

FROM: Michael Pelchat and Diane Holmes, 75 Lancaster Rd Gorham NH.

February 22, 2021

TO: Gorham NH Planning Board

RE: Six Comments regarding the Proposed Expansion of Summer Fun OHRV Rental Business onto the former Burger King Property.

Dear Gorham Planning Board,

Per your request for public comments, we feel that the former Burger King site is a terrible location for expanding Summer Fun's Polaris OHRV rental operation. We request that the Planning Board please consider the following 6 points during its decision process.

1: If approved, it will be a life changing event to the detriment of the residents and all the adjacent businesses. The impacts of noise, summarized by a post on a Polaris RZR Forum indicates, stock exhaust at idle = 75 decibels, stock exhaust at wide-open-throttle = 95 decibels. For your consideration, many audio experts agree the 85 decibels for extended periods (over 30 minutes) can cause permanent hearing loss. Also, consider the impacts of unregulated exhaust fumes and the crazy antics of excited OHRV riders that create a Daytona 500 Speedway atmosphere for OHRVs on Gorham's Main Street. It is not the direction the Town of Gorham should be promoting, especially if the Planning Board has to 'bend' the zoning rules to interpret that this type of business expansion is permitted in Business Zoned A. Business Zone A is intended for quiet use businesses as evidenced by the prohibition of no more than six chickens or an animal kennel. Besides impacting the Main Street neighborhood with added noise, how much more added OHRV traffic will be going to and from our Lancaster Road neighborhood, which unfortunately for us, continues to contain a Gorham Select Board supported trailhead to the OHRV trail system.

2: Main Streets' heavy traffic is a real problem. Rental machines must cross through busy traffic to head north to the trailhead. Looking at Gorham Main Street's traffic counts back in 1999, the State of NH DOT counted an average of 9,189 vehicles per day in August. In 2013, DOT's vehicles per day count for the same period went up to 12,000. As a comparison DOT's traffic count for North Conway's Main Street for 2013 was also 12,000 vehicles per day. Gorham's Main Street is just as busy as North Conway's! People who live in Gorham already understand in summertime it is exceedingly difficult to find a gap in traffic to cross Main Street. Last year, at Summer Fun's 177 Main Street location, we saw the congested traffic problems with the number of rental machines coming and going out of that location. With many more rental machines coming and going from the former Burger King site, machines trying to cross traffic to head north on Route 16 is a potential disaster waiting to happen. Imagine you are renting an expensive hourly rate OHRV and are anxious to get out on the trail. After an extended period of waiting for a gap in traffic to line up, you might take the risk to

shoot across Main Street when the smallest traffic gap presents itself. How will a “guide” leading a pack of rental machines make that initial crossing any easier or safer for those following? Will all renters require a “guide” regardless of their rental history or experience? What happens when there are no “guides” available? Regardless, lots of powerful machines will be stacked up, revving engines, waiting to get across Main Street many times a day. What do you think the outdoor and indoor dining experience will be like for the long-established White Mountain Café immediately across the street as the renters rev their engines up to 6,000 rpms to take off and follow their leaders? Having lived with OHRV traffic on Lancaster Road for many years, one cannot carry on a normal conversation while OHRVs pass nearby at 30mph, never mind when they are throttling up or exceeding the 30mph speed limit. In Gorham, OHRVs exceeding posted speed limits is the norm and not the exception.

3: The Town of Gorham has a detailed Master Plan produced with input from Gorham citizens. This is the guiding document that zoning, planning and select boards should implement when considering if a business or activity is compatible with the wishes of its citizens, along with current zoning ordinances and state laws. The expansion of OHRVs onto the center of Gorham’s Main Street is not in keeping with this Town Master Plan. For over 150 years, Gorham has been a base for tourists who come to enjoy the mental and physical benefits of human powered recreational sports. They love to experience and explore the unique White Mountains in our area as they pursue their recreational goals, as many of Gorham’s citizens also love to do. Increasing the number of OHRVs and its associated noise through town diminishes the pleasures of walking Gorham’s beautiful Main Street, its neighborhoods, fouls our fresh air and has proven to chase away non-motorized recreationists.

4: According to Gorham’s Zoning Rules, automobile dealerships are not allowed in Business Zoned Area A. While Summer Fun is not selling their Polaris vehicles per se, patrons are renting them which is not that much different from a potential buyer examining and trying out an automobile at a car dealership. With the stated parking plan for machines and customers, the former Burger King property is already maxed out. You are just “kicking the can down the street” so to speak. There is already no onsite parking available for employees at the former Burger King site. The same congested parking problems encountered at their 177 Main St location are sure to occur at the proposed location if their business continues to grow, with renters taking over nearby parking along main street and possibly encroaching on other businesses or residential parking spots.

5: It was also stated in the Summer Fun proposed operating plan that no soap will be used to daily power wash their fleet of OHRV’s. At some point they may need soap, solvents, and disinfecting chemical. Will that untreated runoff go directly into the small abutting stream and

Androscoggin River along with the rinsed greasy mud? Remember when Wal-Mart wanted to build on the Glen Road between Promenade and Railroad streets? It was denied mainly due to traffic, noise, and visual concerns of area residents even with all its top notch proposed environmental and highway safeguards.

6: We also wish to advise the Town to be prepared to respond to the possibility of an influx of property tax abatement requests if this plan is approved due to the loud, noxious, and disrupting nature of increased OHRV traffic in residential areas. For example, a professional assessor determined our 75 Lancaster Road property has lost 12% of its value due to OHRV traffic going past our home. Residents and businesses impacted by an expanded OHRV rental hub on the Main Street area may also suffer similar property value loss, loss of business as well as the loss of a decent quality of life. Along with the rules already in place, the health and happiness of Gorham's residents should hold more weight in decisions like these over someone's profits. And it is us, the tax paying citizens that are picking up the bill for increased police staff and all the other costs associated with increasing OHRV usage through our Town.

In conclusion, our hope is that Town's elected planners and other leaders carefully consider all the associated problems this proposed business may inflict upon its residents and existing businesses. Unlike private OHRV owners who are coming off the trails to access Gorham's downtown businesses, rental machine riders are headed to and from the woods as quickly as they can. Wherever this rental business is based, renters most likely will continue to use their cars to patronize Gorham's restaurants and lodging facilities and not on their rented OHRVs. After 10 years of OHRV use in Gorham we should all realize by now that taking the easiest options to support this industries growth is not always in the best interest of the Town and its residents in the long run. Thank You for the opportunity to comment.