



TO: Town of Cottage Plan Commission

FROM: Mark Roffers, Town Planner

DATE: March 19, 2025

RE: Amended Conditional Use Permit and Design Review, Warm Belly Farm

Warm Belly has prepared a revised conditional use permit and design review application adjusting its approved plans from 2024. The changes adjust proposed traffic circulation, suggest a grassed overflow parking area on about 5 acres of leased land to the south (just east of the 2024-approved pick-your-own/corn maze), indicate relocation of a 2024-approved fabric building, and adjust exterior lighting.

Unresolved Questions

Last week, I reviewed the submitted plans and the Town Clerk/Treasurer shared the first seven of the following questions with Warm Belly's representative at Snyder. I just added the final two questions.

1. Last year, there was a somewhat elaborate plan to install lights around the perimeter of the site. The new plan now seems to suggest just three new lights near the new building in the back. Are these three lights now the full extent of new lighting that is proposed?
2. Provide a catalog page for the selected lights, which should be "dark sky" compliant.
3. The plans cut back designated parking spaces in the rear (west) gravel parking lot but keep the gravel area at its far west end (labeled "existing gravel area to remain" on 2/20/25 General Site Plan map included with the application materials). What is the new function of that gravel area, if not parking?
4. Indicate how turf grass will be established in the overflow parking area, or maybe more appropriately how long it will take to get established, before cars will be allowed to park there? Seems like it may take a couple years of growth to handle cars.
5. How will the edges of that overflow parking area be marked so that customers know not to drive beyond it to find parking? Indicate on plan.

6. There is some suggestion of one-way-in and one-way-out travel lanes to that overflow parking area. What improvements will be made to mark this area? Why not instead just have a single two-way entrance lined up with the proposed driveway in the overflow parking area?
7. Verify that the “2-acre farm animal and playground area”, proposed on the 2024 plans near the west end of the site, is no longer part of Warm Belly’s plans, or if it still is, label on updated site plan.
8. To the extent the Town is not already aware, what improvements (if any) have already been made as a result of the 2024 approvals, what are still left to complete, and what may have been abandoned from those 2024 plans?
9. The submitted application suggests that there could be 20 employees at peak season. I am having trouble reconciling this relatively modest total with a proposal that includes 960 parking spaces (i.e., at least 960 customers if all full). Please explain or reconcile.

I suggest that all of the above questions be discussed at the Plan Commission meeting. (Unfortunately, I am unable to attend.)

Parking and Traffic

The revised plans now suggest about 340 parking spaces without the proposed 5-acre overflow parking area in use, and about 960 total parking spaces when the proposed overflow parking area is in use. This is up from about 450 total parking spaces in the 2024 plans.

This revised parking count could correlate with significant traffic volumes on Vilas Hope Road and its intersections with nearby highways like CTH BB just to the north. The application includes an “event plan”, and indicates that “a finalized, modified version of this plan to be filed with the local authorities at time of approval and prior to opening to the public”. The expected timing for submittal of a modified event plan should be made clearer. I also advise that such modified event plan include more information on expected off-site traffic movement, including potential support from traffic control personnel during larger events, and the suitability of Vilas Hope Road and nearby intersections to accommodate traffic safely and efficiently during larger events with or without such support.

The anticipated/maximum frequency of larger events, or maybe in other words events requiring use of the overflow parking area, should also be more clearly understood. The following text in the applicant’s materials suggest that larger events or the need to use overflow parking could be fairly frequent (but this could be a misunderstanding):

The temporary grass parking would be utilized a maximum of six months a year. Typically, the temporary grass parking will be utilized Fridays from 4pm to 8pm, Saturdays 10am to 8pm and Sunday 10am to 6pm between September 1st through October 31st.

If such large events are infrequent (e.g., a few times per year), then I would advise a conditional use permit condition to cap large events requiring the overflow parking area at X events or Y days per year, in addition to an enhanced traffic management component of the expected modified event plan. If, instead, there are frequent larger events, then a professional traffic impact analysis for this amended project may be warranted before further approvals are granted. Such an analysis would identify what if any off-site road and intersection improvements might be necessary to accommodate frequent event traffic.

Building Design

Given its location distant from public roads and residences, it is my opinion that the proposed hoop building (even with its relocation from 2024 plans) meets associated Town design review ordinance requirements. For the “proposed approved farm store building” much closer to Vilas Road, the applicant should supply proposed exterior building elevations before that building is anticipated to be built, indicating proposed exterior materials. Given its location much closer to Vilas Road and existing residences, it should have a much more finished design than the hoop building per Section 12.08(4)(b) of the design review ordinance. I understand that its construction may be a ways out.

Landscaping

The Town design review ordinance requires submittal of a landscape plan. It was agreed in 2024 that recent and pending landscape improvements near Vilas Hope Road would be sufficient to meet the landscaping requirement. Warm Belly representatives told me that such landscaping has been installed, but I was not able to independently verify this.

Exterior Lighting

The exterior lighting proposal remains unclear to me. The application suggests proposed lighting would be as approved in 2024, except around the hoop building area. The application also indicates that “all proposed lighting of rear field/parking area will be limited to harvest times of year, with access minimized during the winter months; all is outlined on proposed Event Plan.” The submitted event plan does not cover lighting. All lighting must comply with Section 12.08(4)(d) of the Town design review ordinance, which sets standards to promote dark night skies and minimize neighbor impacts. Dark sky standards were reinforced with Town Comprehensive Plan amendments adopted this January. The General Site Plan map shows, in its lower right corner, a “proposed flood light” detail that is not compliant with dark sky standards. In general, I recommend a much clearer and consistent understanding of all additional exterior lighting that is proposed but not yet installed, and verification that all such lighting will meet Town standards.