

Minutes of AARC June 12, 2019 Meeting

Present

Lori Garkovich, Lindy Huber, Skip Phillips, John Wilhoit, and Pattie Wilson, Planning Director

Others present

Laura Stouffer

Election of Officers 2019-2020

Chair	Skip Phillips
Vice Chair	Lindy Huber
Secretary	Lori Garkovich

Approval of June 13, 2018 Minutes – Motion by John Wilhoit, second by Lindy Huber with all approving.

Review of Application 06-001-2019

Laura and James Stouffer - 1470 Clifton Road (Firegate 69) – A-1 District – Article VII, Section 701.4(l) & 701.8 (A&B). Applicant is seeking a review and recommendation for an agricultural enterprise for Agri-tourism under Tourist Destination for event venues such as: weddings and reception, conferences, educational seminars and farm-to-table events. Educational tours and seminars will be offered in the future.

Site Visit Evaluation

On Thursday, June 6, 2019, all members of the AARC and Pattie Wilson visited the applicant's farm, Heartland, located at 1470 Clifton Rd, Firegate 69.

The property was recently approved by the State Historic Office to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In the application, the farm was defined as "Woodland Pasture" consisting of farmland with a variety of large trees in a mostly unaltered condition, that is, much of the property was never cleared for agricultural use. The application to the National Register of Historic Places states:

The farmhouse and remaining domestic outbuildings are situated within a pastoral Inner Bluegrass woodland pasture landscape....it is among the few intact landscapes that remain in this area of Woodford County, and in fact, what was once a common site is now a rarity in Central Kentucky as a whole....The woodland pasture landscape that surrounds the house has been maintained, which helps continue the property's association with a central Kentucky agricultural landscape.

The entrance to the property is original and designed for a carriage, so while cars and pick-up trucks can enter slowly, it is not appropriate for delivery trucks or even farm equipment to enter. The owners state that to get farm wagons and haying equipment onto the farm they rely on access through an adjacent property. Recognizing that the

current entrance is not sufficient for farm activities nor event participants, the owners have already met with the Kentucky Department of Transportation and received conditional approval for a new entrance to the farm at the eastern edge of the property.

This location for the new entrance has excellent sight lines and provides safer access for event participants and farm equipment. Moreover, there are no residential units across from the proposed entrance, so the headlights of vehicles leaving the farm at night will not disturb any neighbors. The applicants only have to pay the required fee to finalize the official process for the new access. This action will address shared concerns of AARC members at the beginning of the site visit.

Across Clifton Rd to the south is a cattle pasture; on the east side is a hay pasture; and the northside has an adjacent horse pasture. In reality, this horse pasture is a significant distance from the planned event area - beyond the northern Heartland property line and then across a creek. Indeed, standing at the edge of the proposed parking area, you can barely see the roof of the Heartland barn beyond which is the property line and then the creek. The parking area for event participants is approximately 400 ft from a cattle field on the west side of the property, but this pasture is used only periodically. Moreover, the applicant intends to plant a new row of pollinating trees and bushes along this western fence row to further shield any view and to continue to enhance the value of the farm as a pollination corridor.

Once at the farm, there is a sense of isolation and neighboring residences are not visible because of the woods that border the farm and are scattered throughout the interior of farm near the house. This is the area where event activities will be hosted. All of the AARC members, upon initial review of the application were concerned with the distance to the neighboring properties, but the visit dismissed these concerns. Although the Heartland home place is between 1200 and 1499 ft from the nearest residence, the physical distance to this neighbor is deceptive because the woodlands surrounding the farm house create a high level of isolation.

The business plan includes the planting of small lots of seasonal ornamental flowers and greenery that may be purchased for on site events with excess sold at the Farmer's Market. Clients will also be directed to Woodford County producers and businesses (e.g., wineries, distillers, caterers, lodging including B&Bs) to complete the preparation for their event.

The site plan includes rebuilding the carriage house ruins and the corn crib as well as building a new event structure. A central new structure is proposed for the reception hall in the scale and character of the reconstructed carriage house. Breezeways will connect these structures.

Since the farm owners currently are applying for approval to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places, the plans for any reconstruction or new construction must meet the requirements of and be approved by this office to assure that structures "fit" with and do not detract from the historic property. This means that the submitted site

plan may be modified due to requirements from the State Historic Preservation Office and/or the National Register of Historic Places.

Because event participants will be parking in an area separated by the woodland pasture, the applicants have included a parking attendant hired by the clients to assure that event participants park in designated areas. Moreover, the applicant will post “no trespassing” signs to mark their boundaries, and clients will receive a property map to share with attendees to clearly define accessible spaces.

Amplified music will be permitted at events but must be concluded by 10 PM. Since the applicant’s family lives in the Heartland farm house and they have young children, they have a strong interest in managing noise and intrusive lighting from events occurring at the farm. It was the conclusion of AARC at the end of the site visit that the woodlands will provide a strong buffer for neighboring property owners from any disturbance due to events at the farm.

Presentation by Applicant Laura Stouffer

The business plan is to do 15 events during prime wedding season and other types of events during off-season plus 4 educational programs in partnership with partners (e.g., NRCS, Woodford County Extension office, State Historic Register Office) a year for a total of no more than 30 events a year. However, since some of these will be focused on the natural pollinators and other agricultural characteristics of this farm, it is the opinion of the AARC, that these educational events/tours are agriculturally oriented and therefore should not be considered in the total count of proposed commercial events.

They have received conditional approval from KYDOT for a new more accessible entrance to the farm and simply must pay the application fee to complete the approval process.

Heartland already is a “by right” Tourist Destination, but this ordinance prohibits construction of a new structure. While the applicant could renovate an old barn that sits at the very back of the property, this would require extensive changes to the property to have access for visitors. The decision to move forward with designation on both the Kentucky and National Registers of historic places has led to the decision to seek conditional approval for a commercial activity on the farm.

There will be signage at the entrance as permitted by KYDOT and then directional signage within the farm. Applicant was advised to also explore the opportunity to have a state historic property sign to be placed on the road prior to the actual entrance.

The contract to be used with clients indicates that an event can be one day or from Friday through Sunday. In addition, clients can rent just the grounds or the grounds plus access to the first floor and the cellar of the historic home for use by the wedding party and their families.

General impressions of the AARC of the site and the proposal include:

Approval will provide a significant source of revenue that will enable the owners of Heartland to sustain the farm as an example of an inner Bluegrass woodland pasture landscape.

When Heartland is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it will contribute to the growing cultural tourism resources of Woodford County. Approval will support the owners' ability to create an educational site for visitors as well as residents.

The development plan for Heartland will reintroduce native grasses and wildflowers as well as planting pollinator trees and bushes to create a pollinator corridor. This will enable the owners to partner with local and state organizations to provide ecosystem educational seminars and tours.

With a new entrance already conditionally approved by the KDOT, event participants as well as farm vehicles and equipment will have a safe and easy access to the farm from a location that does not impinge on the privacy of neighbors.

Lighting for the parking area will be low downward facing lights and the path from the parking area to the main house where the event activities will occur goes through the woodland pasture which has a naturally occurring arbor from which twinkle lights will be hung.

Motion made by John Wilhoit with 2nd by Lindy Huber to recommend to the Board of Adjustments approval of the application with the following conditions:

- The new entrance as reviewed and conditionally approved by KYDOT
- The number of commercial events to be no more than 30 per year.
- The applicant will follow the site plan as modified by approval from the National Register of Historic Homes.
- The applicant will adhere to the other conditions established by the Tourism Destination ordinance.

Motion was approved by all.

General Discussion

The proposal for this particular property forces the AARC to acknowledge that the decision tree must be matched to the site visit. This is because the raw numbers don't

take into account the characteristics of the property that mitigate some of the absolute numbers.

As a result, it was agreed to modify the decision tree by including a final section that allows the members of the AARC to modify the score based on the physical characteristics of the actual site. This addition to the decision tree would be phrased as follows:

- **Initial AARC member score for the decision tree:**
- **Final AARC member score for the decision tree as modified by observations from the site visit:**
- **Reasons for the modified score:**