

CHARLOTTE PLANNING COMMISSION
Charlotte Town Office
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Charlotte, VT 05445
Phone: 802-425-3533

August 2, 2019

Peter Carreiro
Root Seven Holdings, LLC
343 Root Road
Charlotte, Vermont 05445

Re: Sketch Plan Review – Application Number PC-19-76-SK

Dear Mr. Carreiro,

The purpose of this letter is to summarize the Sketch Plan Review for the proposed land development project on the 2.95-acre property located at 3171 Ethan Allen Highway. The development is proposed to occur within the Village Commercial (VCM) zoning district of the West Charlotte Village (WCV) ~ East of Route 7 only.

A Sketch Plan Review for the project was held at the Planning Commission meeting on June 20, 2019. A site visit to the property occurred on Wednesday June 26, 2019 and was attended by Planning Commissioners Peter Joslin (Chair), Charlie Pughe (Vice-Chair), and Gerald Bouchard.

The Planning Commission has classified your project as a “Site Plan Review” for a change of use criteria in accordance with **Section 5.5** of the Charlotte Land Use Regulations (hereafter referred to as “the Regulations”).

The Planning Commission is providing the following guidance for your Site Plan Review application that should be addressed.

1. As per **Section 5.5(E)** of the Regulations, your forthcoming Site Plan Review application should include the following elements;
 - A. **Site Features:** The application proposes to retain both of the existing concrete buildings, which will be renovated with agriculturally-themed exteriors. Although the buildings are on the order of 50-years-old, they have not been surveyed on the Historic Sites and Structures Survey (HSSS) by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. Exterior elevations of the two buildings with their proposed renovations were submitted as part of this Sketch Plan Review. It is understood that the northernmost building (i.e. the former “Steve’s Citgo” gas station) will eventually serve as a commercial farm stand with an added creamery stand. It is anticipated that the

southernmost building (i.e. the former "Uncle Sam's Dairy Bar") would host a 6-month seasonal *Snack Bar*.

- B. **Site Layout and Design:** The primary use of the site will be for a commercial farm stand, where the former gas station building serves as storage for milk (which is not bottled on site), meat, produce, and other agricultural products. The grassy area will be used to host farm animals on site.

The current site includes six (6) toilets and three (3) one-thousand gallon septic tanks. There are currently two toilets in the northernmost building that connect to one septic tank, and four toilets in the southernmost building that connect to the other two septic tanks. One bathroom on the northernmost building will be made available for future customer use. Wastewater capacity for the site is currently estimated by the consultant Dave Marshall of Civil Engineering Associates to be around 800 gallons per day. There is a wellhead upon the property that is not indicated on the map.

Solar and energy efficiency should be addressed for the Site Plan.

If you are planning to install signage on the property, you should submit a signage plan for the project that is in accordance with **Sections 3.13** and **4.9** of the Regulations. Furthermore, it would be advisable to check with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) regarding State regulations for any proposed signage intended for display on US Route 7. For further information, please visit: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/sign-information>

- C. **Access:** Of the two US Route 7 access points, the northernmost has been eliminated by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans); where the southern access will become a gated access for emergency use. The property would then be served by the current access from Church Hill Road, and a service/delivery access for trucks from Root Road to the existing building on the adjoining 'Milkbox Properties, LLC' parcel to the east. The frontage of this property exists along an identified High-Crash Location (HCL) of US Route 7.

Your site plan application should address the following issues to accommodate future traffic and higher parking demand anticipated to occur during special farm and food events, in addition to the future operation of the snack bar:

- Site access for automobiles, vendor trucks, pedestrians, bicycles, buses, and emergency vehicles.
- Traffic circulation to and from Church Hill Road via both the Commercial Farm Stand access and the Root Road access, where it has been observed that vehicles park during the events.
- A contingent strategy to accommodate overflow parking, which has been observed to occur on Church Hill Road during the events. The plan should further address potential pedestrian and vehicle conflicts when this occurs. This could include:

possible police-assisted pedestrian crossings, the employment of parking stewards (wearing ANSI Class II safety vests), temporary MUTCD-compliant in-street signage (e.g. MUTCD R1-6, R1-6a), and/or other mitigation.

Pedestrian access was addressed at the public hearing, where it was discussed that a pedestrian crossing on US Route 7 (from the west) would require a warrant analysis from VTrans indicating a demand threshold to warrant the addition of a pedestrian crossing at the intersection of US 7 and Church Hill Road (see the report entitled "[US Route 7/Ferry Road Pedestrian Crossing, Feasibility Study](#)" by Dubois & King, dated December, 2014). It was also noted that pedestrian access from the east along Church Hill Road is an unfavorable location to channel pedestrians to the site, due to a poor line of sight for vehicles and the lack of sidewalks.

- D. **Parking, Loading, and Service Areas:** According to the statements made during the public hearing, the renovated parking area will be located to the east of the existing gas station building that is currently planned for seven (7) parking spaces that are not indicated on the Site Plan map. Parking spaces within the turnaround area are unknown at this time. Your parking plan should conform to **Section 3.11** of the Regulations, and comply with the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, which call for at least one (1) *Required Accessible Parking Space for Total Number of Parking Spaces Provided in Parking Facility* of 1-25 vehicles to be maintained by the property owner. This will include a sign with the International Symbol of Accessibility installed in front of the space with the lower edge of the sign at least five feet (5') above the ground, and a marked access aisle for the space that is at least five feet (5') wide to accommodate mobility devices (e.g. vehicle-mounted wheelchair lifts, wheelchairs, walkers, etc.).

There is not a category within the listing in **Table 3.1** (of the Regulations) for Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements to address potential demand for a "*Commercial Farm Stand*". The closest category appears to be:

- i. "*Retail Sales & Service*", which has a minimum requirement of at least **one (1) off-street parking space per 250 sq. ft. of gross floor area** for the proposed facility;
- ii. "*Recreation/Outdoor*", which requires **1 parking space per 3 patrons at capacity**; and
- iii. Once the "*Snack Bar*" is planned, the parking requirement for the site would be increased to accommodate the operation. Here, the "*Restaurant*" category of **Table 3.1** calls for **1 parking space per 150 square feet of seating area**.

All designated parking spaces shall have a minimum width of nine (9) feet, a minimum length of 18 feet, and unobstructed access and maneuvering room.

The site plan should be updated to include the proposed number of striped parking spaces, required ADA parking-related infrastructure, at least one bicycle rack that is

installed in proximity to the main building, and the area of impervious surface (e.g. the proposed parking area, and the buildings).

The bicycle rack should be made of non-edged thick tubular steel that is mounted below grade, or flange-mounted on concrete, with a capacity to hold at least eight (8) bicycles.

- E. **Landscaping and Screening:** The submitted site plan indicates the replacement of most of the asphalt on the property with grassy area, which will host a varying amount of "light-footed" farm animals to be periodically rotated through the property. During the hearing it was discussed that fencing would be installed to contain the livestock. The site plan should detail the dimensions and style of fencing to be utilized to ensure the animals do not escape on to the roadway.

Impervious surfaces intended for vehicles are planned to be made of non-white crushed stone. At this time, the Planning Commission has not requested a more detailed landscaping plan beyond what was presented at the public hearing. The current site plan map includes the location of Class II wetlands and the pond on the northeastern corner of the parcel. The fifty foot (50') buffers should be added to the map.

- F. **Stormwater Management and Erosion Control:** should be discussed in accordance with applicable standards covered in **Section 5.5(E)(6)** and **Section 7.8** of the Regulations. As part of your Site Plan Review application, the Planning Commission will require a stormwater management and erosion control plan that is prepared by a licensed professional, as per **Section 7.8(A)(2)** of the Regulations.
- G. **Outdoor Lighting:** should be in conformance with the standards outlined in **Section 3.9** of the Regulations. At the public hearing you stated that the lighting for the site will not change. However, the Planning Commission will require that an outdoor lighting plan to be submitted with your Site Plan Review application that will also address any possible expansion of the parking area discussed in Item C (above). The site plan map should be updated with the locations of the outdoor lighting fixtures. All fixtures for the site should be down-shielded if they are not already. The General Standards of **Section 3.9(B)** require the following:

a. *"All outdoor lighting shall be kept to the minimum required for safety, security, and intended use, consistent with the character of the neighborhood in which it is located."*

b. *"Permanent outdoor lighting fixtures shall be designed to minimize glare, and shall not direct light upward or onto adjacent properties, roads, or public waters, or result in excessive lighting levels that are uncharacteristic of the surrounding neighborhood or area."*

2. Where a "Commercial Farm Stand" is a permitted use administratively approved by the Zoning Administrator, the future operation of a "Snack Bar" use will require a Conditional Use approval from the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA). You may choose to undertake your forthcoming Site Plan Review application and Conditional Use Review application in tandem, or undertake the Conditional Use application at a later date. However, it is advisable to submit a Conditional Use permit at least three (3) months before you wish to begin the operation of the Snack Bar.

3. Other issues may be considered during the review of your forthcoming Final Plan application. In accordance with **Section 6.3(D)** of the Regulations, this Sketch Plan Review is valid for six months, unless an additional six-month extension is formally requested from the Planning Commission before the expiration date

Please let me know if I can answer any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'PJ', is written over a faint, illegible stamp.

Peter Joslin (Chair),
Charlotte Planning Commission