



THOMAS COMMITTA ASSOCIATES, INC.
Town Planners & Landscape Architects

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: East Bradford Township Officials and Staff
Dara and John Marshall

FROM: Daniel B. Mallach, RLA, AICP, ASLA
Thomas J. Comitta, AICP, CNU-A, RLA

DATE: March 5, 2019

SUBJECT: **REVIEW COMMENTS – THE FARM @ 415 BIRMINGHAM
CONDITIONAL USE PLANS DATED REVISED FEBRUARY 7, 2019**

The enclosed Review Comments pertain to the following documents, received on February 19, 2019.

These Review Comments also pertain to an initial Site Visit with the Applicant Mr. John Marshall on March 26, 2018, additional Site Visits on June 28, 2018 and August 30, 2018 to evaluate potential tree impacts and buffering needs, and a meeting with Township Staff and the Applicant Team on August 28, 2018 at the Township Building.

- "Conditional Use Parking Exhibit" consisting of one (1) sheet dated revised February 7, 2019, prepared by D.L. Howell & Associates, Inc.;
- "Conditional Use Truck Turning Plan" consisting of one (1) sheet dated revised February 7, 2019, prepared by D.L. Howell & Associates, Inc.;
- "Conceptual Landscape Plan" consisting of one (1) sheet dated revised February 7, 2019, prepared by D.L. Howell & Associates, Inc.;
- Conditional Use Application Cover Letter to Ms. Mandie Cantlin, Township Manager, from Ms. Debra A. Shulski, Esq., Riley Riper Hollin & Colagreco, dated February 7, 2019;
- Narrative of Compliance with Bed-and-Breakfast Estate Standards, prepared by Ms. Debra A. Shulski, Esq., dated February 7, 2019;
- Impact Assessment Statement prepared by Mr. Christopher M. Daily, P.E., D.L. Howell & Associates, Inc., dated February 7, 2019; and
- B & B Estate Sign Illustration (undated).

Please call or email if there are any questions.



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The following Review Comments pertain to the documents listed on the Cover Memorandum.

Items from our Review Comments dated October 15, 2018 that have been addressed are so noted.

New and updated text is in bold type.

1. Overall Comment

Based on our Site Visits and discussions with Mr. Marshall and Project Engineer Chris Daily, P.E., we still believe that from the perspective of Landscape Architecture and Land Planning that the subject property is suited for use as a Bed and Breakfast and venue for small to medium sized events. The attractively arranged farmstead buildings appear to be appropriate for the staging of such events, and for limited use by overnight guests.

This includes the use of the accessory Barn Building and adjacent walled enclosure, assuming compliance with, or relief from, all relevant Ordinance requirements.

The comments herein are intended to inform additional discussion of the proposal and potential Conditions of Conditional Use Approval pertaining to Visual Buffering, Parking Area Landscaping, Tree Protection, and the ongoing stewardship of this historic property.

2. Buffering from Adjacent Residences

The Plan shall comply with the §115-52 East Bradford Township Zoning Ordinance (ZO) Buffer requirements for adjacent to the Residential Uses.

Specifically, per §115-52.B (ZO), a "Screen Buffer" is required adjacent to the abutting Single Family Residential Uses, and a "Perimeter Buffer" is required adjacent to cartways. Please note:

- 2.A As discussed during the Site Visit with Mr. Marshall and Mr. Daily on August 30, 2018, the Plan now depicts evergreen trees, six (6) Norway Spruce, to screen the sight lines from the abutting 410 Allegiance Drive residence (the first abutting house on Allegiance Drive off of Birmingham Road) and proposed parking, drive aisles, and the Barn complex.
- 2.B As recommended in our July 5, 2018 Review Comments, the Plan now depicts additional parking area evergreen shrub screening at the northeast of the parking area, for the particular benefit of 404 Allegiance Drive.
- 2.C The northern portion of the property closest to Natalie Drive is **now** included on the submitted Plan sheets, **on the Conceptual Landscape Plan. As recommended**, three (3) new evergreen trees are **indicated on the Conceptual Landscape Plan** to extend the row of mature evergreen trees that is currently growing in this location. **No further comment.**
- 2.D **If Conditional Use Approval is granted, a Land Development and/or Permit Plan shall indicate the height of the nine (9) proposed Norway Spruce.**



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For the best combination of screening function and long-term health, we recommend that they be a minimum of eight feet (8') in height at installation.

2.E If Conditional Use Approval is granted, a Land Development Plan and/or Permit Plan shall include the species proposed for the seven (7) shrubs, at 24 inches in height.

2.F Input from neighbors may inform and refine these proposed and recommended buffering strategies. In addition, as a Condition of Conditional Use Approval, the Township could reserve the right to require the installation of additional buffering, based on further fair consideration after events have been held.

3. Parking Perimeter Landscaping

Per §115-45.1.H.1 (ZO), the perimeter of parking areas shall be “landscaped to soften the feature's appearance”. Implementing the proposed and recommended Residential Buffering (see comment 2.A through 2.F) would provide this required visual softening from adjacent residences.

Otherwise, parking would primarily be visible from Birmingham Road itself, and from the end of the residential driveway across Birmingham Road (accessing 414 Birmingham Road).

As noted in the above comment 2, along a right-of-way, the proposed Use requires a Perimeter Buffer, the purpose of which, as described in §115-52.B.2 (ZO), is to “filter views between complementary land uses”. Site topography and existing vegetation should provide the intended benefits of a Perimeter Buffer, and would additionally “soften the feature’s appearance” per §115-45.1.H.1 (ZO).

As a Condition of Conditional Use Approval, the Township could reserve the right to require the installation of additional parking perimeter buffering, based on further fair consideration after events have been held for which the full parking strategy has been implemented.

4. Parking Area Landscaping

The Parking Area Planting provisions of §115-45.1.H (ZO) describe the amount and type of planting that is required in the interior of a parking area, as well as screening requirements for around the perimeter of a parking area.

As depicted on the **February 7, 2019** Parking Exhibit, the proposed parking is intended to be among the existing trees and shrubs and adjacent to and behind the existing buildings.

Assuming that they are well maintained, the type and quantity of these existing plants satisfy the interior planting requirements of §115-45.1.H (ZO).

We consider this item to be resolved.



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5. Tree Protection in Parking Areas

The Parking Exhibit indicates that vehicles would be parked adjacent to many mature trees. Our typical preference is to maximize the distance between parking spaces (or drive aisles) and tree trunks so that there is at least a one foot (1') offset for each one inch (1") of tree diameter-at-breast-height (DBH). For example, vehicles should stay at least 15 feet away from a tree with a diameter of 15 inches DBH.

Such an offset would be consistent with the requirements of §115-45.C.2 (ZO) relative to the establishment of a "tree protection zone" and the exclusion of vehicles from within this zone, in order to limit damaging soil compaction over a tree's root system. While this "tree protection zone" is explicitly required during "construction activities" undertaken during site development, it is equally applicable during the ongoing use of the site, at least in principle as a stewardship best practice.

Further evaluation of the proposed parking locations relative to tree trunks and species-specific root disturbance implications was undertaken during the Site Visit on August 30, 2018 with Mr. Marshall and Project Engineer Mr. Daily.

In the intended driving corridors and the locations where vehicles are proposed to be parked under trees, there would not be contact with visible surface roots. Further, the trees in question would have minimal encroachment into the tree protection zone and/or are species that are relatively tolerant of soil compaction over their root systems (according to information provided by Penn State Extension that serves as a useful guide for a given tree species tolerance vs. sensitivity to soil compaction).

Therefore, we recommend that the proposed parking be considered acceptable in terms of tree health, with the following conditional recommendations:

5.A In Section B, "Parking" of the **2-7-2019** Impact Assessment Statement, the Applicant "agrees to permit the Township to conduct annual inspections to confirm the unpaved surface area is appropriate for parking, and agrees to accept this as a condition". In this context, we recommend that annual or biennial (every other year) inspections include evaluation by a Certified Arborist of the trees adjacent to parking. The results of these inspections would be reported to the Township.

The 9-4-2018 Response Letter included with the prior Conditional Use submission stated that "the Applicant intends on contacting a Certified Arborist to satisfy this comment".

5.B To help minimize impact damage to the tree trunks, simple low fencing (e.g. post and chain) could be installed and maintained between the trees and parking spaces or drive aisles to discourage motorists from parking or driving too close to these trees.

The Parking Exhibit indicates "Tree Protection Fencing" adjacent to a large Sycamore Tree at the front of the dwelling. Additional trees adjacent to drive aisles and parking spaces could also benefit from such protection. A Land Development Plan and/or Permit Plan should indicate these fenced locations, along with a Detail for the fencing.

5.C In order to promote safety and to minimize unintended damage to vegetation during events where off-pavement parking is needed, traffic should be directed so that vehicles park in approved locations. We understand from Mr. Marshall that he intends to provide this traffic direction.



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(In addition, the Parking Exhibit now indicates temporary signage to help direct traffic. We defer to the Township Engineer to confirm the suitability of this temporary signage, as well as of proposed circulation, including evaluation of the **2-7-2019** Truck Turning Plan.)

6. Tree Maintenance

Aside from any regular inspections to evaluate tree health (as described in above comment 5.A, we **still** encourage Mr. Marshall to work with a Certified Arborist to evaluate short term tree maintenance needs that would minimize safety hazards and vehicle damage due to limb drop, and to develop a long term plan for the care of the many beautiful trees on the property.

7. B & B Estate Sign

An illustration of a proposed B & B Estate sign has been submitted. It is labeled at two feet (2') wide by three feet (3') high, equaling the six (6) square feet maximum area permitted by §115-48.2.S (ZO), computed exclusive of the sign's supporting elements.

We defer to others for further review and comment, including the Township Zoning Officer and Historical Commission (the latter as explicitly required per §115-48.2.S, ZO).

A Land Development and/or Permit Plan shall indicate the location of the sign, to ensure that clear sight triangles will be maintained.

8. Summary

If Conditional Use Approval is granted, the Buffering, Parking Area Landscaping, Tree Protection, and tree-care strategies discussed herein are considered appropriate means by which to satisfy the noted Ordinance requirements, and to promote "best practices" from a Landscape Architectural perspective for the use of this historic property. **Specifically:**

8.A At a minimum, site planting indicated on a Land Development and/or Permit Plan shall include the six (6) Norway Spruce indicated adjacent to 410 Allegiance Drive, the three (3) Norway Spruce to the north of the Barn installed for the particular benefit of Natalie Drive residents, and the seven (7) parking screening shrubs for the particular benefit of the 404 Allegiance Drive residents. See comments 2.A, 2.B and 2.C.

8.B A Land Development and/or Permit Plan shall indicate the height of the nine (9) Norway Spruce and the species of the seven (7) 24-inch shrubs. See comments 2.D and 2.E.

8.C As a Condition of Conditional Use Approval, the Township could reserve the right to require the installation of additional parking perimeter buffering, based on further fair consideration after events have been held for which the full parking strategy has been implemented. See comments 2.F and 3.



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- 8.D The Applicant has agreed, as a potential Condition of Conditional Use Approval, to annual inspections by a Certified Arborist to evaluate whether the unpaved surface areas adjacent to trees remain appropriate for parking. See comment 5.A.**
- 8.E The Tree Protection Fencing proposed adjacent to a large Sycamore Tree at the front of the dwelling could also be utilized to protect trees adjacent to drive aisles and parking spaces. A Land Development Plan and/or Permit Plan should indicate the location of all such fencing and should include a detail of the fencing. See comment 5.B.**
- 8.F We defer to the Township Engineer to confirm the suitability of the temporary signage intended to direct traffic, as well as of proposed circulation. See comment 5.C.**
- 8.G The Township shall undertake further evaluation of the proposed B & B Estate sign, including required review by the Historical Commission. A Land Development and/or Permit Plan shall indicate the location of this sign. See comment 7.**

Please call or email if there are any questions.