



February 27, 2017

Rep. Carolyn W. Partridge, Chair
Rep. Richard Lawrence, Vice-Chair
Vermont House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry

VIA EMAIL: to L. Leehman 02/27/2017

Re: Accessory On-Farm Businesses; 17-0560 ver. 1.1

Dear Chair Partridge and Committee:

I understand your Committee is considering changing the number of private events allowed on a farm from 12 to 6 per year. I support this change and offer the following suggestion to Par. III:

(III) Private events, such as conferences or weddings, not to exceed ~~six-12~~ days in a given year ~~for or~~ no more than 150 guests per event. Such events must not be advertised to the general public and shall occur at the same location as the farm operation with. ~~An event shall not be considered private if payment not is required from attendees in order to attend.~~

Reasons for suggested language:

- Six private events per year is easy to track and limits impact on adjoining landowners. Note: Some events include setup/rehearsal time on the day prior which should not count as additional “days”.
- “Site Plan Review” provides sufficient notice to, and consideration by, neighborhoods. However, the proposed language in 10(D) should be modified to (from 24 VSA 4413(a,1)):
“(D) Applicability of other standards. A municipality may ~~require~~ regulate an accessory on-farm business with respect to location, size, height, building bulk, yards, courts, setbacks, density of buildings, off-street parking, loading facilities, traffic, noise, lighting, landscaping, and screening requirements, and only to the extent that regulations do not have the effect of interfering with the intended functional use. ~~to meet the same standards it applies to similar commercial uses for setbacks, frontage, parking, traffic, height, noise, lighting, landscaping, or screening.”~~
- Six private events per year provides farms with a sustainability option.

Concern for equity and effective date:

- Equity is not an issue. Adjoining landowners may become a farm with the same benefits. For small lots (less than 5 acres), those non-farm owners already do not have the same land development options as larger farm parcels, such as subdivision and being exempt from local zoning requirements.
- Wedding Barns are now a part of many farm operations supporting adaptive re-use of barns for historic and community preservation goals; towns can expand events to non-farm barns, if desired.
- Municipalities should be given one year to amend local bylaws for private events.

VT Farm Bureau Testimony on 02/22/2017:

Testimony referred to a “wedding barn” case in Hyde Park from 2013. Under the current draft, the landowner could have been deemed an exempt use as an “on-farm business” and the town could have issued Site Plan Review approval to address the neighbors’ request that noise cease after 11:00 p.m., enabling the \$5,000 per weekend barn rental to continue (2013 Order, attached).

Thank you for working on this important issue,

Ronald Rodjenski
Hyde Park Town Zoning Administrator