

To Members of the Vermont House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency and Forestry:

Submitted by Al Kaiman, immediately neighboring, long-time resident to North Branch Vineyard's development *and* desire to receive reclassification ... if pending Act H.128 proposal advances to law.

Thank you for welcoming and making an important place for interested party/citizen testimony on the 'simmering' content of important proposed bills making part of their legislative journey via Room 249.

My wife, Paula, and I are education and human service retirees, immediate neighbors on one side of the North Branch Vineyards development adjoining Portal Road. Our home is the original, 1830's era Portal family founding homestead.

Introduction

I'm hoping to share some very specific observations inherent in what I consider to be the fuller, deeper meaning of "Vermont's natural beauty" which I suggest reaches into a network of life – usually quite warm and neighborly – and almost always respectful at a minimum. These observations highlight, I believe, the importance of finely crafting top grade regulations (hopefully understandings with citizens embarking on business expansions (agricultural or otherwise) that are down-to-earth, truly tangible, and enforceable. My bedrock premise is this: A full meaning of Vermont's natural beauty is definitely more than the 'surface scratching' comparison of how much red pigment is showing on a given autumn palette in Vermont for visiting leaf peepers. And, given this premise, **I believe our Vermont deserves the very best, a premium version of regulations and guidelines** *that endeavor, even if imperfectly at times, to preserve and strengthen the true character of our state for now and for the future.*

(1). When moving to Vermont from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in 1978, gently rolling a classic butterscotch-enameled VW camper van off the Lake Champlain ferry ramp, I began driving on I-89 toward Montpelier. Soon this thought came to me (truly thinking out loud): "*Holy cow! Boy, I sure wish one of these exit ramps led to my potential home embedded in this kind of beauty.*" (an Upper Midwest exclamatory, youthful moment ... maybe just lacking the popular UP phrase, "You betcha!")

*First and foremost ... I've come to learn that the natural beauty of Vermont **easily surpasses** the professionally produced, tourism-sensitive, photographic slices of life in which the paved mall parking lots, supermarkets, 'hurt-your-heart' decaying country and some city homes ... are nowhere to be seen. Even the classic red vintage pickup truck filled with fresh apples is made to look appealing for the viewer.

*That is, Vermont's natural beauty is a multi-dimensional kind of 'natural beauty' that is composed of a unique cultural pallet. It's a way of life. It's how most of our communities function. It's how people generally treat one another. It's how, if an attempted helpful solution goes through the 'vetting ringer' and gathers respect and effectiveness, *it can usually gather praise and respectfulness **no matter how much one's title and academic pedigree sparkles.***

* *Country road? Go ahead ...* talk to a neighbor briefly through our mutually open driver's door windows while passing one another on the road. *Sure ... invite* a front-pack, infant-carrying Mom or

Dad to feel free to use our park bench for a little rest as they enjoy the view of North St. climbing through the increasingly forested areas with the crisp outline of an artistic mountain silhouette in the distant background. *Of course, *speaking of that distant view* from within our home; continue doing the awkward dishes by hand in our 1950's era deep sink. While peeking up at the contemplative panoramic view it can settle your busy – maybe tangled up – thoughts about planning for the daily living setting and support needs/services of a loved one within the immediate or extended family as the sand in the hour glass gets very thin for that special friend or loved one. Somehow, possible paths forward seem to emerge with more clarity and possibility. No panacea presents; but the gift of the Vermont environment can inspire us to be our best selves ... no matter what the particular personal challenge by its quiet but potent ability to keep things in perspective. *And wait-a-mintute ... I wonder if I should share the latest research I heard on Vermont Public that the calming and focusing effect of archival music from an elderly parent's growing up years can be as important as medicine?*

* *And what about* spraying the road surface with a mist of water for a stretch in front of our door yard? The resulting dampness, like a shadow, on the road side of the purposeful rose bush hedge gains a little relief from the dust clouds of frequent, too-fast traffic passage of recent years. This summertime 'work around' primarily sparks friendly nods or a wave from passing neighbors.

*Persuading the State Police to bring out a solar-powered, trailered, digital speed sign on two occasions appeared to help a bit with tired, speedy commuters as well as muscle-truck devotees ... and our neighbor boys definitely enjoyed 'running their hardest' along the edge of the road to see who could prompt the highest readings for speed.

*Employing precise 'Gorilla Tape' adhesive foot pads under the hooves of a venerable 1950/60's era children's toy ("Milky the Cow") on the front hood of my little white and black puddle jumper Suzuki brought Holstein humor and lightness along our Portal Road as neighbors turned out near their mailboxes to applaud a troop of pandemic-impacted U-32 graduates on their special day with robes and mortar board regalia in place, framing their beaming faces and proud waves.

*An '*electrified with excitement, energy, and pride*' four or five year old neighbor boy weaving – but still technically following the lead guidance of his Dad on his own bike – **works on this road** – if the roadside tree and bramble trimming has been done fairly recently.

**Placing an improvised sign* near a very dangerous stretch of six to eight-inch, 'hidden,' icy potholes near our snow-plowing mailbox demolition, (simply saying 'LOOK AGAIN') ... seems to have struck a balance between creative helpfulness and uninvited bossiness.

2. Owing to this recipe/chemistry when we talk about partial or liberal exemptions for 'accessory on farm ventures' we need, I think, to be sure to honor the very *high bar of the real meaning of 'natural beauty.'* The potential side effects of some accessory on farm ventures – when they include robust partying, high and frequent vehicular traffic, high-tech amplified concerts (potential characteristics of of the personality of event centers) - doesn't just impact the enjoyable leaf peeper visual habits we're accustomed to as Vermonters.

3. If we live with, and have adapted to an annual, rigorous car inspection protocol in Vermont it's because the Vermont community wisdom trusts people/drivers not to drive unsafely with two and three ton vehicles at high speeds during the months in between their inspection sticker refresh ... but, yes, indeed, even the light scale rust on the rotors is up for scrutiny ... and, yet, we do need to **demonstrate**

and verify that the multitude of systems that work together to result in an overall safe vehicle, not just the owner's drivers and passengers but, also, other drivers and passengers in the Vermont environment.

4. Preliminary approval of 'accessory on farm' certification after the initial aspirational goals and elements of operation are **actually demonstrated over, for example, a two year period of time ... moving from hoped for and planned for, to actually accomplished and demonstrated.**

*It would seem that granting accessory on farm status before a farmer's track record is established would be risking a lot of time, energy and expense before it is truly timely and warranted. It would also be risking an unnecessary and premature tarnishing of the overall 'natural beauty' living environment as outlined above for many Vermonters ... not just those on Portal Road in Middlesex.

*I stand in opposition to H.128's passage particularly in regard to its lack of strong stipulations to nail down clear enforcement/monitoring steps and its possible, somewhat lax specificity, owing to the robust movement to quickly amend Act 250 as less restrictive. I see it as not completely 'baked,' owing to the sense of urgency around some lawmakers and citizens jumping on the fast-moving "Reform/Dilute Act 250.

*I also stand in opposition to having an 'event centers and concerts' inclusion within any modifying or added 'accessory on farm' regulations and definitions.

Sincerely,
Albert L. Kaiman
Middlesex, Vermont

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