

TOWN OF CHESTER

Application for a hearing before the Development Review Board

- Appeal No: 563 Date 4/15/21 Appellant name: Farm at Williams River House
- Appellant address: 397 Peck Rd, Chester Landowner name: John Winter & Kathleen Walsh
 Landowner address: 397 Peck Rd, Chester VT 05143 Tel # (84) 213-3659
- Location of property: 397 Peck Rd, Chester VT Parcel map # 15-01-09.200
- Description of Project: Open home to 3 bedroom B&B, and offer property as a venue for open air and tented weddings (private - one event per weekend max)

Type of application:

- Conditional Use approval
- Variance
- Sub-Division
- Appeal of decision of Zoning Administrator
- Boundary Line Adjustment
- Flood Hazard Area Review
- Waiver
- Planned Unit Development
- Misc. listings in Sec. 7.9 E

Seven (7) copies of to-scale drawings or engineered plans detailing this project must accompany this application. A copy of the "Checklist" attached to this application must be completed and submitted with this application, along with all required letters.

Applicant Signature John Winter Date 4/15/2021

Zoning Administrator Catherine A. Hasbrouck Date 4/20/2021

INTRODUCTION

We, Kathleen Walsh and John Winter, are science teachers who work at Springfield High School. We had long dreamed of moving to Vermont, ever since Kathy's undergrad days at UVM, and reinforced by John's recent studies in organic agriculture. We purchased the property at 397 Peck Road, Chester VT in January 2020 with the intention of re-establishing it as a small diversified farm, "farm-experience" bed-and-breakfast, and wedding/event venue while maintaining its foundational rural, agricultural use and natural beauty. The property is located on 46 acres of beautiful farmland, with sweeping views encompassing mountains, rivers and hay fields. We have contracted with a farmer to hay the fields, and a professional wedding planner. We hope we will create a wedding venue that draws visitors to the community of Chester. This will benefit many local businesses through guest accommodations, dining services, catering, flowers, tourism, and the like.

The previous owners of the property, Geof Brown and Mark Martins, ran a wedding venue and B+B under the names "Williams River House" and "Fox Chair Mountain Farm" starting in approximately 2007 and ending recently, as they prepared to sell the property. They developed the property in such a way as to capture its natural beauty, while providing stunning vistas and backdrops, and a boutique 3 bedroom suite antique farmhouse for their guests. While they were recognized in industry publications as a premier wedding location, they eventually closed the business due to family health issues. In order to restore the business, hereafter known as the Farm at Williams River House LLC, we plan to operate our farming business, open our 3 bedroom B+B and begin bookings for future tented weddings.

2.10 Residential 120,000 District

A. Purpose: To provide lower-density residential neighborhoods with compatible home businesses and working landscape uses that are consistent with the Chester Town Plan.

This property has been used as a Bed & Breakfast and event space. These uses are compatible with the neighborhood, which includes a mix of vacation dwellings and short term rentals, a large dairy, a logging company, auto repair shop, church, and primary homes with woodshops, small orchards, and gardens. (See attachment 1)

B. Permitted Uses

We are continuing use as a single family residence and for agriculture.

C. Conditional Uses

We are seeking conditional use based on the following identified conditional uses: tourist lodging (through our bed-and-breakfast); recreation (weddings are becoming weekend-long events, and they and B+B guests may enjoy such varied activities as nature walks, birding, Nordic skiing or snowshoeing, s'mores around the fire pit, fishing or swimming; and home business (run from our home), operated by our family. We intend to continue with current agricultural use for the property throughout our ownership tenure.

D. Dimensional Standards:

None of our proposed uses would affect the dimensions of the property, which is a 46 acre farm at the end of Peck Road. Lot size and setbacks all exceed the standards.

4.8 Conditional Uses***1. General Standards: Any conditional use shall not result in undue adverse effect to:******a. Capacity of existing or planned community facilities;***

None of our activities would have an impact on the local school system, and we are not attached to the local water or sewerage systems. Events would be weekend affairs that would not require police traffic control, and we will not have bonfires or fireworks that would increase likelihood of a fire incident.

b. Character of the area affected;

As described under 2.10.A, our intended uses have already been a part of the neighborhood, and are fully compatible with the low density community of farmers, foresters, farm laborers, carpenters, second home owners, and short term rental properties.

c. Traffic on roads and highways;

We anticipate hosting weekend events that should not overburden Peck Road or the bridge. Guests will either park on site in our fields, or be brought in by shuttle bus from area lodgings.

d. Bylaws and ordinances;

We agree to follow all relevant bylaws and ordinances, including but not limited to noise, light, waste, and trash disposal standards.

e. Utilization of renewable energy standards.

We do not anticipate that any of our intended uses will have a negative impact on renewable energy standards. We have sought to reduce the carbon footprint of our property through updated insulation based on an energy audit with Efficiency Vermont, installation of heat pumps and a solar array to reduce or eliminate our use of oil and wood for heating, and replacement of incandescent lights with LEDs wherever possible.

2. Specific Standards***a. Minimum lot size:***

As stated in 2.10.D, the property is 46 acres of mostly open fields, with the event site substantially greater than 50 ft from any property lines. Additionally, we have a riparian buffer, creek and river, between the event area and any neighboring residences.

b. Distance from adjacent or nearby uses:

Our event space is more than 400 feet away from the nearest dwellings and workshops. Nearby uses include agriculture (corn field and dairy barns), woodworking shop, short term rental, farm labor housing, and vacation homes.

c. Minimum off-street parking and loading facilities:

The field in the southwest corner of the property was previously used for parking. At approximately 120'x 114', allowing for 9'x18' parking spaces, 46 vehicles can be parked within that space. We have the potential of another 48 vehicles to park in the corral (150'x 90') as an overflow space. In addition to on-site parking, we are pursuing the possibility of shuttle bus deliveries of guests to and from area inns. The

previous owners recommended that as an option. We anticipate events of a maximum of about 150 guests. There is parking available for caterers and rental companies along the side of the lower field, to the side of the small barn. (See attachment 2: annotated photo of property detail)

d. Landscaping and fencing:

Fields are divided and outlined by a combination of wooden fences and old stone walls. Additional landscaping features include shrubs, berry vines, large stone terrace, apple and pear orchard, flower, vegetable and herb gardens, and a mown path wending through the hayfield.

e. Design and location of structures and service area:

No new permanent structures are included in this proposal. Event, portable restroom, loading and parking locations, as well as parking for the bed and breakfast, are included on the map (attachment 2). We intend to designate a handicapped parking spot for the bed and breakfast, as we are applying for a permit to update the first floor bedroom to make it ADA compliant.

f. Size, location and design of signs:

The previous owners had a hanging sign at the top of the Peck Road driveway. It had deteriorated over time, so we are replacing it with a very similar sign in size and design in the same location. Its dimensions are 24"x14". It is painted wood, with no lighting. (See attachment 3) We have submitted a separate application for this sign.

4.9 Performance Standards

A. Noise (as measured from property edge)

1. Noise shall not exceed 60dB between 8:00 pm and 7:00 am.

2. Noise shall not exceed 70dB between 7:00 am and 8:00 pm.

Bed and breakfast activities will most certainly not violate this standard. Events are to be staged well away from neighbors. In meeting with our neighbors to discuss restarting the wedding venue, we specifically asked about noise, and were assured by all that it had never been an issue with the venue in the past.

To test sound, ambient sound was first measured using the smartphone monitoring app Sound Meter at three locations (see locations on attachment 2): at the edge of the property at the creekside nearest the proposed event area (A), in the southwest corner of the property at the edge of the parking lot (B), and at the top of our driveway (C). Then a car stereo at the event location was played with doors and windows open. Sound at just outside the vehicle was measured at 89 dB.

All measurements were taken between 3:30 and 4:00 pm on 4/20/21.

Location	Avg ambient sound (measured without music)	Avg sound w/ music from stereo
A	62 (max 68) dB	62 dB
B	52 (max 58)	50.5
C	42 (max 77)	40.5

The data clearly show that the ambient noise of the highway and creek are far more of a factor than the music that might come from an event. Never-the-less, we will monitor the volume on event days, and require that DJs or bands stay within the designated limits, both before and after 8:00 pm.

B. Air Pollution

None of our activities should produce any of the listed forms of air pollution. We will not allow fireworks, unless we first apply for and receive a separate permit.

C. Glare, Light, or Reflection

We use only low voltage shielded LED lighting in the event area to illuminate paths and steps. The exterior of the house (doorways, paths) is accented with electrified period style lamps. Existing exterior barn lights are being replaced with vintage-style downward facing gooseneck barn lights using Dark Sky certified LEDs.

D. Safety Hazards

We anticipate no safety hazards from our proposed uses. We will not allow bonfires or fireworks.

E. Electromagnetic disturbances

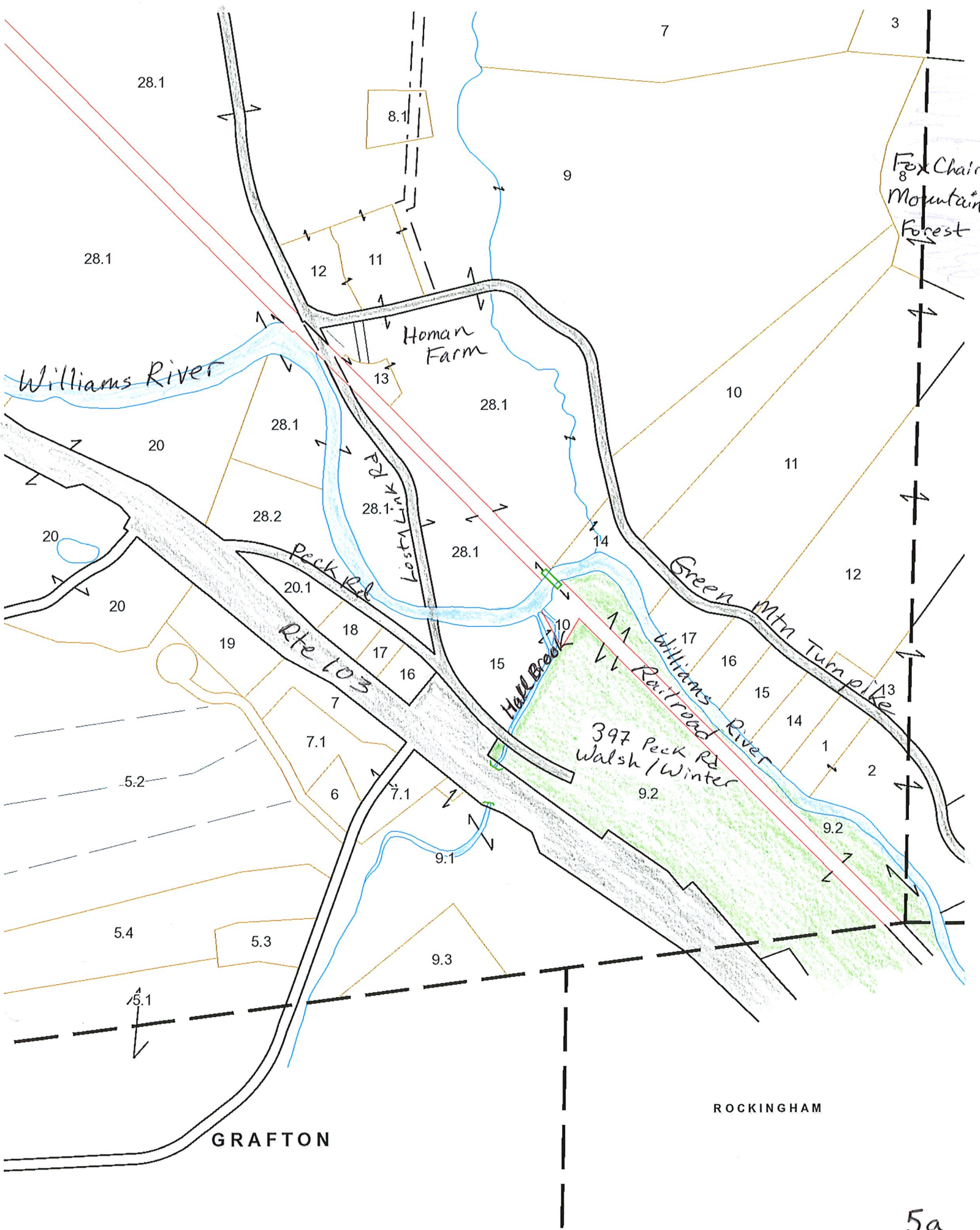
Not applicable.

F. Underground storage tanks, Ground/Surface Water Pollution

We have no underground storage tanks on the property. Our oil tanks are located in the basement. All events will include portable restroom facilities.

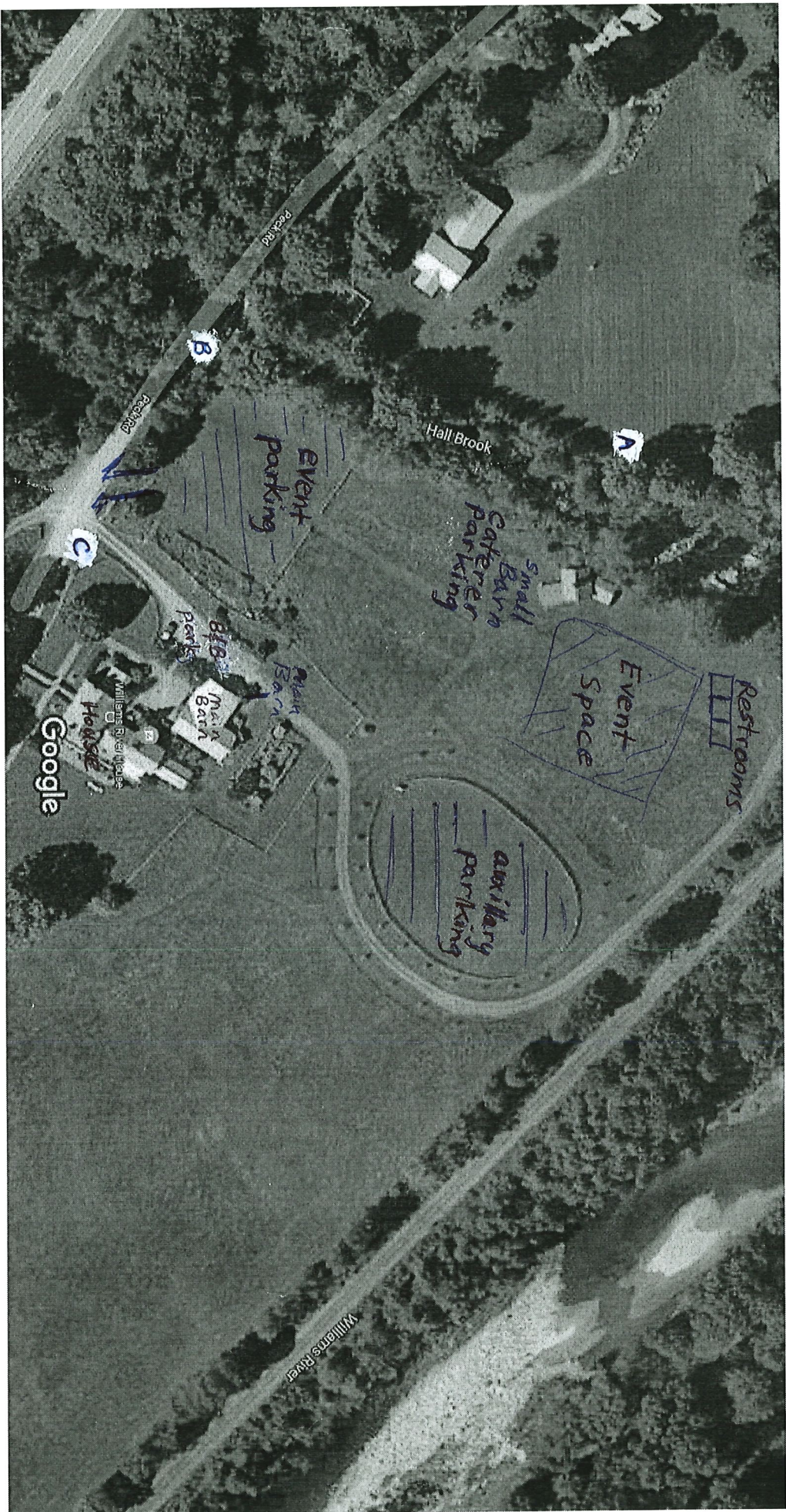
Attachment 1: Tax Map Detail with neighbors and land use identification

<u>Property Number</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Notes on land use/residence</u>
20.1	Savage	Cleared lot: temporary storage of timber, gravel, trailers
18	(?)	Second home, occasional use throughout year
17	Savage (?)	Rental property
16	Savage	Housing for agricultural workers
15	Bala	Second home + woodworking shop w/ short term rental above
28.1	Homan	Dairy farm, corn fields
14	Wilkins	Second home (winter); short term rental (summer/fall)
17	Nielson	Second home (CA), daughter currently living there
16	Holleran	Primary residence, forester office and workshop, small orchard
15	Boneez	Second home, primarily occupied spring and fall
14	Egan	Primary home, with small orchard, gardens
1&2	Veich	Primary residence, small orchard, storage garage for carpenter



Attachment 2: Aerial photo of property detail: locations of event area, parking, portable restrooms, locations of sound check (A,B,C)

Google Maps



Imagery ©2021 Maxar Technologies, Map data ©2021 50 ft



Johanna McBrien

New sign



Farm at



Williams River
House

Chester, Vermont

Circa 1780



TOWN OF CHESTER
POLICE DEPARTMENT

556 Elm Street
P.O. Box 370
Chester, VT 05143

Emergency 911 or
Dispatch (802) 875-2233
Office (802) 875-2035
Fax (802) 875-2036

April 22, 2021

Development Review Board
Town of Chester
PO Box 370
Chester, Vermont 05143

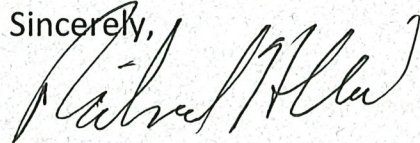
RE: Farm at Williams River House
Landowners: John Winter & Kathleen Walsh
Location: 397 Peck Road, Chester, Vermont

Members of the Development Review Board,

John Winter & Kathleen Walsh at The Farm at Williams River House, has applied for a Conditional Use Permit, for the purpose of: To open home to a 3-bedroom B&B, and to offer property as a venue for open air and tented weddings. (Private - one event per weekend)

Should John Winter & Kathleen Walsh / The Farm at Williams River House, be granted the necessary permits from the Development Review Board, Town of Chester, VT, it is my opinion that traffic safety will not be an issue.

Sincerely,



Richard H. Cloud, Chief of Police
Chester Police Department

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TOWN OF CHESTER
FIRE DEPARTMENT

Matthew Wilson, Fire Chief
556 Elm Street
P.O. Box 370
Chester, VT 05143

Emergency 911 / 875-3200
Business (802) 875-2173
Facsimile (802) 875-2237

May 2, 2021

Cathy Hasbrouck, Zoning Administrator
Town of Chester
PO Box 370
Chester, VT 05143

Dear Cathy Hasbrouck,

After reviewing the request by Kathleen Walsh and John Winter, I see little impact to the Chester Fire Department at this time based on the information you provided in your letter. If something is added to this project or changed from your proposal in the future, I would need to reevaluate the fire safety issues and impact on services provided by the Chester Fire Department. They must follow all state regulations imposed by the Vermont Division of Fire Safety. I would also request a walk through of the finished project before opening for pre-planning purposes.

Regards

Matthew Wilson
Fire Chief
Chester Fire Dept.