

Ian Ridgway and Jayne Ridgway
142 Town St.
Cornwall, CT

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.

I, Ian Ridgway, and co-property owner and co-business owner, Jayne Ridgway, doing business as Ridgway Farm LLC, are applying for two special permits for a farm store and cidery with a one-bedroom accessory apartment. The following narrative addresses our plans and all applicable regulations. All of the proposed uses at our property are permitted by the current Cornwall Planning and Zoning regulations and encouraged in Cornwall's Plan of Conservation and Development.

This application proposes the construction of a barn with two special permits; including an area for a farm store, a processing room, a cold storage area, and a one-bedroom accessory apartment. The lot is primarily in an R-3 zone with the eastern portion of the property in an R-5 zone. The proposed building would be in an R-3 zone. The proposed building is an 80' by 30' barn with an attached 8' porch on the north end and a 4' deck/outside staircase on the south end. This two-story barn will have approximately 4440 total square footage. The first floor will be divided into three sections with differing uses. A 30' by 30' space will be used for cold storage of fruit, vegetables, and cider. There will be a 26' by 30' room for the processing of both alcoholic and non-alcoholic cider and other farm products. A 24' by 30' room will include the farm store and tasting room area, which will be the only area open to the public. There will be two sections in the 30' by 56' upstairs of the barn over the cold storage and processing rooms. The 30' by 26' area over the cold storage will be used for further storage and office space for the cidery. The remaining 30' by 30' upstairs area will be used as an accessory apartment to house the cider maker. The basic floor plan for this building has been approved by the Cornwall Fire Marshall Stanley MacMillan Jr. Once completed we plan to add an array of solar panels to the roof of the building to help minimize our environmental impact.

North Cornwall has a rich history of agriculture as evidenced by the abundance of large barns in the area. Within one mile of the proposed barn, there are over 24 two-story barns. The use of these barns varies from agricultural to residential. The design for this barn will be appropriate, with a gambrel roof over the two-story section of the barn and a lower gable roof over the smaller single-story section. These building styles and sizes are common in our area.

Ridgway Farm LLC is located at 142 Town St. and has been in business since 1981. Focusing on vegetable and fruit production, we also produce maple syrup, pork, beef, and eggs. We have fed Cornwall families for over 40 years at farmer's markets, restaurants, stores, community-supported agriculture (CSA), food pantries, and our iconic roadside stand. Located on a 108 acre parcel there are approximately 5 acres of vegetable production, 16 acres of hayfields, 5 acres of pasture, and 20 acres of forest used for maple syrup production, while the remaining forest is harvested for timber and firewood as well as used as a property buffer along our property lines. Some of our hay production and maple syrup sap collection occur on land

throughout the town of Cornwall to supplement our onsite production. We also rent a field used for vegetable and fruit production north of West Cornwall on River Rd. The employees of Ridgway Farm currently include family members of the owners. Employment varies based on the season. There are currently three full-time employees and two part-time employees. In the winter months, the employment can shrink to two full-time employees. In the past, we have had full-time workers who live offsite.

Our farm has worked with federal and state agencies that promote agriculture and soil conservation. In fact, we operate under a conservation plan from the Natural Resources Conservation Service which has awarded Ridgway Farm grants to help with our sustainability initiatives including hoop houses, and irrigation. We will follow all state and federal regulations concerning the production and sale of cider. This proposed practice is approved by the NWCT Conservation District as a viable use of agriculture on our land.

Our land on Town Street has a history of agriculture since the settling of Cornwall. The property has been passed down through four farm families, the Allens, the Rogers, the O'Donnells, and the Ridgways. These families of farmers helped shape our area of North Cornwall into what it is today. For example, the North Cornwall Meeting House was built by farming families nearly 200 years ago. Similarly, there has been a history of diversified agricultural enterprise in the area, including dairy, fruit, and vegetable production. The proposed building will also allow us to continue our quest in revitalizing the often forgotten apple history of Cornwall. By using scionwood from old trees in the area we are able to graft new trees and preserve their unique genetic history. We have started this process by creating grafted trees using scionwood from trees that date back to as far as the 1800s. One such tree is an old apple tree that stands by the intersection of Rattlesnake Rd. and Cogswell Rd. Other grafting successes have come through our work with the remaining trees at Hart Farm on Cherry Hill Rd. and Hofts Orchard (now owned by Jane Herold and Robert Adzema) on Route 128 and Hall Rd. Many of these trees have characteristics that are unique to Cornwall and through the cider-making process will reinvigorate the appreciation for them. The proposed cider business has received encouragement from many Cornwall residents and cider enthusiasts.

This special permit will allow us to store apples for wholesale and production of alcoholic and non-alcoholic cider. Once completed, our cidery will apply to become a Connecticut Farm Cidery. This distinction will mandate that at least 25% of the fruit used for fermentation is grown in Connecticut. We currently manage about one acre of fruit trees, including trees owned by friends and neighbors. To achieve this we plan to plant an additional 4 acres of apples which will be used as our primary source for apples. The orchard is planned to be planted in the spring of 2024 at 142 Town St. Our orchard is planned to be planted in the hayfield that is farthest away from the road and neighboring houses to minimize the impact on the surrounding area. This project is starting without an established orchard so the production of cider will come in stages. In the initial stage, starting when the building is complete, from fall 2025 - 2027, the annual production goal is 500 gallons, using apples sourced from other locations. The second stage of production will come in the following years from 2028-2030 when the main orchard is more productive. At this point, production will increase with the goal of production 2,000 gallons. While some fruit used in the production of cider will be brought in from off-farm orchards the majority of products sold at the farm store will be grown on the farm as required **Section**

10.5.f.1. Additionally we plan on utilizing the existing apples in the area to create a truly Cornwall cider, blending a variety of old and wild existing trees.

The farm store/tasting room and the processing room will primarily be in use at different times of the week and year. The hours of the tasting room will also open in stages as our production progresses. The farm store could be open three to five days a week from noon to 7 p.m. from May until November. As production grows the hours of the tasting room could also expand with additional hours. It is hard to state with certainty what the operating hours of the farm store will be five to ten years in the future, however, at no point will the store be open 7 days a week. We also intend to sell much of our cider at off-farm locations, similar to our maple syrup which is currently for sale at over 20 stores. Any expansion to the operation, including store hours will happen gradually. During the winter months, the farm store may still be open however, we will operate with minimal hours. Pressing of the apples will only take place in the fall, approximately six times. The three tasks of pressing, transferring cider, and bottling will be completed in a single day each time they are performed. All waste products from the production of cider will be collected in a DEEP-approved holding tank, shown on the site plan. We also envision having a minimal amount, up to four times a year, of larger events at the farm to celebrate and promote local agriculture and cider. These events will be based in the planned orchard, which is about a half mile away from the road. These events could include food trucks and live music. At the beginning of the project, we do not plan on hiring more employees, however, as the project scales up, more people may be needed to run the farm store, harvest the fruit, and produce cider.

We strongly feel that both of these special permits fit directly into the goals of the *Town of Cornwall Plan of Conservation & Development 2020*. The first goal, *Economic Development* (pg.6), is addressed in multiple ways. This proposal would allow the resident in the accessory apartment to work from home. It would also help to support an existing Cornwall business, by expanding the diversity of Ridgway Farm. During times of increased uncertainty of climate and weather patterns, this proposal would also help an agricultural business become more sustainable. Three goals for Economic Development are laid out below: “Make it easier for residents to work from home”, “Support Cornwall’s existing businesses”, and “Support our agricultural and farm-based businesses” (Cornwall POCD 2022 pg.6). The second goal of the POCD addresses the need for an increase of housing. It writes, “The goals and actions listed below are intended to increase the number of full time residents in Cornwall and to provide appropriate housing options for all ages; including options that are affordable, attainable, energy efficient” (Cornwall POCD 2022 pg. 9). A single-bedroom detached accessory apartment aligns with the addressed need for increased housing opportunities. Furthermore, this apartment would be energy efficient with solar energy and wood heating. The third goal of the POCD addresses protecting natural resources in Cornwall. This goal is described as “Protect priority forests, farmland, wetlands, and wildlife corridors (“Open Space”)” (Cornwall POCD 2022 pg.11). This proposal helps with the protection of natural resources and the town's climate resilience as it would increase renewable energy with solar panels and improve the viability of the local food system. Further, the planting of apple trees will help with the carbon footprint of our farm practices. Finally, the fourth goal of the POCD addresses the needs of Community, Culture & Youth Resources. One of the stated goals to achieve this is to “Attract and retain young people and families” (Cornwall POCD 2022 pg. 14). Two ways to keep young people and families in town are to increase housing and employment opportunities. This proposal does both.

Our proposed cider barn/farm store fits into the Cornwall Zoning Regulations in many different ways as seen in the stated purpose of the regulations. The addition of a farm store/farm cidery will help to promote the health and welfare of Cornwall residents by strengthening the local food system, providing educational opportunities for people to see where their food comes from, and providing increased economic opportunities **Section 1.1.a.** The previous paragraph addresses how this proposal fits directly into the goals of the Town Plan of Conservation and Development. **Section 1.1.c.** The Right to Farm and protection and preservation of farmland is clearly stated in **Section 1.1.d.** This proposal will help to ensure farmland is being used by allowing for diversification of practices. Historic and natural features of Cornwall will be preserved through this proposal by bolstering the agricultural economy in the area of historic farmland. The accessory apartment will help to provide increased housing opportunities **Section 1.1.f.** The proposed cider barn/farm store will increase the economic viability of the existing farm on the property and provide a new opportunity for families, neighbors, and residents of the community to gather and socialize **Section 1.1.h.**

Our farm store will be similar to our farm stand offerings, with additional products from other local farms. We plan to continue to use our self-serve farm stand to offer our famous open 24-hour service. Currently, our stand may be one of the few places in Cornwall people can buy fresh produce every day. Our farm store parking calls for 12 parking places seen on the site plan, nine for customers, two for employees and one apartment parking. Overflow parking is available in the field next to the driveway. The tasting room area will be limited to 15 indoor seats as determined by the Torrington Area Health District. There will be additional outdoor seating provided, highlighted on the site plan. Agricultural uses are allowed “by right” in any zone in Cornwall as stated in **Section 4.2.a.** The functionality of the proposed building is considered an accessory to farming as it will establish a Farm Store **Section 10.5.f.1** as well as food-based farm products **Section 10.5.f.2.**

We are also applying for the use of a single-bedroom accessory apartment in the building. A detached accessory apartment is allowed in all residential zones as stated in **Section 4.3.h.** The existing residence at 142 Town St. is occupied full-time by both property owners as required **Section 10.1.c.1.** The proposed barn has a pending septic application submitted to the Torrington Area Health District, which included the use of an apartment in the flow plan. Based on the previous approvals from the health district, the disposal of waste is adequately addressed through the onsite septic and reserve. The floor plan for the accessory apartment, as previously approved by Torrington Area Health, is attached. The proposed building will be accessible for fire and police protection through the existing driveway and the additions shown on the site plan. Fire Marshall Stanley MacMillan Jr. has also approved the floor plans for the apartment **Section 10.1.c.2.** One off-street parking spot for the apartment will be provided and is shown on the site plan as needed per **Section 10.1.c.3.**

The attached site plan addresses the following as required in **Section 10.1.c.4.** The relationship between the existing single-family residence and the detached accessory apartment is noted. As stated, off-street parking is clearly marked, and access to the parking area and apartment is shown. Floor plans are attached showing the livable floor area for the proposed structure.

Including the porch areas the existing residence has a square footage of 3170'. The proposed cider barn/farm store will have a square footage of 4440'. The livable floor area of the apartment will not be greater than 1200 square feet as required in the General Standards **Section 10.1.f.1**. The accessory apartment would provide room for a single-family dwelling on the second floor of the proposed building. This would be the first accessory apartment on this lot.

The addition of an accessory apartment in the proposed cider barn/farm store aligns with the nature of the neighborhood by combining the building into a multi-use building. The proposed building will align with both the Town Plan and the historical and current uses of buildings in the neighborhood. The apartment will not add additional vehicular traffic to this area as it will be used to provide housing to a lifelong Cornwall resident who has been at 142 Town St. for 26 years. We do not believe that the farm store/cidery will add much traffic due to its limited hours. Also, our customers will largely continue to be Cornwall residents and lake visitors who are already traveling Town St. and stopping at our vegetable stand for produce. We will simply be increasing the offerings so Cornwall residents may actually have to drive less to acquire necessary food.

North Cornwall has a long history of people living in barns. In fact, the Planning and Zoning Commission recently granted a permit on Rexford Rd. for another barn/home. Our barn will be set back over 1,000 feet from Town St. behind our vegetable stand, sugar house, and greenhouse. It will be of design common with many of its neighboring structures in an area still defined by its agricultural landscapes and activities.

Respectfully submitted,

Ian Ridgway

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Jayne Ridgway

Jayne Ridgway