

**TOWN OF SALEM  
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 – 9:00 A.M.**

The Salem Planning & Zoning Commission will hold a Special Meeting at **320 Hartford Road** on Saturday September 17, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. for the purpose of viewing the site for the following application:

**ZRA-SAZ 8-01. The Salem Herbfarm, 320 Hartford Road.** Application to amend Section 30.4 of the Zoning Regulations that list permitted uses in the Special Agriculture Zone to include “Special Event Facility” and to designate the Salem Herbfarm location at 320 Hartford Road as a Special Agriculture Zone.

**PRESENT**

Vernon Smith, Vice-Chair  
Ron Bouchard, Secretary  
Ron Labonte  
Jennifer Lindo-Dashnaw  
Ruth Savalle (9:11 a.m.)  
Eric Wenzel  
David Miller, Alternate

**ABSENT**

Joseph Duncan, Chair  
John Gadbois, Alternate

**ALSO PRESENT**

Town Planner Richard Serra

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Vice-Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

Ed Regan, Sandy Merrill, and Anne Duncan led the site walk, providing a brief history of the property and presenting the proposed activities to transform the Salem Herbfarm into a “Special Event Facility”. The property is currently permitted as a Special Exception (Agriculture) within Residential Zone A (Salem Zoning Regulations, Section 6.2.1). The primary focus of their proposal will be weddings from April through November. Use of the facility during the winter months is doubtful due to the lack of heat in the barn as well as lack of sufficient areas to place any snow that is plowed to clear the parking lot. They hope to begin hosting events in 2018, which will provide them with adequate time for the proposed plantings to grow and mature and promote the facility.

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The entrance at Route 85 to the facility, sight lines (1,100 feet to the south and 650 feet to the north), and lighting located along either side of the driveway were reviewed. It is felt that the traffic flow and out of the facility will be less than was generated while the property operated as the Salem Herbfarm. As such, they are hoping that the existing CT Traffic Study will be sufficient and are seeking a waiver to conduct a revised Traffic Study. Likewise, they are hoping that the current, submitted plan will be sufficient as the proposed changes to the property are minimal. The sight lines will remain clear, open, and properly maintained and no vegetation will be planted in this area. The entrance will have an area of grass with an introduction onto the property by a natural screening of a deer-resistant Western Arborvitae known as *Thuja plicata*, which is known to be superior for its sound and light deafening qualities. Low lighting will also begin in this area, guiding vehicles and guests, and should not be visible from the road. Located behind this natural screen, which will be located along the western, southern and, possibly, northern, sides will be the proposed parking lot. The existing parking area provides parking for approximately 35 vehicles and the proposed expansion will provide parking for an additional 60 or more vehicles. In addition, a native vegetative screening of either evergreens (White Pine) or deciduous plantings is also being proposed to shield any noise or lighting from the neighboring resident(s). The existing grass and topsoil in the expanded area will be removed and gravel from the front of the barn area will be laid down to help keep any runoff to a minimum. They also aim to maintain as much grass in the area as possible to keep the water runoff on the site. Additional privacy to the facility and for the residents of the property will be provided by a manicured hedge of the Western Arborvitae on the opposite side of the driveway. The estimated number of cars entering and exiting the property before and after the event was discussed. It was noted that the headlights of those vehicles exiting the property will be directed onto a vacant lot and should have no effect on the neighboring residents. It is estimated that the events will host a maximum of 140-160 guests. The private driveway in which approximately eight (8) vehicles may comfortably park could accommodate any parking overflow for staff and other members of the wedding party. Currently, there are three (3) handicap spaces. Additional spaces may be added, should it be required.

The existing tent location, which sits behind another garden hedge behind the parking area, was presented. The tent may be moved (further away from the property line), eliminated or reduced in size. The question of the availability and use of microphones in and around the tented area for announcements was raised. All amplified music and dancing will take place within the existing barn. A visual screening of the Western Arborvitae, which will be shaped and pruned, will also be planted on the north side of the property from the existing home and curving up towards an existing hemlock hedge. The screening should not only keep the sound and lighting within the property and provide some added privacy, but also act as a natural barrier to keep the guests from wandering outside of the property. Additional gardens may be added to help further beautify the property.

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The gravel area in front of the barn will be transformed into a grass/garden area. The gravel from this area will be moved to the expanded parking lot and the grass from that area will be moved to this gravel area. Some or all of the existing greenhouses will remain and be utilized for the gardening purposes. Currently, there is one restroom available for guests in the barn. The barn will be expanded to include the existing greenhouse area and the stairs leading to the existing greenhouse will be eliminated and the floor will be elevated so that it is even with that of the barn. The existing corner units in the barn will be removed. The final seating capacity of the completed barn is estimated at approximately 120-130 people. An additional bathroom and air conditioning will be added at a later date. A sound test was conducted to determine its impact on the neighboring area.

Commissioner Bouchard departed from the meeting at 9:53 a.m.

To maintain some flexibility, it was suggested that they might like to allow for some live (not amplified) and/or ambient music in the exterior of the barn. Luminaries and additional soft lighting options were also discussed to provide additional safety and for effect. The ultimate goal of the facility is to have as low impact on the neighborhood as possible while continuing to maintain the existing rural, rustic feel of the property and area.

Nighttime photographs of the property illuminated by the existing lights were requested.

Mr. Regan, Ms. Merrill, and Ms. Duncan will be in attendance at the Public Hearing and requested that, if possible, any questions be presented to them prior to the meeting so they can be fully prepared. The Commission thanked them for their presentation.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**M/S/C: Smith to adjourn the meeting at 10:07 a.m. Meeting Adjourned.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Salem