

April 21, 2017

Dear New Canaan Planning & Zoning Commissioners,

We urge you to deny Grace Farm's renewed application and instead have them come into compliance with their current permit. We fully support the arguments made by our collective neighbors and their legal representatives, and therefore will not duplicate those arguments here. Instead, we feel it both helpful and critical to offer you what our family has recently endured throughout this long process.

We have met, both at our home and at Grace Farms, with Grace representatives 6 times since December 2016, to express the burdens our family faces living next door and also to seek meaningful resolutions to issues of security, privacy and the enjoyment of our property.

We would like to highlight just a few examples of our recent dialogues:

1. **Screening:** Grace offered the following suggestions for screening on our property:

- a) Plant a hedgerow of trees across the middle of our property. This would have literally cut our property in half. It would also have converted our backyard into a dark, narrow alleyway.
- b) Plant trees on a shady ridge between the wetland areas of our property. In researching this idea, Kathleen Holland informed us that trees would likely not grow in this location.
- c) Plant trees at the end of our driveway, which would leave no place for a snowplow to deposit snow.

In short, due to both the elevation and wetlands of our property, there is no practical place to plant additional screening. Yet, in an email we received this week, Grace still is insistent that planting on our property is a feasible solution. We invite you to walk our property and see for yourselves.

- d) Per their renewed application, Grace's proposed plantings on their own property (a small grouping of 8-10' trees that have a predicted growth of 1-2' a year in *ideal conditions*, and considerably less in the proposed shady wetland location) will not offer our family any screening for many years. This is an awfully long time to have thousands of strangers peering into our backyard, making us feel like we live in a fishbowl. (*see included photo*)

2. **Walking Path:** Grace invited us to see their new landscaping plan and again walk the path with them. Grace assured us that they would be permanently deleting a section of the path close to our family's home because it was, "just the right thing to do for the neighbors." We agreed wholeheartedly and thanked them profusely.

Yet, days later, in their renewed application, we were devastated to learn they merely proposed to shutter that section of the path seasonally (*section D of their Management Plan*).

3. **Fencing:** During my last visit to Grace, I questioned why sections of their proposed buffer fencing did not connect to one another to form a cohesive barrier. I was assured that, due to their proposed vegetation plan, that area would “grow in” and additional fencing would not be needed — in large part because this section of the path would be permanently closed. Yet, after reading of their plan to open the path seasonally, we once again feel misled.

4. **Signage:** Grace proposed installing signs to direct the public to stay on their walking path.

Recently Grace put up a temporary “Path Closed” sign at the edge of the footbridge. Yet as the weather has warmed, we have watched a third of the public walk right around the sign.

When I wrote to Grace asking them to please adhere to Steve Palmer’s interim request for that section of the path to be closed, I was curtly told I needed to call the Grace security office at the time I noticed the infractions, and that otherwise Grace did not want to hear from me. Steve Palmer, who was cc’d, did not respond to my email.

In short, signage has proven ineffective and not a solution to our family’s security concerns.

Furthermore, it should not be our family’s responsibility to police Grace Farms. We will not leave our young children and guests alone to privately call Grace’s security office to report an issue.

Grace appears to be making promises they do not intend to keep. The path and footbridge east of the stream should remain closed as they are today. The stream will function as a natural deterrent for anyone looking to wander too close for our comfort, the distance from our property line will be almost 200 feet, and the proposed new trees may at some point provide screening.

5. **Outdoor Amplification:** Grace’s proposal for amplification for a variety of outdoor programs does not belong in any residential neighborhood.

On Easter Sunday we clearly heard the Easter egg hunt at Grace Farms athletic field near our home. Imagine what a nightmare it would be for us if Grace was allowed amplification at such small size events. Now, imagine what that would sound like when you consider Grace’s request for outdoor events of up to 700 people, and then imagine that event with amplified sound.

Please allow our quiet residential neighborhood to remain just that: quiet and peaceful.

6. **Lighting:** Grace’s proposed lighting plan is overly complicated and places the burden of enforcement once again on our family.

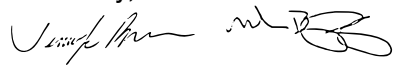
It is currently past April 15th and there is no foliage on any of our trees. Full foliage usually does not occur until May, and our trees are bare again in November. Their renewed application calls

for the dimming of the lights only between January 1st and April 15th, which is an insufficient window. We request the lights simply be dimmed year round, eliminating the need to keep tabs on their lighting calendar.

While Grace refused to discuss any possible lighting solutions in our meetings with them, they did offer one proposal: that we apply film on all of our windows to shield us from the lights emitting from Grace and give us a sense of privacy.

Grace Farms was initially presented as a church. What is there today instead is a far cry from just a religious institution. What Grace Farms is now asking for would take matters to whole new level. It is more than any neighborhood should be asked to tolerate.

Sincerely,



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