Frendly Gathering Public Hearing Minutes

2/25/2025

The hearing began at approximately 6:30 PM.

Members of the ZBA present at the Meeting House: Vance Bell, Bill Dunkel, Cathy Fales, Tom Johnson.

ZBA members attending online: Chris Cummings, John Finley

Representatives of the Frendly Gathering at the Meeting House: Eddie Furci, Jack Mitrani.

Bill explained that the purpose of the hearing was to hear a request for a Conditional Use Permit for the Frendly Gathering’s public concert from 4PM July 17 to noon July 20.

Vance Bell and John Finley stated that they could render an objective decision on this matter even though they reside in Timber Ridge close to the site of the concert.

Bill outlined the format of the hearing and then explained that in considering this request the ZBA must take into account the following bylaws in the Town of Windham Zoning Regulations:

1. Sec. 201.1 which says that entertainment facilities are a conditional use.
2. Sec. 206 #3 and #11 and especially item 2 on page 22 which says “All conditional uses shall comply with the Performance Standards in Section 209 of these Regulations.”
3. Sec. 209, #1 which says “No emission of noise in excess of 39 decibels (dBA Lmax) from the hours of 9:00PM to 6:00 AM”.

Bill reported that during a January 16th conference call Bob Fisher, town attorney, affirmed that if the ZBA grants a conditional use permit which allows noise greater than 39 DB beyond 9:00 PM, the Selectboard must issue an interim zoning bylaw.

Next, Mr. Furci and Mr. Mitrani explained the purpose of the Frendly Gathering and how it will be organized. Mr. Mitrani said that the organizers want to bring the festival back to Timber Ridge where it began and thrived between 2011 and 2016, and that they want it to be a family friendly event.

They provided the following information (some of it in response to questions from members of the ZBA) about the organization of the festival:

* It will begin at 4PM on Thursday July 17 and the last performance will conclude at midnight on Saturday July 20. The grounds will be closed by noon on Sunday, July 21.
* A maximum of 2500 tickets will be sold.
* Tickets will be sold at Magic Mountain and most cars will be parked there with shuttle service provided to Timber Ridge.
* Some cars will be parked at a campsite on Harrington Rd. No parking will be allowed on Rt. 121 or any roads in Timber Ridge.
* Between 10 and 12 security personnel from Green Mountain Security will be on duty around the clock during the festival.
* No alcohol will be sold at the festival. Ticket holders may bring their own beverages and legal drugs (marijuana).
* Firearms are prohibited.
* Security personnel will do random backpack checks and identification checks.
* 200 Frendly Gathering volunteers will assist in monitoring the festival and will alert Security if help is needed to enforce rules and behavioral standards.
* There will be a private ambulance on site all weekend.
* Organizers have been in touch with the Londonderry Rescue Squad, Windham Fire Department and county sheriff’s office to make them aware of the festival.
* Free camping will be available on the Timber Ridge ski trails, but no campfires are permitted.
* Paid camping will be available on private property on Harrington Rd.
* Trash will be handled sustainably and recyclable items separated.
* They will add no new permanent structures or disturb the ground or soil, or encroach on any wetland, vernal pool or stream.
* All food vendors will be inspected by the VT Dept. of Public Health.

After members of the ZBA had asked questions and made comments, members of the public were invited to speak. Gina Bassi, who owns property adjacent to the concert site, said that part of the stage may be on their land. While she and her husband do not oppose the festival, they need assurance that their property will not be damaged and they will not be held liable for any problems that may occur. Mr. Mitrani stated that he did not think the stage would be placed on their property, but he was very willing to work with them and provide the necessary assurances they need.

Emily and Kyle Goyette initially said they were 100% opposed to the festival because they had very negative experiences the last time it occurred at Timber Ridge, particularly with attendees who were high on alcohol and drugs. Mr. Mitrani acknowledged these were very valid concerns and that the organizers were taking numerous steps to prevent this from happening again, including increased security and random bag checks. He also said that the bands which will perform and the kind of music they will play will be different from past concerts. He offered to build fencing around the Goyette’s property to prevent people from trespassing. These steps, and the open attitude of the organizers, seemed to somewhat assuage the Goyettes’ concerns, but further conversations between them and festival organizers may be necessary.

Several other residents of Timber Ridge, including Maureen Bell and Becky Phillips said they had positive experiences at previous Frendly Gatherings. Maureen agreed that things got somewhat out of hand at the last festival. Both women said they were in support of the festival returning this summer.

Tim Waker, who owns the former Timber Ridge Ski Area suggested that if security personnel were stationed at three key access points, auto and foot traffic to the concert site could be fully controlled.

After all members of the public had an opportunity to ask questions and make comments, the ZBA went into deliberative session at approximately 8:00PM.

Respectfully Submitted.

Bill Dunkel