

From: Barton Jones <jones.barton@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2023 12:21 PM
To: Land use <landuse@cornwallct.gov>
Subject: Oppose Cider Tasting Room on Town Street

To: Cornwall Planning & Zoning Commission
From: Barton and Debby Jones

We agree completely with Andrea Geisser's opposition to this project as stated below.

From: Geisser, Andrea <ag@zmlp.com>
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2023 11:52 AM
To: landuse@cornwallct.org
Cc: Geisser, Andrea <ag@zmlp.com>
Subject: ridgway cider farm and selling outlet

I am a resident of Town St (90 Town) the same street the proposed cider farm selling outlet that includes an area similar to that of a public bar- restaurant. I have no objections to an apple farm. I have no objections to the sale of cider (there is already a farm stand on that location). I do have strong opposition to a space dedicated to sell alcoholic cider for consumption on a residential street. Town Street was not designed to support traffic generated by an outlet selling alcoholic beverages to be consumed on location. There are specific areas in Cornwall zoned commercial where such activities can take place (for instance where the Package store is located). Please do not approve such request. It is not safe for those residing on Town Street. I also would ask that given Gordon's position as first selectman, that any member of the Planning and Zoning Commission who has a relation to the petitioner should recuse his or herself from the vote on this matter. Regards Andrea and Mary Ellen Geisser 90 Town Street

From: Jeremy Brecher <jeremy.brecher@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2023 9:02 AM
To: Cornwall Land Use <cwlanduse@optonline.net>
Subject: Ridgeway Farm Cidery Proposal

Anna Timmell, Chair
Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission

To the Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission:

I write to support the proposal to make a cidery and cider tasting room at the Ridgeway Farm on Town Street in North Cornwall.

I am a lifelong resident of North Cornwall, just off Town Street in the Yelping Hill community and on Yelping Hill Road, since 1949. I am also a Connecticut historian and author of the text for the Cornwall Historical Society's book *Cornwall in Pictures*. I write in part to put this proposal into historical context.

Cornwall was for most of its history a farm community. The loss of farms over recent decades has been saddening for many Cornwall residents.

Historically, farms in Cornwall as throughout New England depended on combining a variety of activities in order to be economically viable. As a Connecticut Agricultural Extension Service study of rural Litchfield County wrote in the early 1940s, a pattern of "piecing together a living out of diverse activities" by area farmers reflected the fact that "the tradition of the Yankee handyman and jack-of-all-trades still persists, a survival of the self-sufficient economy." The incorporation of auxiliary activities into Cornwall farming was still a feature of the town in my youth. It is also a feature of the revival of Cornwall agriculture that is now under way, as illustrated by the resurgence of maple sugaring. I believe the Ridgeway Farm proposal is a worthy continuation of this tradition.

Cider is a central part of the history of New England and of Cornwall in particular. According to the "History of Hard Cider in New England" by Jim Collins, at that time editor of *Yankee Magazine*,

Throughout much of the 18th and early 19th centuries, it was the most common beverage in New England. Cheap and easy to produce from local seedling apples, the fermented, sometimes fizzy, juice was more popular than ale, kept longer than milk, and in many places was safer to drink than water. Farmers routinely steeped their apple mash and pressed it a second time for less-potent "ciderkin" for their children, and paid their farmhands partly in drink.

According to Collins, at that time in New England there was no distinction between hard and sweet cider; "all cider was hard." Cider was often delivered to the "warming houses" adjoining the churches to provide another kind of warming during the breaks in lengthy sermons.

Under the impact of temperance movement, prohibition, and changing public tastes, by 1935 the production of cider in Connecticut virtually ended. The aging apple trees that dot many of Cornwall's post-agricultural lands remain as a reminder of a former era. But in recent decades cider has again become a popular drink and cidery is a growing occupation.

Cornwall has long struggled with the question of how to remain a rural town with a quaint but treasured way of life while also providing a way for people to make a living. I can think of no form of economic activity that would do more to preserve and even reestablish our traditional Cornwall way of life -- notably our heritage as a farming community -- while also helping provide a viable economic base for the present and the future.

As a North Cornwall neighbor I heartily endorse the proposal for a cidery on Town Street.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Brecher
36 Yelping Hill Road

From: Jill Cutler <jill.cutler22@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 30, 2023 3:17 PM
To: Cornwall Land Use <cwlanduse@optonline.net>
Subject: Ridgway proposal

Anna Timmell, Chair
Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission

Dear Commissioners:

Ian Ridgway has shared his proposal for a combined farm store, cidery, and accessory apartment on the Ridgway Farm with me. As a former Commissioner, I read it with a careful eye for issues and problems. In terms of zoning issues I could find none. Rather it seeks to fulfill some of the most important goals of the Cornwall Plan of Conservation and Development, including the creation of a home business, creating an affordable accessory apartment, and enhancing a precarious farm income by creating a shelf stable agricultural product.

The Ridgway plan draws on the creation of a historic New England product that might enhance community in Cornwall with its tasting room. Cider, both hard and soft, is an agricultural product with a local as well as a broader audience. The plans for the disposal of apple waste seem appropriate. What the tasting room should and will be has been carefully thought out: not a bar, but a venue in which people can taste a limited amount of different types of cider before buying. Both the tasting room and farm market will have limited hours, and they will operate with a sensitivity to the larger community.

We here in Cornwall consider ourselves “farm friendly,” and there is hardly anything friendlier than supporting a project that dovetails so well with town goals. In this time of extremely uncertain climate, with either too much or not enough rain, strong wind events, warm winters, and other unpredictable and harmful weather, being able to create shelf stable products can be valuable for any farmer. If we are to be “farm friendly,” we must try to preserve the farms that we can be friendly to, and allowing for the diversity of product they need for economic health is one way to do that.

I strongly support Ian and Jayn’e Ridgway’s attempt to amplify their creative approach to farm life.

Yours,
Jill Cutler
Former Chair,
Planning and Zoning Commission.

From: candbgold@cs.com <candbgold@cs.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2023 9:43 AM
To: Land use <landuse@cornwallct.gov>
Cc: ianridgway97@gmail.com <ianridgway97@gmail.com>
Subject: Ridgway Application to P&Z Commission

August 31, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the application of Ian Ridgway and Jayne Ridgway before the Planning and Zoning Commission for the construction and management of a cider barn/farmstand/accessory apartment at 142 Town Street.

Current conversation acknowledges the convenience of the farm stand and maple sugar house already at that location. There is also acknowledgement of the need for work opportunities and affordable housing for young people who wish to establish their lives in Cornwall. Commentors also acknowledge concern for the survival of the few remaining agricultural businesses in town. In the face of the daunting challenges to providing a financially viable future for these businesses, which help maintain the town's beloved rural nature, creative thinking should be encouraged insofar as it adheres to the town's regulations.

I understand that the application has been approved by the Torrington Area Health District, the Cornwall Fire Marshall, the Inland Wetlands Committee. Therefore, I urge this Commission to approve the application for special permits to the extent that it meets all Town regulations and any specific conditions the Commission may deem appropriate to the endeavor.

Thank you for your consideration,
Barbara Gold
6 Rexford Road
860-672-6925

From: Ann Trowbridge <artrowbridge@verizon.net>
Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2023 10:15 AM
To: Land use <landuse@cornwallct.gov>
Cc: ianridgway97@gmail.com <ianridgway97@gmail.com>; Mason Marohn <mason.marohn@icloud.com>; David Marohn <dmarohn1@verizon.net>; AJ Marohn <ajtrowbridge12345@gmail.com>
Subject: Ridgway cider - supporting letter

Dear Chair Timell, P&Z Commission Members and Zoning Officer Nelson,

We have considered the application and fully support the proposed Ridgway Farm apple cider facility special permit request for an appropriately small scale operation. We support P & Z giving careful attention to appropriate screening from Town Street, zoning-compliant signage and limits on evening hours of operation, given its location in a residential zone.

In particular, the addition of a second floor apartment for workforce housing will contribute to meeting that critical local need. There are local barns comparable in size to that proposed to house all of these activities, and therefore, the future building would appear to be in keeping with Cornwall's agricultural character in both scale and use.

We look forward to adding a cider detour to walks around the lake, and to the expanded operation of the Ridgway's farm stand in an enclosed building.
We encourage you to approve the project with consideration of how the terms of the special permit could address near neighbors' concerns.

Ann Trowbridge, David Marohn, Mason Marohn and AJ Trowbridge Marohn
12 Adams Road
West Cornwall CT 06796

From: Michael Carano <mrcarano53@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, August 17, 2023 5:48 PM

To: Land use <landuse@cornwallct.gov>

Subject: Proposed Ridgway Farm Cider Barn, Farmstore, and Apartment

To Whom It May Concern

This email is in support of the proposed Ridgeway Farm Cider Barn, Farmstore, and Apartment. Anything we can do to help the small farms and small business community in our town is advantageous to us all. Encouraging young people to continue farming locally rather than leaving the community seems to be part of the mission of our town.

I encourage the Planning and Zoning Committee to vote in favor of this proposal.

Thank you,
Mike and Lynn Carano
Swifts Bridge Road

William L. Berry
45 Lake Road
West Cornwall, CT 06796

August 31, 2023

Dear Planning and Zoning Commission,

I am writing to express my opposition to the application for a special permit to construct and operate a farm cidery and farm store and build an accessory apartment at 142 Town Street. This letter specifically addresses the prospective impact on property value and is not exhaustive of my reasons for opposition to the application.

The location of the "barn," the building to hold the manufacturing operations, store, tasting room and accessory apartment and its' adjacent parking lot is only a few hundred feet from the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Ian Ingersoll. This is close enough to inflict noise and perhaps odor contamination emanating from vehicles, music, people, and machinery onto the Ingersoll's property. Dust from the gravel driveway/parking lot will also inevitably infiltrate the Ingersoll's property. During the construction phase there will be heavy equipment, large delivery trucks and workers disrupting the Ingersoll's tranquility. When the construction is completed, the hopes of the proprietors are that large numbers of visitors will arrive to enjoy ambiance, sample alcoholic drinks, open and closed container purchase of beverages and other items, some of local farm produce.

The significant number of hoped-for visitors is evidenced by their plan that includes 10 parking spaces, indoor and outdoor seating, and spaces for employee parking. I understand that they also plan to hold up to four "events" per year that will undoubtedly involve loudspeakers, music and overflow parking on Town Street. The scope of the proposed operation is significantly elevated contrasted with activities at the current farmstand. This directly contradicts the implied comparison put forth in the proposal.

Property value is usually considered only in economic terms, that is, the monetary value that a prospective buyer would place on the land and improvements thereupon. To the homeowner who would not sell at a market price, however, a property's value must be significantly more. (An economist would say that if property values were not more than a simple monetary value, the property would already be sold.) That part of property value greater than the monetary market value consists of many things including, importantly, the pleasure, security and familiarity derived from owning and living in a place of sanctuary. Those non-economic values are most perfectly captured by the word "home."

Determining the economic value of a residence in the absence of an active market for the property is a difficult and imprecise art but, by reducing the property value to an approximation of market value, some necessary functions such as insurance and taxation are facilitated. Objectively assessing non-economic values is difficult. Except for academic economists interested in preference theory and practitioners of tort law, assessments of non-economic values are rare. Yet none would argue that these non-economic values do not exist. Few would argue that they were insignificant.

There is no question that the presence of the store and the nuisance of an alcoholic beverage "tasting room," will result in a significant decline in the Ingersoll's economic property value. Other neighboring properties will also suffer economic damage. But the non-economic damage in this case amounts to an invasion to the sanctity of people's homes. And as other interested parties have observed, there is broader non-economic damage to the entire North Cornwall community as well.

It is my understanding that the designers of this project have refused to even consider locating these impactful operations to other unused sites elsewhere on their relatively vast property. And, as the decline in value of the Ingersoll property progresses, other property values in the Town Street, Cogswell Road and Lake Road neighborhood will also, inevitably, decline.

The Town of Cornwall Zoning Regulations (revised to July 1, 2023), states: *The kind, size, location and height of structures, and the nature and extent of site work, and the nature and intensity of the use, shall not hinder or discourage the use of neighboring properties or diminish the value thereof* (Article 6, Site Plan & Special Permit Requirements, Section 8.10 Special Permit Approval Criteria, Paragraph d, page 22).

Also, in the Cornwall Zoning Regulations, Article 10, Special Use Provisions, paragraph h, page 41, the regulations state: *"Additional conditions or safeguards may be deemed necessary to protect and promote property values, protect the area's environmental resources, improve the neighborhood compatibility, and promote best practices for site design."* Among the safeguards suggested in the regulation are: *"1. screening or buffering from adjacent/adjoining properties and the public right-of-way."* [While the application indicates that a forest "buffer along property lines" exists (page 1) the sparse line of trees between the Ridgway property and the Ingersoll's can hardly suffice even as a visual let alone a sound buffer.]

I observe that nowhere in the Cornwall Zoning Regulations are "property values" defined as being limited to economic, monetary values only.

I urge the Planning and Zoning Commission to deny the application for a special permit.

Alternatively, the some of the adverse effects of the proposed project can be lessened if the Planning and Zoning Commission imposes conditions such as locating their cidery and store operations to an alternative remote location either on the Ridgway property or elsewhere. For example, locating the "tasting room," store and cidery in a business zone adjacent to a well-trafficked Cornwall street or road would, in my opinion, greatly enhance the likelihood of commercial success.

I have no objection to construction of an accessory dwelling at 142 Town Street.

I invite any questions or comments.



William L. Berry

August 30, 2023

I'm writing in support of Ian Ridgeway's proposal to build a cider barn including an apartment on the family farm.

A cider barn is a natural extension of the farm, evolving in an organic way, not a business idea hatched someplace else. It would preserve the rural character of the property while allowing Ian to stay and farm here. Ian has already done a lot to rejuvenate our orchard on the corner of Hall Road which was completely overgrown just 5 years ago. This is conservation in the best sense, using what's already here. There may be other small orchards in town that are underutilized and might be restored as well.


As a business owner in Cornwall I regularly hear from customers that they are looking for places to go and things to do. Every business in town benefits when any of us attract visitors and customers. Without on site businesses we become a bedroom community of retirees and people with independent incomes, earned elsewhere. It feels better to have working people present. Ian's proposal addresses the need for people who are not already financially well established to be able to work and live here.

I have visited the proposed site, and it is well off the road, as far back as the current easements on the property allow. You do not see the neighbor's house from the site.

Mohawk Ski area has parking for hundreds of cars. I live nearby and have never felt imposed upon by traffic. In fact I wish we could encourage more skiers to come into town and support local businesses. Perhaps then businesses would be open more than just 3 or 4 days a week!

Since we are lucky enough to have a young entrepreneur, I hope we will encourage him and welcome his efforts to forge a viable life in a rural town. Ian's success will contribute to a vibrant community for all of us.

Jane Herold
54 Sharon Goshen Turnpike
West Cornwall, CT 06796

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Herold', with a stylized flourish at the end.



28 August 2023

Re: Ridgway Farm, 142 Town Street, Cornwall, CT.

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in support of the Planning and Zoning application submitted by Ian and Jane Ridgway, of Ridgway Farm, Cornwall.

Northwest Conservation District (NWCD) staff provided soil identification services during the planning phase of this project and has also reviewed the land it holds under conservation easement. None of the activities proposed in the P&Z application will be on land covered by the conservation easement.

NWCD supports agriculture, especially diverse agricultural activities such as those practiced and proposed at Ridgway Farm. NWCD also strongly supports agroforestry and perennial agriculture which reduces tillage and promotes soil health and climate resiliency. These activities also promote farm viability. The addition of value-added products such as cider help farms become more economically viable and resilient to climate change.

The plan submitted by the applicant appears to be well-thought through and designed with the maximum efficiency and minimum land disturbance.

It is our pleasure to support the expansion of this agricultural enterprise.

Sincerely,

Lawrence M. Rousseau
Chairman
Northwest Conservation District