

PLANNING BOARD

Town of Lewiston 1375 Ridge Road Lewiston New York
Thursday – September 20, 2018
PB 2018-9

Present: Conrad, Craft, Casale, Lilly, Taczak, Waechter

Absent: Burg

Presiding: William Conrad, Chairman

Conrad: I would like to welcome everyone to the September meeting of the Town of Lewiston Planning Board. I would like to say the Special Use Permit for Varisco on Saunders Settlement Road has been pulled from the agenda.

The next item on the agenda was a request from Marc & Cheryl Brunett, 708 Pletcher Road, SBL# 73.00-2-6.2, for a one-lot split. The property is presently zoned R-1, one family residential.

Conrad: Please come up to the microphone and describe your project.

Brunett: It's my property but he's going to be building on it. He's my son-in-law.

Josh Ryan. Me and my wife plan on building a house on the back side of the property. It's kind of split in the middle, it's about 6 acres.

Conrad: Do you have any other intentions other than the home?

Ryan: No.

Conrad: Any questions from the Board? Is there anyone in the audience that has questions or concerns regarding the project either for or against?

A motion to classify the subdivision as a minor and treat it as a minor was made by Taczak, seconded by Lilly and carried.

A motion to recommend approval of the subdivision as presented was made by Taczak, seconded by Craft and carried.

The next item on the agenda was a Site Plan Review for Michael Schweitzer, Bella Rose Vineyard & Winery on Ridge Road, SBL# 102.00-1-9.1.

Conrad: Please step forward to the microphone and introduce yourself and give us a brief overview of your project please.

Michael Schweitzer, and this is Andy here. He worked with me on a majority of the project. 57 acre piece of property. The front 15 of it basically has the building and vineyard on it right now. The vineyard as it stands is around 6 acres. The building was built under an Ag Permit this spring. Along with the building the parking lot was already done with a good amount of planting and things around that area are done as well. The idea is to have a farm winery and tasting room on the property. That is the general scope of it.

Conrad: Are you going to serve any food?

Schweitzer: No. I won't have a kitchen.

Conrad: Any future plans for that?

Schweitzer: Maybe food trucks and stuff like that but not actually to serve food. I know some of the wineries do chocolate along....that is a possibility.

Conrad: I discussed this with the Building Inspector but as far as the radius for turning your vehicles, what is the largest vehicle you plan to have visit the site?

Schweitzer: There could be buses down there. We have plans for buses.

Conrad: Would you have a tractor trailer or anything that would be delivering equipment?

Schweitzer: I wouldn't personally know but a tractor trailer has already come down there for excavating of the septic.

Conrad: Is it still there or was it successfully able to leave?

Schweitzer: Successfully down and up yes.

Andrew Johnson: It can accommodate the larger trailers.

Conrad: That was a concern to me.

Schweitzer: We built the road to DOT standards so everything grade, width, everything you can think of was done and run through the DOT. Dave Mallow who I think recently retired is the one that put it through.

Conrad: Are there any questions from the Board?

Waechter: As far as your parking issues, and I understand as you stated you are going to be open for tour buses. Is that something that you are going to be managing as far as what the tour buses need to come in by reservation or the larger vehicles because I see a potential issue that you may run in to with a parking problem if you have 2 or 3 buses show up at the same time?

Schweitzer: Typically you ask that they call in advance. That usually doesn't happen. It's an easy solution; you just have a parking attendant. That is typically what you see on the wine trail right now. During busy days and busy weekends we have a parking attendant that will not only park or tell the people where to park but also have the bus drivers check in just to make sure if there is any problem in the crowd that somebody is being held accountable.

Waechter: Is there a potential that you would unload the patrons and the bus would exit and come back later for them?

Schweitzer: No. The bus has to stay on the premise. That is pretty typical. I've never seen a bus on the lot leave. It has to stay on premise.

Conrad: What are your hours going to be?

Schweitzer: Typically 12:00-6:00. I believe New York State doesn't let you open before that. Other than having a select private event, typical is 6:00.

Conrad: Would that be 6 days a week? 7 days a week?

Schweitzer: Usually Monday is closed. During the winter you have limited hours. Between December and March or even as far as May you could have just weekend hours and then during the week you would probably be closed Monday and open the other 6 days of the week.

Conrad: Are there any activities going on outside, tours through the vineyards or anything?

Schweitzer: No. There is an overhang porch for seating. That is pretty much it. There will be no tours or anything like that.

Taczak: You mentioned special events. What about outside lighting for the parking lot, is there anything like that?

Schweitzer: Right now we don't have any outside lighting for the parking lot. There is lighting on the building itself. It will be shining downward in to the parking lot but not necessarily lighting on the parking lot itself no.

Lilly: How about lighting on the driveway coming down?

Schweitzer: There is not currently any lighting on the driveway going down because the hours of operation don't call for it. It's something I can certainly do. It wouldn't be difficult. The sign at the top would be lit so I have to run electric up that way anyways. There is a proposed guardrail that would be easy enough to attach lights on the guardrails so you see.

Waechter: As far as your special events that you mentioned that you would possibly be open for, would those be held within the hours of operation or would it be something that would be at a night time say starting at 7:00 and then continuing on until later?

Schweitzer: It would be during the normal hours.

Lilly: Is that sign going to be visible from both directions for people to know where to pull in, in a safe manner? I don't know how close you can put that sign. It looks like a nice sign on the plan.

Schweitzer: It's not very close to the road because you have to have certain distances back. It's as close as we could put it and its running parallel to the road. It's not like you can only see it in one direction or something like that. We have a big front apron to accommodate the turning radius and the busses and if you have a bus coming in and out.

Lilly: There is enough room for vehicles coming in and out?

Conrad: What about the visibility from Ridge Road for someone pulling out? You have that curve that's close by and there is a lot of over growth close to the road there.

Schweitzer: When we put the sign up some of the over growth will have to come down. That is maintenance that will have to be done in the future. I didn't want to take away any more than I had to up until this point.

Conrad: People go up and down Ridge Road sometimes at a high rate of speed. We don't want anybody pulling out obviously and having an incident.

Schweitzer: We did think of that with the DOT and there was thought put in to it. One of their recommendations and we are doing is actually going to be capping the top so you're not spinning out on stone. The top surface is totally flat. There is a slight pitch for rain but there is no grade on it per say. It will be flat and it will be paved for that very reason.

Lilly: How many employees or staff members?

Schweitzer: Typically you don't have very many. In the winery itself there would be 5 and then a couple of hands for the vineyard. Right now in the vineyard I've been doing everything myself. It doesn't take much but as the vineyard grows there certainly will be more hands to

the vineyard. The nice thing about that is you're typically not in the vineyard the same time as the winery. You get out of the vineyard while things are cool. I picked over the weekend. It was 86 degrees. I will tell you that was not fun. You make the best of the time you have.

Conrad: You would be the first official full scale winery in the Town so that's nice. I know it's been a long time coming especially with the wine trail. It's nice to extend it in to the Town. Any other questions from the Board?

Lilly: In your letter here you have it offers many benefits to the Town. Can you give us a couple of examples of that?

Schweitzer: The biggest thing I think I'm contributing is the fact that we have so much green infrastructure. Not only is this a new winery and the first coming to Town. I'm kind of setting a precedent for it. We have applied for the net zero grant. We are doing geothermal with or without it. Eventually with or without the grant we hope to do solar so I will be totally off grid. I won't even be taking power. I will be giving power back. The only thing I'm consuming is water. I think that precedence on top of the green sustainable way I would be making the wine is going to be really something to look forward to and show other people around other areas this is something that can be done and done right.

Conrad: Has there been anything in the newspapers as far as your operation or anything?

Schweitzer: No I've stayed pretty quiet.

Conrad: Do you plan on making more of a splash about it?

Schweitzer: Yes, I'm officially with the Chamber. I've been talking to them regularly. As of next month I will be on the vote board for the wine trail itself. I had to wait for my alcohol licensing to come through. It's just one of those things that there is no sense of making more out of it than what it was. In fact I had to put a gate at the top because I wasn't getting anything done. I would have 4-5 people coming down the road a day just talking to me, checking it out, wanting to see what was going on. Not that I minded that but I couldn't get anything done.

Waechter: Is it your intention as a boutique winery, a small winery or is it to expand?

Schweitzer: No, just stay small. 3,000 cases is what's average on the wine trail. Arrow Head, Freedom Run is bigger than that. They are probably 5,000-10,000 cases. I would be between the 3,000-5,000. I wouldn't see myself any bigger. That is the square footage we laid out in the building and really with some serious thought you could make the building bigger. That was never the intention. You would have to blow out the parking lot.

Parisi: Our Planning Board is a recommending Board. I'm sure you know this will eventually go to the Town Board and the Town Board at a certain point will have to make findings involving certain things that are in our code. One thing I don't think we've touched on very much is the character of the neighborhood, the effect of your winery on the adjoining properties and just how your plan fits in with the character of the neighborhood and the area that it's going to be located in and the existing structures and adjacent property owners.

Schweitzer: Everything that you just mentioned was thought about. In fact even the barn is a red barn we built for the building itself in going with the character of the area. It's not some huge stone building or something like that. Being we're using grapes and stuff like that fits right in to Lewiston. It's on the seal. I think the theme fits great with the area. I'm pretty good right now familiarizing myself with other people in the area. There are a lot of growers of grapes like the Nicholas down the road from me. They have given me a lot of suggestions and stuff like that, that I have gone with too.

Parisi: How far will this be from the neighbors? Forgive me because I don't know the exact location. Is it residential neighbors you have or more commercial farm type neighbors?

Schweitzer: It's rural residential as far as the area itself. It's all pretty much farm. The front of my property is 1,000 feet wide and the building is generally in the middle of that property. The only occupied house is actually at the top of the escarpment. On the east side of the property so you're talking 100 foot drop, trees in-between and 600'ish to the building and the parking lot on the other side of it. We took a lot of thought and care. Craig is my neighbor up there. He has helped me out a lot. I try to be in-kind to the things I have done to him and the way it is going to affect him.

Parisi: Just quickly and I think I know the answers to what I'm going to say but it's important we put this on the record so that when the Town Board makes findings there is a record to back up the findings. Traffic impact, that you anticipate the nature of the road that you're on and the impact of increased traffic and the safety of that neighborhood.

Schweitzer: The DOT went over this with me and they felt that it wasn't going to increase the traffic considering I was already on the wine trail and the state of traffic that's there that I would just be filtering from it and then it going right back to it. They didn't expect any significant increase to it and that's why a full blown study was never done because the preliminary one that was done added nothing to it.

Parisi: Do the neighbors know about your plan?

Schweitzer: Absolutely.

Parisi: What have they expressed?

Schweitzer: They are fine with it. Craig cuts my grass. He's been very happy with how things have progressed. We've taken great care even the way we are coming up the driveway I've talked to him about adding bushes and trees and things to block and the way that we've angled the switchback coming up brings it not in to the windows of his house and stuff like that for the road itself.

Parisi: That's all been incorporated in to that current site plan?

Schweitzer: It's already been done. All those little things that have been thought about and asked about were done previous to where we are at now. This has been an almost 5 year project. As scary as that is for me, it has really allowed us to get to a lot of little details. Andy can attest to that. He was actually just walking it before we got here. It's a lot of the little things that are going to set me apart including the neighborhood.

Parisi: Just so you know the Planning Board makes their recommendation whatever that might be and then it will go to the Town Board for a public hearing and ultimately the decision on your site plan and special use permit.

Taczak: I see Pat is here the Fire Inspector. Is everything....

Martin: We were able to sit down with the developer several months back and we had some initial concerns but the plans are going to be for a fully sprinklered building, not only the tasting area but the processing area.

Taczak: Tim mentioned you had a fire hydrant moved?

Martin: There was some problems with the cars and the latest plan I had showed it move over more towards the roadway as it's going in to the parking area which is fine for us. The other area was a little congested with bushes and trees.

Taczak: You don't have issue with turning? Obviously its accommodating busses it's going to accommodate a truck.

Martin: I think we've been able to work out all our difficulties.

Conrad: Does your engineer want to add anything to this? He's been standing here all this time.

Andrew Johnson: I would just add that we used all the green infrastructure techniques even though we weren't under the DEC regulations. We did it anyways because we can show low impact design can be done cheaper and better. For example eliminating the need for curbs and extra piping and use sheet flow to filter strips. All those little things add up to cost savings. I

think it looks better. If you are on a property that is 57 acres in size and you have this little small facility, use the green space around you to your advantage. I'm excited for him. I think it's a great project and I was happy to be a part of it.

Parisi: Your 3,000-5,000 cases, is that anticipated based on the current number of plantings you have or are you going to expand that?

Schweitzer: My vineyard currently is only 650 cases. Even if I were to plant the whole 57 acres you still wouldn't be at 5,000 cases probably. As long as a certain percentage comes from the vineyard itself you are covered under New York State small winery. You just have to maintain that.

Parisi: Ultimately your plan would be to plant the whole 57 acres or as much as you could at some point?

Schweitzer: As soon as I stop rubbing 2 pennies together.

Johnson: I would like to mention too that we were mindful of the code with all my projects. The first thing I do is talk to the Code Enforcement Officer. I even made a note at the beginning of the 32 items on the site plan check list and then we made sure we worked through all of those, talk it out, work it out on the drawings with Michael and that was our approach to it.

Taczak: It sounds like you guys have dotted your I's and crossed your t's.

Johnson: As an engineer I always make sure I do that.

Lilly: Tim, the parking was a question? We're not sure what this category goes in to but I think we feel comfortable that the parking is fine?

Johnson: I can elaborate a little on that to if you want just so you know some of our assumptions behind it. You're right we did check the code on that and because of his unique situation we don't really fall in any one of your specific categories but the closest one that we do fall in is the restaurant, bar and banquet hall which calls for one space for every 3 seats, 1 space for every 150 square feet of customer area and plus 1 for each employee. He doesn't have any seats right Michael because that's part of the regulation.....

Schweitzer: It's a stipulation for New York State small wineries. You can't have seats because you're not a bar and you're not a restaurant. You can have it for private events but you can't actually have it with the exception of 1 set aside for handicap accessible.

Johnson: We used the other 2 criteria to that which is 1 space for every 150 square feet for customer area which is the wine tasting area. That was 2,500 square feet divided by 150 is 16.6

seats so round up to 17 seats and then he said earlier he may have up to 5 employees, 22 and so we ended up doing 29 spaces total and then I linked it to the ADA standards of from 1-24 spots you need 1 handicap, 25-75 you need 2. We have 29 spaces plus the 2 handicaps.

Schweitzer: There is over flow parking too.

Johnson: There is 32 overflow spots of stable grass, lawn area that is existing now that could be easily marked off by your staff if you did have a big event. It wouldn't be like people parking on the road or in a dangerous spot. We have plenty lawn and plenty of room around him to do that.

Lilly: You mentioned that you were going to put black top up top to ease the inflow and exiting. Is that something we can make sure is part of the plan? I think it's pretty important. If you've ever been on stone trying to get out.

Schweitzer: That as well as the handicap spots will have to be hard surfaces. That's something that's already in the plans. The road diagram.

Lilly: I think having that entrance black topped and well-lit would be....other than that once you get down below it everything is perfect.

Schweitzer: I can't get my bond back from DOT until that's done. That was one of the stipulations because we had to cut in to the road a little bit when we extended the culvert. There is a 36" culvert under Ridge Road that continues under my road. That was 1 of 2 parts of the stipulations for the bond that I put up with DOT.

Casale: What is the occupancy you could have in your tasting area? How many patrons could be there at 1 time?

Schweitzer: It depends if you're talking from a square footage standpoint or if you're talking from astandpoint. Being sprinklered I will be able to go over 100 right? But that doesn't mean I'm going to be. It's just 1 of the things we did because we really didn't know what classification I was in. Square footage wise I don't even know to be honest with you what that would be because again I'm not a restaurant, I don't have tables. Are you just going off of standing then?

Casale: I'm just I guess trying to back in to the parking. If you could have 150 people there for a quick event and you have 60 spots. Then you could potentially have an issue.

Schweitzer: The field that the overflow parking is in actually extends quite a bit further. My vineyard row, the front block is 260' long and the parking that he has for overflow actually stops at the front of where it would be to the right. You could add even more, I think the

parking lot is 120' long, so you could go 120' long by 250' of additional parking on top of what he did. That is all flat field right now.

Conrad: How does that impact your handicap accessibility? You said the range was over 25-75 requires 2 handicaps. The additional parking won't bring you over that limit right?

Johnson: 32 plus 29, we're still under.

Schweitzer: Again, it would be for special events. I would know how many people were coming even through tickets or advance notice. I would just mark off another spot or leave a couple extra spots for that. If you need that on paper I certainly could.

Conrad: Is there a recommendation from the Board?

A motion to recommend approval of the Site Plan as presented was made by Lilly,

Conrad: Do you want to make any conditions?

Parisi: The one thing I will say is this is technically site plan and a special use permit. You could do the approval all as one but just make sure specifies it is for both site plan and the special use permit.

Conrad: Let's do them separately for clarity.

Motion seconded by Casale and carried with the following conditions: that there is lighting down the driveway and black top on the apron of Ridge Road and the area on Ridge Road is clear of brush for sight lines.

A motion to approve the special use permit was made by Lilly, seconded by Taczak, and carried based on meeting all the requirements for the town, legal and engineering departments to include lighting down the driveway and black top on the apron of Ridge Road and the area on Ridge Road to be clear of brush for sight lines.

The next meeting will be October 18, 2018, at 6:30 P.M.

A motion to approve the minutes of July 2018 was made by Taczak, seconded by Waechter and carried.

A motion to adjourn was made by Taczak, seconded by Lilly and carried.

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Respectfully submitted,

Sandra L. VanUden
Planning Board Secretary

William Conrad
Planning Board Chairman