT 06796

Re: Special permit for a farm cidery and farm store as per Section 10.5.f. (Agricultural & Accessory Uses subject to a Special Permit) and special permit for a detached accessory apartment as per Section 10.1 (Accessory Apartments & Apartment Uses) - 142 Town St.

Dear Ms. Timel and Members of the Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission:

Please accept this letter of support for the above-mentioned application. This application aligns with two goals identified on page 6 of the 2020 Cornwall Plan of Conservation and Development:

- Support Cornwall's existing businesses.
- Support our agricultural and farm-based businesses.

This application meets or exceeds both of those goals. Ridgway Farm LLC is a well-established working farm. The addition of a cidery and farm store will help diversify the farming operation, which is the hallmark of sustainability for Connecticut farms. This enhancement to an existing farm operation will add value to the farm's offerings, help diversify and grow farm revenue, and provide a retail outlet for consumers seeking fresh, locally produced farm products.

Farm cideries are a growing sector of Connecticut agriculture. It is our experience that farmers who entertain such an endeavor do so with thorough consideration for their neighbors and communities, their own families, who often reside on the farm and protection of their agricultural soil and resources.

Connecticut farmers must diversify their operations to survive and stay profitable. Farms are fighting the impact of climate change as we experienced just in the past four months with a late season frost that harmed fruit production to record flooding in July that deluged vegetable fields.

Farms are not just about the bucolic landscape we all take for granted. Farms are businesses owned and operated by hardworking, entrepreneurial farm families who care deeply about their heritage, communities, and land. Farms must seek alternative income to survive. This application will help ensure the next generation of farmers stay on the family farm and stay a part of the Cornwall community.

The Voice of Connecticut Agriculture

Connecticut Farm Bureau Association (CFBA) is a non-profit membership organization representing nearly 2,500 farming families in the state of Connecticut. The agricultural industry has a critical and significant impact on the economy of Connecticut in output, jobs, and quality of life: up to \$4.0 billion in output, 21,696 jobs, and significant social and environmental benefits.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on the merits of this application and urge the Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission to grant these Special Permits.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joan Nichols".

Joan Nichols
Executive Director
joann@cfba.org
C: 860-951-2791