

Minutes of Zoning Board Meeting
Town of Whately, MA
Remote Meeting, via Zoom
May 5, 2020

Members Present: Roger Lipton, Bob Smith, Debra Carney, Fred Orloski
Members Absent: Kristin Vevon (recused due to abbuter status)

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, town buildings were closed and this meeting was held virtually through Zoom. Town Administrator Brian Domina hosted the meeting, which was recorded.

Attending:
Jenelle Wilkins, Quonquont Farm
Anne Barker, Quonquont Farm

Public Hearing to review:

An application by Quonquont Farm to amend the special permit restrictions approved on June 27, 2011 and updated on March 6, 2018, requesting that the farm be allowed to operate its banquet facility in the month of November and to hold weddings on weekdays (as needed) in addition to weekends, so as to accommodate current May, June, and July clients who must postpone their events due to the coronavirus pandemic. This request applies only to events in the 2020 calendar year.

The secretary read the legal notice and the applicant approved it.

At 6:40 p.m. Chair Roger Lipton opened the meeting and the hearing. Jenelle Wilkins, Event Manager for Quonquont Farm, explained that due to the coronavirus, their clients who expected to hold their weddings and other special events at the farm during this spring and summer must reschedule their plans to the fall. Currently, she said, their events are limited to weekends only (Friday through Sunday), and to May through the end of October. They are requesting permission to hold events on weekdays, she said, as well as through the month of November, for the 2020 season only, to preserve their business through the pandemic.

Roger asked whether there were any questions or comments from the board, and there were none. He asked whether any members of the public were present and wanted to say anything, and received no response.

The board and the applicant discussed why the original months were chosen. Debra Carney remembered that, at the time, the applicants only asked to operate from May through October because they didn't want to heat the barn for the cold months. Owner Anne Barker agreed that was the reason they had only asked for those six months, and answered a question from Roger about heat, saying that if they are allowed by the government to operate during November they will have to bring in heat to the barn to keep the guests comfortable.

Bob Smith reminded everyone that at the public hearing sessions for the original special permit, abutters had been greatly concerned about possible noise from the events hosted. He asked Ms. Wilkins and Ms. Barker whether they had received any notices of complaint about noise from the neighbors, and was told they had not.

Roger moved to close the public hearing. Debra seconded, Bob voted yes, and the hearing was closed. Roger then moved to grant the application, stating that given the pandemic it is a reasonable request.. Debra seconded, Bob voted yes, and the amendment was approved unanimously.

Roger explained that the 20-day appeal timeline would be in effect from the date that the board's decision is filed with the town clerk. All agreed that Roger will write the decision, email it to the other board members for approval, make any changes, have Bob and Debra e-sign it, and send it to the secretary and the town clerk. He will then circulate the original decision papers to Bob and Debra for handwritten signatures and will deliver the signed originals to the town clerk. It was unclear whether the official filing date would be the filing of the e-signed copies or the handwritten originals – a question town administrator Brian Domina will research.

Minutes of December 5, 2019
The board approved the minutes.

Minutes of February 6, 2020
The board approved the minutes as amended.

A next door neighbor to Quonquont Farm joined the meeting at this point. He was told that the public hearing had already closed and that the special permit amendment had passed.

Documents Reviewed (kept in the ZBA files)
None

Mary McCarthy
Secretary
Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Whately, MA