

To the Zoning Commission

The latest compromise the Ridgways offer with weekend (especially Sunday) openings still does not address the fact that all the adjacent neighbors and most North Cornwall residents (North Cornwall Neighbors Coalition) do not want a bar/tasting room/entertainment venue open at all in our residential neighborhood. Making cider is one thing but inviting the public into an entertainment venue where alcohol is served is unacceptable.

There will be no peace in peaceful North Cornwall if this special permit is allowed.

Diane and Ian Ingersoll
December 12, 2023

Response to the Request for a Special Permit for the Ridgway Cidery

Good evening. My name is Roxana Robinson, and I live at 218 Town Street, in the house built by my grandfather, Samuel Scoville, Jr.

I'm responding to the request, by the Ridgway family, for a special permit to establish a cidery that would sell alcohol and sponsor commercial events that would include live music and the sale of alcohol. We all like the Ridgways, and we enjoy having them as neighbors. They offer a great deal to the community, and we wish them well.

But we have reservations about this project.

Many aspects of it are still unclear. If alcohol is offered for tasting, how large are the tasting units? How many units would be offered to each customer? Will alcohol be sold and consumed on the premises? What rules would govern these activities, and who would enforce them? We would like answers in writing to these questions.

The Ridgways write:

“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.”

But the Ridgways have no way of knowing who their customers would be. If the cidery appears on Google Maps as a destination, customers will come from all over the region. Secondly, this statement contradicts the engineer's plan, which shows two parallel one-way driveways, one for entrance and one

for exit. This is set up to accommodate large numbers of cars. The project requires a substantial financial investment, and it's hard to imagine it succeeding unless it attracts large numbers of customers.

The Ridgways plan at least four events per year, offering live music, food and alcohol. They will offer indoor amplified music. Their new filing eliminates food trucks, but not food. It says nothing about grilling or barbecuing. Food vendors would drive in and set up booths. Crowds would be necessary to make these event a success.

I would like to cite the Town Zoning Regulations, Site Plans & Special Permits, Article 8.10

Article 6

8.10 Special Permit Approval Criteria

For Special Permit applications, the Commission shall take into consideration the protection of public health, safety, welfare, and that the following approval criteria have been met:

d. Proper consideration has been given to the environmental quality of the proposal, [including landscaping and proper use of the site's natural features. 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. All applicable standards shall be incorporated into the plans. (adapted pg 33-34)

A project dependent on the sale of alcohol, and on public events involving alcohol, music and crowds, will definitely hinder and discourage the current use of neighboring properties. Every resident of North Cornwall is now able to enjoy country silence, which would be certainly be hindered by loud, populous, alcohol-fueled events. Finally, this project would diminish the value of the neighboring properties. A local real-estate broker responded: "Certainly, a commercial establishment, selling alcohol and drawing crowds, sited in a

residential neighborhood, would diminish the values of adjacent properties to a very serious extent.”

A recent article in the *Hartford Courant* demonstrates some of the issues that have arisen from this sort of project.

We all are part of the Cornwall community. We all want farm families to thrive. Many who question this project are the people who support the Cornwall Conservation Trust. The Trust owns much of the farmland in North Cornwall, and allows it to be used by local farmers. So the supporters of the Trust are providing substantial support to farm families, as well as supporting a pastoral use of the landscape. We'd like to work with farm families in developing ideas that bring in revenue and that also make it possible to maintain the quiet natural countryside. Let's revitalise our villages, attracting commerce to them while we protect the beautiful surrounding farmland which provides us all with such rich sustenance, both physical and spiritual.

Roxana Robinson
218 Town Street
West Cornwall, CT 06796
North Cornwall Neighbors Coalition

To the Zoning Committee:

I'm sure many of you were present or heard about the very successful evening event organized this summer by Park and Rec on the green in Cornwall Village. There was music, food, and at least 200 people, families, friends, kids, dogs all had a great time. Cars lined all the surrounding roads and it was a loud, noisy and enjoyable community gathering held in public space. Please now try to imagine a similar-sized gathering with food, drink, and loud music happening not once, not twice but four times a year and not on the Cornwall village green but in a quiet residential neighborhood.

Yet this is exactly what a new update to the Ridgeway's original application now states to be part of their plan. In their very own words they propose to hold up to four "larger events at the farm to celebrate and promote local agriculture and cider, where there will be food and alcohol served, with music and entertainment."

Actually there is a word for this kind of activity. It is called Agritainment and that's the definition of "a commercial enterprise at a working farm, ranch, or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates supplemental income for the owner and is designed to draw in locals with various attractions. The sky is really the limit here — outside of any pertinent

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December 12, 2023

To the Cornwall Planning & Zoning Commission:

Good evening. I am Jim Stewart, full time resident at 19 Town Street. I, along with other residents of Cornwall, appreciate the opportunity to express our thoughts and concerns about SP#257.

First, I do want to thank the Ridgways for making adjustments in their proposal to address concerns of other residents. We all appreciate that the Ridgways have been an integral part of this community for many years.

I think we can all get behind the planting of an orchard on the farm. Where I personally have concerns is with the retail aspects of Ridgway's proposal. I want to discuss ongoing operations and oversight if the Commission approves the Ridgway proposal in something close to its current form. I specifically want to address

- Traffic
- Lighting and noise
- Alcohol consumption on-site
- Ongoing operations

Traffic:

The Ridgways have stated that they believe the project will generate little incremental increase in traffic. But there has been no discussion about traffic management for events. As someone with the misfortune to have been driving through Burlington one Saturday in October, I can attest that Hogan's Cider Mill sponsored an event that certainly drew significant crowds. At least Burlington has a police department that was deployed to control traffic. The Ridgway plan has said they will encourage all the commercial traffic bringing apples and processing supplies and removing product and waste to be on a single day of the week if possible. Will there also be recommendations on how that commercial traffic should approach the site?

Lighting and Noise:

The most recent Ridgway plan says no large flood lighting will be used on the cider barn, only lighting sufficient to satisfy local code. With a season from May to November and hours that might extend as late 7 PM is it practical not to have floodlights on the retail portions of the site and parking area? Sunset is at 6:30 PM in early October and 4:30 PM in late November. In terms of noise just from the indoor venue where there would be amplified music is it realistic to think that would not be able to be heard outside?

Alcohol Consumption On-Site:

As the employee staff is expected to be small, will there be training for staff on how to handle patron disorder? Patrons can be disorderly and rude in the absence of alcohol and ones that have some (or too many) drinks even more so. Again, without a local police force that could be a "friendly presence"

that happened by the site from time to time or be summoned to quickly intervene if needed, it seems a large responsibility will fall to the staff on hand. How will they be trained for potential problems?

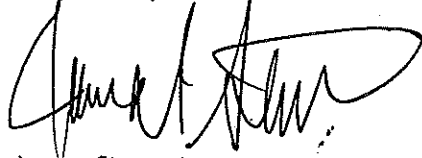
Ongoing Operations:

Are there going to be strict guidelines laid out for what is and isn't permissible on the site? I'm a chemist by training, and one thing remember from my studies is particularly relevant here – The Second Law of Thermodynamics. Loosely paraphrased, it states "The universe, left to its own devices, will tend to move to maximum disorder." Without external forces to control and guide any retail operations, the future course of this business, if approved, can veer in any number of directions. We have already had three iterations of a business plan and the Special Permit process hasn't come to a close. What if business is booming, so the retail sites are opened for more hours? Or business is poor, so let's try open the cidery and outdoor space to private events. And that is with the Ridgways in charge. Imagine this venue without an owner without the sense of commitment to Cornwall that the Ridgways have operating this business.

If the proposal proceeds on Town Street, allowing food and tasting room sales and outdoor activities without clear rules and regulations to what is or isn't allowed is like letting the genie out of Aladdin's lamp or opening Pandora's Box – easy enough to do but not so easy to undo. There is not a set of rules that can be applied that would effectively regulate those aspects of the business. And even with the development of such rules and regulations there is not an effective way to enforce those rules. Our Zoning Enforcement Officer is in her office 6 hours a week, we have no local police force, and I cannot imagine spending additional town funding to increase oversight staffing. So I would ask the Commission to please not approve the retail aspects of this proposal on this particular site.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,



James Stewart

North Cornwall Neighbors Coalition

