

78 Kleppin, Steven

From: Mike Buczkiewicz [buczkiewicz@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 18, 2012 2:38 PM
To: Kleppin, Steven
Cc: Jennifer Buczkiewicz
Subject: Tonight's P&Z Meeting / Grace Farms Property
Attachments: Buczkiewicz - Grace Farms P&Z Letter.pdf

Dear Mr. Kleppin,

Hope all is well. My name is Mike Buczkiewicz - my wife Jennifer and I own the property at 1258 Smith Ridge Road here in New Canaan. While we both were very much looking forward to attending tonight's Planning & Zoning Commission meeting, unfortunately neither of us will be able to attend. However, we were hoping we could submit the following letter (included below and attached to this email in PDF form) to yourself and the P&Z commission members in lieu of being able to speak at tonight's public hearing regarding the Grace Farms property. Our hope is that this letter could be presented to the commission members and made part of tonight's record.

Thank you in advance for your time and do let me know what you think.

Sincerely,

Mike Buczkiewicz

buczkiewicz@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Kleppin and members of the New Canaan Planning & Zoning Commission,

Hope all is well. My name is Mike Buczkiewicz - my wife Jennifer and I are the owners of the house at 1258 Smith Ridge Road in New Canaan. Our house is the white house that directly abuts the Grace Farms property to the southeast.

12/18/2012

We purchased our home at 1258 Smith Ridge in March of this year. We have spent some time getting up to speed on the issues concerning Grace Farms, and have met with a few of our neighbors on this matter. In addition, we also contacted and met with Sharon Prince at Grace Farms a few weeks ago as well.

Either my wife or I have attended the Planning & Zoning Commission meetings that have discussed the Grace Farms property in the recent past. Unfortunately, it appears that neither of us will be able to attend tonight's meeting, as I have to work late and my wife will be home with our 2½ year old son. However, we wanted to email you and the entire commission our brief thoughts in lieu of being able to speak at this evening's hearing. Our hope is that this letter be made part of the tonight's record.

Our Thoughts

Both my wife and I were well aware when we purchased our home this past spring that our neighbors, Grace Farms, had been approved to build a church on the property. Both Jennifer and I had no objection to this - we thought a church would be a respectable way to use the property and would fit in well with the existing residential neighborhood.

After attending several Planning & Zoning hearings and meeting with the various parties involved, we learned in more detail about the proposed use of the property. We are left with a few reservations that wanted to share:

We understand that churches are used for a variety of functions outside of normal religious services - both Jennifer & I grew up in a church environment and our family belongs to a local church here in New Canaan. However, we were surprised to learn of the scope of the functions that Grace Farms intends to use their property for. Sharon described to us its usage akin a "community center" or a "park" the entire town can use and benefit from. In addition, we were surprised to hear the property would also be used as a philanthropic foundation, a research center, supportive of the arts, social justice causes, and various charities. They intend to hold lectures and seminars for the benefit of New Canaan and the surrounding communities' residents. In addition, Sharon described to us that the public would always be welcome on the grounds and would have full access of the proposed amenities such as the library and gym.

While all of this sounds like a wonderful resource for New Canaan, to us it fits the description of a community center or park, and not your typical church. To be honest, in all the descriptions of what is planned to take place at Grace Farms, the church/religious services sounds like an afterthought. Which leaves us questioning why, in the plans and permits, Grace Farms was deemed a church in the first place. We are far from P&Z experts, but it seems to us that they should be asking for a permit for a park or community center and not a church.

We live in a lovely residential neighborhood, and we very much hope that the area stays that way.

12/18/2012

We were both prepared to welcome a church as our new neighbor. What we have found out is that it sounds like we will be living next door to far more than a simple place of worship. We feel that due to its location in a residential neighborhood, any and all future functions at Grace Farms should respect this. It should not alter the makeup of the current neighborhood.

With all this being said, we do want to be neighborly in the true sense of the word. Thus, we would ask for the following conditions to be applied to Grace Farms and the proposed use of their property:

- Any lighting, interior or exterior, be turned off between the hours of 10 pm and 6 am
- A police officer be on sight to direct traffic on Sundays and other holidays
- The property not be used as a school (other than a Sunday School)
- Use of the athletic field limited to church members only and not open to third parties. In addition, no lights to be allowed on the athletic field
- The east side "open space" wetland corridor of Grace Farms property (running from our property to our neighbors, the Holme/Markotos family) be preserved in perpetuity as a wildlife sanctuary and preserve. No use of this space by Grace Farms members, their guests or the public shall be permitted
- No hunting, firearms, training of dogs, ATV/snowmobile use will be allowed on the property
- Use of bullhorns, loud speakers other such devices will be prohibited outdoors
- The River buildings will be screened from the neighbors properties and prevent light from spilling over and shining onto neighbors properties. Any visible lighting visible from neighboring properties shall be screened by landscaping and light positioning
- A fence placed around the entire property perimeter

We feel that the above requests are reasonable and are similar to our neighbors' feelings on the matter. We feel this represents a good faith compromise between all the parties involved.

Thank you in advance for your time and please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information. Our contact information can be found below.

Happy Holidays,

Mike & Jennifer Buczkiewicz

1258 Smith Ridge Road

New Canaan, CT 06840

203.594.7421 home

917.407.2953 Mike cell

12/18/2012

Buczkiewicz@gmail.com Mike email

Miskowiec@gmail.com Jennifer email