

July 2, 2019

Bob Strobel, Chairman
James Burdin, Town Planner
Town of Northwood, NH
Planning Board

RE: Case 19-6: Joseph Carter/Fatherland Family Trust, First NH Turnpike and Harmony Hill road, Map 222 Lot 54

Chairman Strobel,

My name is Jennifer Boulanger of 26 Harmony Road in Northwood, NH. I am writing to express my concerns with respect to the above case and what I believe to be the risks/issues associated with the proposed growth. Joseph Carter/Fatherland Family Trust proposes to build a miniature golf course and refreshment service on a 1.88 acre plot of land with Tucker Brook running through the lot.

As a Certified Economic Development Professional I encourage small business growth and the creation of quality job opportunities to increase the overall health and well-being of the community (people, municipalities and community as a whole). The people of the community thrive when they can find meaningful, rewarding quality employment opportunities that include a competitive wage, benefits and a method to give back to the community. Mr. Carter is proposing to create FT/PT retail job opportunities to operate the miniature golf course and refreshment service. Part-time retail positions are typically minimum wage opportunities and frequently do not offer benefits; minimum wage is not equal to a livable wage. NH boasts some of the lowest unemployment rates in the Country (U.S. 3.5%, NH 2.8%); the Portsmouth metro area is even lower at 2.3%. The creation of new part-time retail positions would only serve to increase competition for employees amongst the established local businesses. Finding good employees is a challenge for all businesses.

The typical miniature golf course is a seasonal business generally opening around Memorial Day and staying open through Columbus Day. Typical hours are 10:00 am – 10:00 pm seven days/week. There are two existing miniature golf courses in the general area (Chuckster's in Chichester, NH and Hooksett, NH and Jay's Bayside in Alton, NH). There are many more courses in the more heavily toured areas Laconia/Tilton/Meredith/Portsmouth. The Chuckster's establishment in Chichester is located off Route 4 with the course abutting Route 4. This side road has seen a tremendous amount of accidents during busy/peak hours as cars are backed up trying to get it or are jumping out into fast moving traffic exiting the side road. The above described project would be located directly on Route 4 or would have access in/out from Harmony Road. Either scenario would create substantial bottlenecks as there are no sidewalks or turning areas on this particular section of Route 4. There have been five fatal accidents on Route 4 in Northwood NH over the last five years (September 2014, September 2015, May 2017 and two in 2018, August and September). In an article in the Concord Monitor (Sunday May 12, 2019) titled "Proceed with Caution", the Chichester Chief of Police, Patrick Clarke is quoted

“We understand it’s a major east-west road, but in my opinion, the way it’s designed is not safe, and the numbers speak for themselves.” Clarke said his department responds to at least one accident there every two to three weeks. In fact, Chief Clarke relayed concerns about Route 4 to the Department of Transportation three years ago. Route 4 accidents have increased from 42 in 2015 to 68 in 2017 and there were 63 in 2018.

Lastly I would like to speak to Environmental Concerns and the impact of this particular type of retail establishment contributing to vehicular pollution, lighting pollution and general waste pollution. The Bear Paw Regional Greenways established an inventory of Natural Resources in 2014. There are several wildlife habitats identified adjacent to Route 4 in Northwood, NH: the Northwood Meadows State Park and along Route 4 Tucker Brook, the area around CBNA and Sherburne Brook as well as much of the forested area in between Bow Lake, Jenness Pond and Route 4. This area is considered a High Priority Wildlife Habitat due to its high wildlife co-occurrence score. In June 2018, NH DOT, NH DES and NH Fish and Game co-authored a report on NH Wildlife Corridors in response to SB 376. SB 376 took affect August 9, 2016 requiring the organizations to identify, audit and make recommendations with respect to rules and regulations that affect wildlife corridors. The previously mentioned land areas were ranked as some of the Highest in Habitat in NH with several species identified as in Greatest Conservation Need. In conclusion, the Town of Northwood has expressed its desire and the desire of its residents to maintain Protect Designated Conservation Areas (1998 Master Plan) as well as maintain open spaces and the rural characteristics of the town (2004 Master Plan).

In light of the above discussion points, I do not support the development of First NH Turnpike/Harmony Hill Road (Map 222 Lot 54) into a miniature golf course and refreshment service. It simply is not the best location for this type of business.

I would also like to remind the Planner and Planning Board that the Town of Northwood NH is part of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) administered and overseen by the Regional Economic Development Center of Southern NH (www.redc.com). The REDC CEDS goals and objectives are outlined in the report with a focus on Infrastructure Development, Regional Cooperation, Workforce Attraction and Retention, Affordable Housing and Sustainable Living.

Concerned Citizen

Jennifer Boulanger
26 Harmony Road
Northwood, NH



Enclosures:

September 2015 Wildlife Action Plan Map
2014 Bear-Paw Natural Resources Inventory
REDC CEDS Introduction (pages 3-5) with attached List of Steering Committee Members