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March 19, 2021

MEMORANDUM TO: Vernon Township Land Use Board (*via email*)

FROM: Cory L. Stoner, P.E., C.M.E., Land Use Board Engineer

SUBJECT: ENGINEERING REVIEW

Preliminary & Final Site Plan and Variance Application for
Farm 94 LLC
Block 58 Lot 2
Located at 44 State Route 94
Vernon Township, Sussex County
HPA No. 20-199

Dear Land Use Board Members:

The Applicant has submitted revised plans for improvements related to Block 58 Lot 2 property located along State Route 94. The Applicant is proposing the expansion of an existing farm store use, renovation of a barn for a banquet hall, craft studio and retail space, and “glam camping” use. Based on a review of the application and the documents submitted in support of the application, I offer the following comments:

1. The items submitted in support of this application included the following:
 - a. Plans entitled, “Farm 94, LLC, Proposed Farm/Retail Store, 442 N.J.S.H. Route 94, Vernon Township, Sussex County, New Jersey,” consisting of four (4) sheets, prepared by Engineering & Surveying Properties, dated September 2, 2020 and last revised February 25, 2021.
 - b. A lighting plan entitled, “Brown Farm 94,” consisting of one (1) sheet, prepared by Acuity Design Services and dated January 5, 2021.
 - c. Landscaping plan entitled, “Farm 94, LLC, 442 N.J.S.H. Route 94, Vernon Township, NJ 07462,” consisting of two (2) sheets, prepared by KALA, dated February 3, 2021 and last revised February 25, 2021.

- a. Plans prepared by Harry Pharr Architect, undated and consisting of the following sheets:

Sheet	Title
1	A-1 Lower Level
2	A-2 Upper Level
3	A-3 North Elevation
4	A-4 West Elevation
5	A-5 South Elevation
6	A-6 East Elevation
7	A-7 Store
8	A-8 Warehouse

- d. Applications and supporting documents.
2. The Applicant has submitted revised plans and additional information to address comments that were made in my review letter dated November 9, 2020. Per the plans and documents, the Applicant is proposing a number of improvements and uses for the site which include the following:
- a. The renovation of an existing dairy barn for a craft or studio space and retail space on the first floor and banquet event space on the second. A two-story addition approximately 50' x 30' is also proposed for this building.
- b. A 10' x 20' addition to an existing farm building. Said addition will house restrooms, storage and produce washing areas.
- c. A 30' x 50' one-story building for warehousing and equipment storage related to the farm store use.
- d. Various site improvements including parking lot improvements, sewage disposal areas and signage.
- e. The construction of a 15' x 20' building for showers, restrooms and storage related to a proposed "glam camping" use.
3. **Completeness:** Based on a review of the application, it was found that a few of items listed in the Technical Checklist have not been submitted. These items include:
- a. #19 – Proposed utility plan showing all storm sewer inlets and pipes, sanitary sewer mains and lateral connections, all with invert and grate/rim elevation labels and pipe slopes, water main and services connections, with pipe material and sizes,

and proposed well and septic. The Applicant has requested a waiver from submitting detailed plans for the proposed septic disposal systems. Any approval of the proposed application will be conditioned on the well and septic approvals from the Sussex County Health Department and/or the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. I have no objection to granting this waiver for the purpose of hearing the application.

- b. #20 – Environmental Impact Statement: The Applicant has requested a waiver from providing this item. Since the Applicant is mostly expanding existing disturbances on the property in question, I have no objection to granting this waiver for the purpose of hearing the application.

Note: It should be noted that the scope of the “glam camping” has really not been specifically described. Any major disturbance related to this activity could result in the need for additional information.

- c. #22 – Soil Erosion and sediment control plan if over 5,000 s.f. of disturbance in accordance with Sussex County SCD standards: Based on the proposed improvements it appears that the overall project disturbance will be greater than 5,000 s.f. and a Upper Delaware (formerly Sussex County) Soil Conservation District approval will be needed. Any approval will be conditioned on soil conservation district approvals if needed. I have no objection to granting a waiver from providing a soil erosion sediment control plan for the purpose of hearing this application.

As stated above, there are a few items which have not been provided or a waiver has been requested. I believe that the plans submitted show enough information for discussion before the Board and I have no objecting to waiving these items for the Board to hear this application. It should be noted, however, additional information could be required based on the testimony provided and the review comments that the Board may have during the hearing of this application.

4. **Zoning:**

- a. The property in question is located in the AET, Agri-Eco Tourism Zone. The bulk requirements for the lot are as follows:

Item	Required	Existing	Proposed	Variance
Min. Lot Area	5 Acres	67.116 Acres	67.116 Acres	No
Min. Lot Width	250 ft.	686 ft.	686 ft.	No
Max. Building Coverage	10%	0.002%	0.003%	No
Max. Lot Coverage	15%	0.044%	0.045%	No
Barn Building				
Min. Front Yard Setback	75 ft.	31.6 ft. ⁽¹⁾	23.9 ft.	Yes

Min. Side Yard Setback	35 ft.	133 ft.	83 ft.	No
Min. Rear Yard Setback	100 ft.	>100 ft.	>100 ft.	No
Max. Building Height	30 ft./2 Stories	36 ft./2 Stories ⁽¹⁾	36 ft./2 Stories	Yes
Farm Store Building Addition				
Min. Front Yard Setback	75 ft.	8.2 ft. ⁽¹⁾	8.2 ft.	Yes
Min. Side Yard Setback	35 ft.	9.6 ft. ⁽¹⁾	9.6 ft.	Yes
Min. Rear Yard Setback	100 ft.	>100 ft.	>100 ft.	No
Max. Building Height	30 ft./2 Stories	<30 ft.1 story	<30 ft.1 story	No
Warehouse/Equipment Storage Building				
Min. Front Yard Setback	75 ft.	N/A	126 ft.	No
Min. Side Yard Setback	35 ft.	N/A	37 ft.	No
Min. Rear Yard Setback	100 ft.	N/A	>100 ft.	No
Max. Building Height	30 ft./2 Stories	N/A	<30 ft./1 Story	No

⁽¹⁾ Pre-Existing Non-Conforming Condition

- b. The Planning Board Planner has conducted a thorough review of the zoning items and variances pertaining to the proposed improvements. I have no additional comments regarding these items and will defer all other zoning comments to the Board Planner.

5. **Site Plan Layout & Parking:**

- a. **Number of Parking Spaces:** The Applicant has provided parking calculations for the proposed uses on the site. Per the parking requirements listed in Schedule D in Township Code: 60 spaces are required for the barn uses and 61 spaces are provided and 13 spaces are required for the farm store and 43 spaces are provided.
- b. With the number of spaces so high, the Applicant should be prepared to explain why so many parking spaces are being provided for the farm store building.
- c. **Parking Areas Surfaces:** Per Section 330-75B. of the Township Code, all non-residential parking and loading spaces shall be paved with either asphalt or pavers. A note on the plan states that existing parking lot surfaces and access drive which consist of millings will be capped with either asphalt, oil and stone or some other binding products acceptable to the Township of Vernon. It is our recommendation that these areas be paved, however, the Board may decide that oil and stone is sufficient. If the parking lot is not paved, a variance will be required. It should be noted that it is assumed that when the NJDOT reviews the plans they will most likely request the first 25 feet of the driveway access points be paved.
- d. Per Section 330-75B of the Township Code, all parking lots with more than 10 parking spaces shall have granite block curbing. The Applicant is requesting a

variance from curbing the parking lots and is proposing wheel stops instead of curbing.

- e. Handicap Parking Spaces: The plans shows that all handicapped parking spaces are to be paved. However, the route from the parking spaces to the barn may not be smooth surface depending on the parking lot treatment approved. It is my recommendation that the parking lot from Route 94 to these lots be paved to provide a stable, smooth handicapped accessible route to the barn.
- f. Parking Space Size: The parking spaces as proposed will be 10' wide x 18' deep will exceed the minimum 9' wide by 18' deep required by the Township Code. It should be noted that since the parking surface will not be striped, each parking space will have a curb stop to delineate the location of the parking space.
- g. Vehicle Circulation: I am concerned about the vehicular circulation for both parking lots as the plans show only one point of ingress and egress for both. As the Applicant is proposing a banquet hall use, there will be a large number of vehicles arriving and leaving at the same time, which will cause congestion in the parking lot with only one point of entry. The Applicant's engineer should comment on traffic circulation, in to and out of the property.
- h. Access Permits: While the gravel driveways to the farm property currently exist, the uses on this property are going to be greatly changed. An access permit from the New Jersey Department of Transportation will likely be required for this development. Any approval by the Board should be conditioned on the Applicant obtaining an approval from the New Jersey Department of Transportation.
- i. Loading Spaces: Loading spaces have not been shown on the plan. Both the farm store and barn would typically have designated loading spaces 12 ft. x 40 ft. as required per Section 330-76.D of the Township Code. If a loading space is not provided, a variance will be required.
- j. A review of the plans shows minimal grading proposed with this application. The Applicant should be prepared to discuss any proposed grading changes before the Board. Any extensive grading that is determined to be needed will require supplemental grading plans.
- k. The project as proposed does not appear to be a "Major Project" per the NJDEP Stormwater Management Rules and thus would not be required to meet stormwater requirements.

6. **Landscape & Lighting**

- a. Per section 330-72C(9) of the Township Code, all Deciduous trees shall be 3 ½ to 4 inch caliper and evergreen trees shall be 6-7 feet tall. The Plant List should be updated to reflect these sizes.
- b. **Site Lighting:** Per Section 330-80C(6). of the Township Code, the minimum illumination level in parking areas shall be 1.5 footcandles. Based on a review of the lighting plan there are many places in both parking lots where this is not met this requirement and a variance will be needed.
- c. Any Lights to be mounted to any of the buildings will need to be shown on the plan for review.
- d. The Applicant should state if there will be any lighting related to the existing or any future signs on the property.
- e. **Hours of Operation:** The Applicant should be prepared to discuss the hours of operation of the facility and justify lower levels of light that have been proposed.

7. **Utilities:**

- a. **Sewage Disposal Systems:** The site plans show two separate sewage disposal systems. One will be for the proposed farm store and the proposed banquet hall and one will be for future “glam camping” area. Any approvals granted by the Board will be subject to Sussex County Health Department and NJDEP approvals.
- b. **“Glam Camping” Utilities:** The plans illustrate that the electric and water utilities for the proposed 15’ x 20’ “glam camping” building for showers, restrooms and tent storage along with seven tent locations. Very little information has been provided for the “glam camping” area and the Applicant should be prepared to discuss this area in great detail with the Board.
- c. **Need for Emergency Generators:** Per the design Engineer’s letter dated February 26, 2021, portable generators will be used in event of an emergency. The Applicant should be prepared discuss the use of such generators before the Board.

8. **Signage:**

- a. The plans illustrates that a Farm Store Ahead sign will be installed but does not include any detailed information regarding signage any other signage. Any proposed signage should be reviewed with the Board. Signs shall be in accordance with Section 330-180 of the Township Code.

- b. The Applicant should state whether the existing Farm Store sign was previously approved and meets the sign standards of Section 330-180.

9. **Architectural Drawings:**

- a. The architectural plans provided for the farm store addition, warehouse and dairy barn renovations illustrate that the proposed structures will be attractive in design and appearance. The Applicant should be prepared to discuss all aspects of these renovations with the Board.
- b. Farm Store: The Rider to the Application stated that the Farm Store building is to be used for selling food and bakery items. The Applicant should be prepared to discuss the uses in this building in detail and explain whether any cooking and or baking will occur within this building.
- c. Dairy Barn: The Rider to the Application states that this building will be used for art gallery, craft space or studio space on the first floor. The second floor will be utilized for event and banquet uses. Again, the Applicant should be prepared to discuss the uses in this building and detail.

It is noted that the architectural drawings for the barn state that the first-floor addition will include an area for butcher, kitchen and retail. The uses proposed in this portion of the barn will need to be reviewed with the Board.

10. **Additional Comments:**

- a. Clearing/Disturbance Areas for “Glam Camping”: Additional details should be provided regarding the “glam camping area.” This area is currently wooded and the Applicant will need to show any areas of clearing or grading on the site plan.
- b. Highlands Exemption: The entire site is located in the Highlands Preservation area and A Highlands exemption application has been submitted and is pending review. The proposed improvements will either fall under a Highlands Exemption #4 or will require a Highlands Preservation Area Approval.
- c. Parking Area on Block 228 Lot 8: The property located on the west side of Route 94 appears to also be owned by the Applicant. A large milling parking area is located on this property opposite of the Farm Store. A note on the site plan states that this site is not to be used for this application. The Board may still wish to have this parking area removed to attempt to limit the use of this property for overflow parking in the future.

- d. Other Approvals that will be required include but may not be limited to:
- i. New Jersey Department of Transportation (*Road Opening permit*)
 - ii. Upper Delaware Conservation District (*formally the Sussex County Soil Conservation District*)
 - iii. Vernon Township Construction Department
 - iv. Sussex County Health Department
 - v. Vernon Township Fire Subcode Official

Very truly yours,



Cory L. Stoner, P.E., C.M.E.

HAROLD E. PELLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.

Vernon Land Use Board Engineer

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cc: Via Email
Kim Decker, Planning & Zoning Secretary
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Glenn Kienz, Esq., Board Attorney
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