

## Fw: Concerns

Hoby Harmon <hharmon@newfieldsnh.gov>

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To:Sue McKinnon <suemckinnon@newfieldsnh.gov>

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**From:** Lynn Girard <lynngirard@me.com>

**Sent:** Monday, April 1, 2024 7:43 PM

**To:** Michael Sununu <msununu@newfieldsnh.gov>; Hoby Harmon <hharmon@newfieldsnh.gov>; Mark Kasper <mkasper@newfieldsnh.gov>

**Cc:** Mark Girard <mgirard11@me.com>

**Subject:** Concerns

Newfields Select Board,

We are writing to you to express our concerns with The Vernon Family Farm events. Before we share our concerns we would like you to understand we enjoy the Vernon's as neighbors and we wish to see their business thrive, which has caused hesitation from us to reach out to you with our concerns.

When we moved to our home at 298 Piscassic Road, across the street from the Vernon's five years ago, The Vernon Family Farm was holding an event once a month with un amplified music and they were not serving alcohol. We actually went over a couple times and enjoyed ourselves in this setting. Unfortunately as you are aware, over the last few years they have amplified the music and started serving alcohol. This with the increased frequency of the events has caused us to have concerns.

We shared our concerns with the Vernon's this past fall and they brought it to our attention that the town has allowed them to carry on these events with amplified music and alcohol being served. They even shared that they were approved to hold more events than they actually did. We have a hard time understanding why the town would allow such events as the Vernon's live in a residential, agricultural zoned area. Commercial food services establishments exist solely to profit from food and beverages. These types of services should be established in a commercial zoned area. Are we incorrect to suggest this?

We were sent a letter from Newfields Zoning Board of Adjustments regarding the Vernons seeking a variance due to the outdoor kitchen they built not meeting the required set back. Unfortunately this is the only letter we received being an abutter and it was sent after the kitchen was built. It has been brought to our attention that there was another letter sent previously regarding modification of their site plan from the Newfields Planning Board that we do not recall receiving. Regardless it is our responsibility to stay informed and express our concerns which we feel is necessary at this time.

Piscassic Road is a highly trafficked road with a lot of blind drives. Piscassic Road is not a road that can be easily entered and exited, unlike you would see in a commercial zoned area. We have even witnessed a car crashing off the road to avoid hitting a school bus due to lack of visibility. Due to this, the amount of traffic these events attract, and the fact alcohol is being served, we share the towns safety concerns. We kindly allowed the Town of Newfields Police to park in front of our house during these events last summer and fall. This indeed helped with the traffic and controlling the alcohol consumption but we feel it is a lot to ask of neighbors, neighbors who live in a residential/agricultural zoned area, to have a police car and cones parked in front of their home EVERY weekend. Would you not agree?

Safety concerns aside, the Vernon's brought it to our attention that they are allowed to amplify music up to 65 decibels. 65 decibels of amplified, live music is not only extremely loud and disruptive, but it is not easily controlled. We have had to move all of our family activities to another location or a different day as the noise is very disruptive. We have even had people from these events trespass through our property. We try to be understanding neighbors but it is a lot to ask of us every weekend. Again we ask why is it that the Vernon's are allowed to amplify music and conduct these events in a residential, agricultural zone area?

Not only is this effecting our quality of living at our home on weekends when we have time to spend as a family, but if these events continue, it is going to decrease our property value. We have taken a lot of pride and put a lot of time and energy into our property. When one purchases land in a residential, agricultural area, one does not expect to have neighbors conducting a commercial business in the area. Who's to say we can't take profit from holding weddings, conducting sporting events, allowing

food trucks to come onto our land, the options are endless. We would assume not only our neighbors, but the town, would raise concerns considering our home does not lie in a commercial zone area.

Another topic we would like to touch upon is that we have 12 acres in conservation land. When land is put into conservation it is to ensure that land remains open space and the beauty and character of it remains intact to protect the land. How is it that the Vernon's were approved to move an historic rock wall and park numerous cars on conservation land? Does that not go against the deeded agreement? We can't imagine the property owner who put their beautiful land into conservation intended to have the land utilized in such a manner.

This brings us to another topic of concern. As you are aware Southeast Land Trust has an easement onto our property. We have spent five years trying to work with Southeast Land Trust to give us 24 hour notification prior to bringing heavy equipment, trucks, etc. onto our property. We have even offered to put a 2 acre buildable lot into conservation, in return SELT give us the respect and courtesy of letting us know prior to them utilizing the access on our property to keep our family, animals, and friends safe. Through all of our research this easement was never intended to be carried out in a free for all manner in which SELT has utilized. Land Trusts are encouraged to be respectful and accommodating to homeowners. We feel we were being extremely generous to offer putting our buildable lot into conservation to receive something in return that should be done out of respect and safety. Unfortunately not only have we not been given full support from the Newfields Conservation Committee, we were talked about negatively during a committee meeting when we were not put on the agenda and were not there to defend ourselves. How is this ok, especially when they did not follow up on the situation with us prior?

We are very thankful for those who volunteer to play a role to support this town and the members of the Newfields community. However, we feel it is important that those who volunteer, do so in a professional manner without using their role to give their own personal opinions and implement their own incentives. It is obvious there are members of the committee that use their roles to support their own agenda. How is it that the conservation committee can turn a blind eye to the deed associated with Vernon's property which raises safety concerns, but we have not been given the support regarding our safety concerns with Southeast Land Trust, even when we generously were willing to put more of our land into conservation? Land that those in our community would not like to see us develop as the acreage lies between the Rockingham Rail Trail and the Piscassic Greenway.

We do want to take time in this letter to thank Michael Sununu, Hoby Harmon, and Mike Kessler in regards to our situation with SELT. Mike Sununu spent hours listening to our feedback and reading documents to better understand our situation. He even took the time to meet with both us and SELT at the town hall to try to mediate a solution that works for both parties. Mike, Hoby, and Mike Kesler all took the time to come to our property to get an understanding of the easement and our concerns. They made suggestions that could work for both parties. This is what we expect from those who are elected to play an influential/supportive role in our town.

To finalize this letter we want to reiterate that we do try extremely hard to be good neighbors and citizens of this town. We feel we have good relations with all of our neighbors, including the Vernon's, and we truly wish the Vernon's to have a successful business. We grew up farming and have a great appreciation for it. We just strongly feel The Vernon Family Farm is out growing the definition of Agritourism and feel they should hold their events in a commercial zoned area where the land is intended to hold such events. We hope the town takes our concerns into consideration. We also hope that those that have been elected to have influential roles in this town, conduct themselves in an unbiased manner to support, not just themselves and their own agendas, but all the members of this community.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and we hope that it finds you all well.

Respectfully,

Mark and Lynn Girard