

Dear Gorham Planning Board,

My name is Matt Bowman, owner of White Mountain Cafe & Bookstore. We opened the cafe bookstore in 2007, and purchased the Main Street property in 2013. The property includes 3 business rentals and one two-bedroom apartment.

The proposed change of use for 197 Main Street (Tax Map U6 Lot 30) will directly affect our business. We saw a negative effect this summer with the opening of NE Rentals at 177 Main Street. This included very high levels of noise pollution (upwards 96 decibels), and increased congestion on Main Street creating hazardous driving conditions.

Main Street Congestion:

When OHRV customers depart for trails they cross traffic and park idling machines in the “no parking” lane while they wait for other riders to join. This creates visibility issues for customers attempting to enter and exit our business. Customers exiting onto Main Street are faced with restricted visibility (looking left), and customers entering are stopped as they wait for cars to exit.

We have always relied on take out business. Smooth traffic flow in and out of the parking lot. Our neighboring businesses require the same. Over the past year, due to Covid, take out business has been most vital.

Noise levels:

At a time when outdoor seating is most desired, high noise levels from these passing OHRV have made our outside patio seating worthless. Customers complain daily of OHRV noise. Machines passing as they leave and later return from trails (at 96 decibels - twice as loud as a motorcycle) is a constant during Cafe business hours, all summer season.

I have no issue with OHRV use. I do, however, have an issue with the location of an OHRV rental business operating in the center of downtown among local restaurants. I've said before, I love bicycling and enjoy bike racing, but I would NOT like to see the Tour De France pass through town every day all summer for 10 hours.

We attribute much of the Cafe's success to our property location: in the center of town, among other restaurants. Customers often refer to the Cafe as an “island among a sea of fast food.” Considering what we experienced last summer, I fear an OHRV rental business at 197 Main Street, located adjacent to our Cafe Bookstore, would negatively affect the future of our business, our renters, and our property value. I ask that the planning board please not rush the process. Please consider including an environmental impact analysis, and community facilities analysis.

Matt Bowman  
White Mountain Cafe & Bookstore