

January 27, 2025

Albemarle County
Community Development
401 McIntire Rd., North Wing
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Request on behalf of Nina Promisel and David Atwell, owners of Terrarium LLC and Greenwood Grocery, for Special Exception to Section 18-5.1.45(a)(4) [*Building size*. An historic country store building shall not exceed the gross floor area of the building as it existed on November 12, 2008 or 4,000 square feet gross floor area, whichever is greater"] in order to expand the country store use of the **Grocery** at Albemarle County **TMP 71-4A1** into the existing **House** on the adjacent **TMP 71-4B**, located at **6701 and 6695 Rockfish Gap Turnpike** respectively.

The **Grocery** began as a picnic table covered in produce in front of the **House** in 1951, when William and Vernelle Morris began their business. They were old school entrepreneurs, and grew their business as they could, selling a range of groceries, making pies, sandwiches, and expanding into gardening items, plants, homemade cast concrete sculptures, and more. They constructed a “hut” on the adjacent **Grocery** lot by 1957, and continued to grow their name and business out of that structure. Over time, the hut grew into a stand, which grew into a store, and less and less business was conducted out of the **House**, but it remained a necessary and utilized space.

We purchased both properties from the Morrises in September of 1999. The **Grocery** suffered a catastrophic fire started from faulty wiring in October of the same year. In order to rebuild and continue our livelihood, we began a lengthy process to demonstrate to the county officials’ and board of representatives’ satisfaction that the business had existed and had been operated out of both structures for nearly 50 years at that point, and to demonstrate that we could comply with ordinances and regulations for operating a Country Store in a Rural Area. We gathered testimony and evidence, including written documents from the

Morris's themselves, and were allowed by county administrators to continue the country store use and rebuild the burnt store.

We operated the business solely out of the **House** while we secured funding and during the reconstruction process, with outside displays and parking extending onto the **Grocery** property. Once the **Grocery** building was completed and we received our Certificate of Occupancy, the majority of the business migrated to the new building, but we have continued to use the **House** structure and property for display, storage, and office space.

We would like to use the **House** more fully in conjunction with the business, and feel that its potential use as a residence does not benefit the business or community as much as its potential as a gathering space where we can offer a place to sit and enjoy the value added goods that we make and sell in the **Grocery**, sourced as much as possible from local farmers and producers. This use of the Country Store space is authorized by section 5.1.45(a)(2)(a) [*“Accessory food sales. Accessory food sales, which may include, but are not limited to, luncheonettes, snack bars, refreshment stands and other restaurant uses. Interior seating for luncheonettes, snack bars, refreshment stands and other restaurant uses shall not exceed 20 percent of the total gross floor area of the country store use. An additional 20 percent of the total gross floor area of the country store use shall be allowed as exterior seating.”*]. The **House** would also be utilized as more retail space to display curated local goods, expand our gardening offerings, and create an outdoor seating area more protected from the road and more suited to community gathering than the **Grocery** parcel.

We intend, following the suggestion of county staff members, to execute a Boundary Line Adjustment in order to merge the two parcels and have both buildings sit on the same property. We also own the property adjacent to the east border of the **House**, **TMP 55-19A**, and would adjust this boundary line at the same time. This would have the added benefit of reducing the nonconformity of the **House**, which currently does not adhere to setback distances from property lines. We have contracted Ray Surveying to conduct boundary surveys and plan the BLA, but we will delay submission until approval by the Board of this Special Exception.

Our family has deep ties to this region, specifically the rural part of it, through generations of ancestors living and farming here and through the relationships we have fostered by living here and serving the community. We designed the **Grocery** building with traditional and regional aesthetics as first priority, and we have limited our outdoor displays over the years to those which felt appropriate for our community and locale. We intend for the House to reflect this care and attention to detail both aesthetically and in intention and spirit. We have built lasting relationships with our neighbors, dozens of small local farmers and producers, and dozens more Virginia wineries, breweries, and cideries. We have established our business reputation primarily through word of mouth based on our community support, careful attention and service for our clientele, and through our patronage of local small businesses over other options in every aspect of our store. We wish to not only continue doing so, but to work to expand our offerings and ability to showcase cottage industries in the area without expanding our footprint, whether physically, visually, or otherwise. We can proudly stand by Greenwood Grocery as being representative of our values and ethics regarding community and rural life, and we wish to be an example of the potential for non-invasive, region specific growth and reuse that aligns with the County's comprehensive plan.

Thank you for your careful consideration and service to the community.

