

Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission

September 4, 2023

Re: Ridgway Farm Special Permit Application

Dear P&Z Commissioners,

We have read the Ridgway Farm application for a special permit for a farm cidery, farm store and accessory apartment. To us, the application for the proposed project seems thorough and clear and meets Cornwall's zoning requirements.

One of Cornwall's greatest attractions has always been its agricultural character, its fields, orchards, and woods. It is the reason we all live here. Changing times are a challenge to the existing farms in this area, including Cornwall's. To exist, farmers now must be creative and flexible. Preserving our working farms is important to the town's future.

I come from what was a small, pretty, mid-western town, smaller even than Cornwall. Until about 40 years ago, it remained a village of family farms and some part-timers. But no one paid attention and those farms were slowly swallowed by increasingly dense suburbia. There isn't a farm left, little countryside, few woods. There is no longer any 'there' there. One has only to look at nearby towns here to see how it begins.

A working farm that wants to increase its orchard, add a modest business and an accessory apartment will provide employment, housing, and a place for residents and visitors to enjoy for a limited time each year. If modification is needed, we hope agreement can be reached to allow the plan to go forward.

Thank you for considering this letter of support.

Ed and Dinny Greene

Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission Members

c/o Karen Nelson (landuse@cornwallct.gov)

Re: Ridgway Cider proposal

Arleen and I have lived on Town Street for over 33 years, first as weekenders and now full time. We believe the section of the street running from the Russ property past the North Cornwall Meetinghouse and up past the Ellis house is unique, and one of the most picturesque landscapes in Cornwall. We wish the sight of these farms and fields would never change.

But simple farming alone doesn't seem to be as attractive or perhaps economically viable as in the past, although we all applaud Cornwall's efforts to encourage it; it's a big part of why people choose to live here.

The proposal appears to be well thought out and generally in keeping with the agricultural objectives of the zoning regs; it adds an orchard, housing, and helps keep younger people in town. However, the specifics of the commercial activity to be conducted have raised concerns and merit special attention. Put a commercial store on another residential street in Cornwall and it might not be noticed; but the openness of Town Street is different. The fears of some of our neighbors are not unfounded, as stories of ongoing controversies and litigation over matters like noise, visibility/screening, traffic, signage, lights, and similar issues in other places will confirm.

Of particular concern to my mind is the possibility of

overflow parking along the street spoiling the landscape and neighbor's lawns, and also the proximity of the sales operation to the two neighboring properties, Ingersolls and Selendys, in terms of visibility and the possibility of noise.

Section 8.11 of the Zoning Regulations (Special Permit Conditions for Approval) might be of help in resolving some of the objections and prevent ongoing controversy and bad feelings if the Commission could work with the parties to address many of the concerns. I don't know whether the parties have had or wish such a dialogue, but would hope the Commission will take an active role in pursuing it with them.

Sincerely yours,

Tom Barrett

77 Town Street

Sarah Calhoun
Red Ants Pants Foundation
206 East Main Street
White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645

September 3, 2023

To the members of the Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission,

I am writing to voice my enthusiastic support for Ian Ridgeway's application to build a barn for his farm store and cidery. I believe this project and business plan would be a valuable addition to Cornwall. Creating jobs in agriculture, providing additional housing, increasing ag-tourism and economic development are all valuable benefits that would add to a robust, well-rounded community.

Having grown up on a farm in Cornwall I appreciate both the pastoral landscape and the tight knit community where neighbors pitch in and lend a hand to one another. Since leaving Cornwall I started a company, music festival, and non-profit in rural Montana where there is no zoning or long-term planning. I will reflect that although this experience has allowed for a lot of freedom on the ground, it does result in a scattered, unorganized approach for development.

The Cornwall P&Z Commission and town government has done such a thoughtful, intentional job with creating a vision for the future and I believe that Ian's Cidery fits brilliantly into this vision. I understand that landowners have concerns about property values, but I would encourage us all to think not primarily about individual return on investment, but more broadly the return on community. A cidery would give the next generation another option to keep the farm in the family and create a place for us all to gather and connect.

In recent years my parents John and Nancy Calhoun and I have been in conversation with Ian about grafting the last remaining apple tree in our back pasture, an orchard planted by my great grandfather, John E. Calhoun. We have plans to add the Calhoun apples to Ian's nursery this winter. I hope we all get the opportunity to enjoy a true Cornwall Cider *together* while raising our glasses to the future of farming and good neighboring in this fine place we call home.

In appreciation,



Sarah Calhoun
John and Nancy Calhoun

Fwd: Letter In support of Ridgway Cidery & Farm Store special permits for P&Z Commission Meeting

Honora Horan <hhoran@gmail.com>

Wed 9/6/2023 8:40 AM

To: landuse@cornwallct.org <landuse@cornwallct.org>; Land use <landuse@cornwallct.gov>

My first attempt at emailing my support for the ridgway proposal did not go through. I am trying again and hoping I am not too late.

Honora Horan

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Honora Horan** <hhoran@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Sep 4, 2023, 7:24 PM

Subject: Letter In support of Ridgway Cidery & Farm Store special permits for P&Z Commission Meeting

To: <landuse@cornwallct.org>

I am writing in support of Ian Ridgway's and Jayne Ridgway's proposed farm cidery and store and the application for two special permits for the cidery and store. I firmly believe the proposal should be approved by the Land Management office and the Planning & Zoning Commission for a number of reasons:

- It will allow a well-regarded farm operation to meet current and future challenges to producing varied and sufficient crops in a changing climate where weather very often negatively impacts farm operations (drought one year, incessant rain another year, late or early frosts);
- It supports use of local land for growing a desirable crop of "heritage" apples, historically important to the agricultural profile of the town;
- It meets all regulations and requirements of a farm and the Right to Farm.

In the span of my lifetime in Cornwall the dairy farms have virtually disappeared. Of the three dairy farms that surrounded the house where I grew up, during the last few decades one was inhabited but not farmed, one became a lumber operation, and one eventually was leased to a farm producer of beef cattle. These were farms supporting whole families, a fact little appreciated these days.

It is understandable that residents in the vicinity of the proposed farm store and cidery are frightened of change and fearful of all the terrible consequences that they imagine will follow. However, a clear eyed examination of current realities and the proposal should allay their fright:

- Problem! There will be so much traffic from all the people that will seek out the cidery, drink too much hard cider, and careen around Town Street that everyone will be in danger, or inconvenienced! But really, there is more traffic there at North Cornwall Meeting House every Sunday morning for a service and for the occasional wedding or funeral than the cidery/store will generate in any one day; and more traffic heads to Cream Hill Lake Association to play tennis, or attend a large pot luck dinner throughout the summer weekends.
- Problem! People will park all over the place – although there will be space for 11 customer vehicles at the proposed store/cidery and so far up the existing road that they will hardly be visible
- Problem! A large building will blight the landscape – although it is sited 300 feet up a driveway and behind existing buildings, and by standards of most barns of a pretty modest size; it is not some giant brew pub and will not be an eyesore.
- Problem! Excessive inebriation of all those cider-tasters will create a dangerous situation for all the walkers – However, cider is approximately 4.5-6% ABV and has considerably less alcohol than a glass of wine consumed for dinner nearby...
- Problem! Property values will surely decline, although it is often the case that a farm business can enhance the neighborhood's value. It depends on one's values.

- Problem! A cidery should be located in one of Cornwall's existing hamlets not the countryside – Any business operator will tell you that the more consolidated your business operation, the better the chance of success. And as for being located in one of the business areas, one might note that our long-sought restaurant in West Cornwall is closing; people traffic in the village is not sufficient to support some operations.

It is time to support a local farm operation whole heartedly and allow it to grow and prosper.

Thank you for your consideration.

Honora Horan