**APPLICATION OF**

**THE MATHER HOMESTEAD FOUNDATION, INC.**

**19 STEPHEN MATHER ROAD, DARIEN, CT**

**March \_\_\_, 2022**

**AMMENDMENT TO SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION NARRATIVE**

The Applicant, The Mather Homestead Foundation, Inc. (“The Homestead”), is seeking an amendment to its special permit.

In January 2022, an additional 1.14 +/- acres was gifted to The Homestead, increasing its property size to 7.16 +/- acres. In conjunction with the increased size of its property, The Homestead seeks a modification to the maximum event occurrences and participation limits contained in its existing special permit.

**BACKGROUND**

In January 2017, the Planning and Zoning Commission designated The Homestead property as a Protected Town Landmark/Special Permit (#9) and approved with conditions related to the types of visits and events to be conducted at the property.

In July 2019, a site plan application (#306) and special permit land filling and regrading application (#459) to raise the existing barn on the property and construct an enhanced replacement barn to be utilized for educational and enjoyment purposes, create a new parking area and widening of driveway and associated site plan improvements were approved by the Commission.

The special permit’s conditions were updated in combination with the improvements of The Homestead’s property. The limitations are set forth in Condition B of the July 2019 Adopted Resolution, which reads as follows:

USAGE AND EVENTS

1. The Commission hereby amends the permitted number of visits and frequency of use of the Mather Homestead as follows:
   1. There shall be a maximum of 150 people/visitors on the premises at any one time (previously 70 people/visitors).
   2. There shall be a maximum of five *large* events annually, up to 150 people/visitors visiting at once. (previously 70 people/visitors)
   3. There shall be a maximum of ten *mid-size* events annually between 30 and 70 people/visitors attending at once (previously between 15 and 30 people/visitors).
   4. Open to the public by appointment during daylight hours and involving not more than four workers on site to accommodate the small groups of visitors, not to exceed 30 at any time. (previously 15 people/visitors)
2. In January of every year, a schedule of large events (events of between 70-150 people/visitors) and other anticipated mid-size events (events of between 30 and 70 people/visitors) shall be given to the Planning & Zoning Department.
3. A Parking Plan shall be prepared by the applicant and shall be submitted to the Planning & Zoning Department for each large event, prior to the event.
4. The applicant is hereby required to re-apply to the Commission for an amendment of this approval for any one of the following:

* a desire for formal public hours of operation.
* large special events of more than 150 people; or
* modifications to the site such as ranges to the parking area or driveway, or new or expanded buildings·
* changes to the look of the exterior of any of the buildings.
* different and/or more intense use of the property in general.

The goal of The Homestead is to fulfill its mission of education and enjoyment of the property. Since its inception in 2017, The Homestead has conducted numerous events in accordance with special permit provisions and schedules submitted to the Planning & Zoning Department at the beginning of each calendar year. The 2021 and 2022 schedule of events have been included as attachments to this document. The construction of the new barn, the Elizabeth W. Chilton Center, has driven increased popularity and demand for use of the property.

As revealed during Darien’s Heritage Day Celebration in October 2021 (approved by the Commission with special permission), over 300 visitors arriving in approximately 150 vehicles were able to safely access the property. Parking was well organized on the lawn and field (called the “East Parcel” on the plot plan) running property’s east side without negatively impacting area roads and neighbors.

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO ADOPTED RESOLUTION:**

The Homestead requests that the Commission modifies Conditions B & D of the Special Permit as follows:

1. Increase the maximum number of visitors permitted on the site from 150 to 250.
2. For the five permitted ***large events***, increase the maximum participation limit from 150 to 250 visitors at any given time. (Note: These large events would typically be outdoor events occurring during the months of May through October.)
3. For ***mid-size events***, increase the number of annual occurrences from ten to fifteen and increase the maximum participation limit in these events from 70 to 130 visitors. 130 is maximum allowed in the barn due to fire code.
4. For ***small events***, permitted to occur on an unlimited basis throughout the year, increase the maximum participation limit from 30 to 60 visitors. This figure is typical of the number of visitors that would arrive on a school fieldtrip with two busses.
5. Add a condition to require all outdoor events with amplified music/sound to end by 10 PM.
6. Amend Condition D: Remove the requirement for a submitted parking plan for each large event. Add the condition that parking for all large events shall require parking attendants/monitors and be located on the lawn and newly gifted field north of the cottage and the Brookside Road driveway entrance.

Since 2017, The Homestead has proven its ability to properly manage its scheduled events in and their associated traffic and parking, thereby minimizing any impacts to the neighborhood. The property’s additional 1.1 acres of land will further ensure all parking will be contained on premises.

The Homestead respectfully requests that the Commission approves the proposed amendments to the special permit.

Attachments:

1. Site map/Plot plan
2. July 2019 P&Z Adopted Resolution
3. 2021 Schedule of events
4. 2022 Schedule of events