WOOLLEY ENGINEERING

July 3, 2026

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Jered Tate
Senior Planner
County of Albemarle, Virginia

From: Mr. Eric Woolley, PE
Woolley Engineering

Regarding: **The Barns – Garth Road, Albemarle, VA**
Special Exceptions Narrative

This memo supports our request for special exceptions to the County of Albemarle Code Chapter 18 for three (3) design elements proposed with the Special Use Permit submission for The Barns project. The two parcels of the combined project site total 10.46 acres. These parcels are located approximately 400' west of 2149 Garth Road in Albemarle County.

Exception for Existing Structures by County Code Chapter 18, Article II, Section 5.1.43(d)(1) – Preexisting Structures for Special Events

> *"1. Strucutures used for Special Events. Each structure used for a special event shall satisfy the following: (i) the structure shall have been in existence on the date of adoption of this section 5.1.43, provided that this requirement shall not apply to accessory structures less than 150 square feet in size;"*

The Barns project site is currently used as cattle pastures. The existing cattle will be relocated to a neighboring pasture. There are no existing structures located on the site. The Applicants intend to improve the properties by constructing a center for agricultural activities. The new barn structure will be constructed with a by-right use intended to allow participants to experience the agricultural products produced on the properties. Utilizing the new barn structure for special events will provide the Applicants an indoor space for special event use. These special events will align with Objective 5 of the Comprehensive Plan which states:

> *"Recognize and support crossroads communities, which serve as rural-scale community meeting places and provide opportunities for residents to take part in community life."*

The total conditioned space between the two proposed wings of the new structure is approximately 3,100 square feet. This aligns with Part 3, Objective 5, Action 5.1 of the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan which states:

> *"Small-scale uses should be similar in building height and footprint as existing non-residential buildings in the Rural Area, such as existing country stores and offices. Buildings should generally be 1 to 2 stories and have a building footprint of 5,000 square feet or smaller"*

With this narrative we are asking the County Administrator to allow the new structure to be utilized for special events on the property. There are no pre-existing structures on these parcels. We feel the proposed use of the new structure will align with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan to enhance community life and are of appropriate size to meet the County Comprehensive Plan objectives.

Exception for Parking Areas by County Code Chapter 18, Article II, Section 5.1.58. (h)(3) – Minimum Distance From Abutting Lots

> *"Parking areas, tents, and portable toilets. The minimum front, side, and rear yards for parking areas, tents, and portable toilets shall be 125 feet from any abutting lot not under the same ownership as the agricultural operation."*

The proposed parking for the Barns project consists of a main gravel surfaced parking lot close to the barn structure and two (2) overflow grass parking areas located close to Garth Road. Each of these locations do not meet the traditional minimum distance of 125' setback from an adjacent lot not owned by the same Ownership. According to Chapter 18, Article II, Section 5.1.58 (h)(4) a special exception can be applied for.

> *"4. Special exception.* Any minimum yard may be reduced by special exception upon consideration of the following: (i) there is no detriment to any abutting lot; (ii) there is no harm to the public health, safety, or welfare; and (iii) written consent to the proposed reduction has been provided by the owner of any lot abutting the proposed reduced setback."

The impacted adjacent property Owner does not feel this is a detriment to their parcels. The proposed parking will be heavy screened from the neighbors by new vegetative landscape. The overflow parking located near Garth Road will not be in use during typical operational hours and are intended to be utilized only for special events. We feel that the proposed parking does not produce any harm to the general public. Written consent by the neighboring lot has been acquired, and is attached to this memorandum.

With this narrative we are asking the County Administrator to allow the location of these parking lots to be within the minimum distance of 125' set forth in the County Code based on the allowance for an exception as stated in Chapter 18, Article II, Section 5.1.58 (h)(4).

Exception for Parking Lot Surfaces by County Code Chapter 18, Article II, Section 4.12.15 (a).– Non-paved Parking Lot Surface

> *"a. Surface materials. All parking areas consisting of four or more spaces shall be surfaced. The surface materials for parking areas and access aisles shall be subject to review and approval by the county engineer, based upon the intensity of usage and Virginia Department of Transportation pavement design guidelines and specifications. The county engineer may approve the use of*

alternative surfaces deemed equivalent in regard to strength, durability, sustainability and long term maintenance for the intensity of the use."

The driveway and main parking lot for the Barns project is proposed to be gravel rather than a paved surface. This was done with the intent to help preserve the natural landscape of the property. A paved surface diminishes the agricultural feel that the Applicants are attempting to maintain. Paving the parking lots de-emphasizes the intentional efforts the Applicants are putting in to creating a center for agriculture. Their vision for the property aligns with the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan. Objective 4 of this Plan states:

"Promote rural and historic landscapes that enhance visitors' experience and give historic sites as authentic a setting as possible."

With this narrative we are asking the County Administrator to allow the driveway and parking areas to be gravel surfaced instead of asphalt surfaced based on Objective 4 of the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan.

I hope that this narrative, in combination with the proposed neighbor consent letter have provided adequate information to grant the above listed special exceptions. Please do not hesitate to call with any questions or concerns. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Eric Woolley, PE

Attached: (1) Neighbor Consent Letter

Cc: Katharine Gilman, Applicant
Jessica Forsythe, Applicant

June 9, 2026

Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
County of Albemarle
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902

Re: Letter of Support — The Barns at Garth Road, Special Use Permit Application

Dear Members of the Board:

I write in enthusiastic support of Kate Gilman and Jessica Forsythe's application for a Special Use Permit for "The Barns," their proposed regenerative farm and community education center on Garth Road. As their closest neighboring property — Timbercreek Farm sits immediately west and south of The Barns parcel — I say, without reservation, that we are excited to see it come to life.

Kate and Jessica's vision is compelling. They propose to transform what is currently a cattle pasture into a thriving, ecologically diverse regenerative farm — one that enriches the soil, cultivates native plantings and pollinator habitat, and produces botanicals, culinary and medicinal herbs, cut flowers, native fruit, and honey for direct sale. Alongside the agricultural program, they plan to offer hands-on educational workshops and intimate community experiences rooted in the life of the land itself. Their design, developed with a team of accomplished landscape architects and engineers, is thoughtful, sensitive to the rural character of the corridor, and respectful of neighboring properties.

Preserving and activating farmland requires the kind of entrepreneurial vision Kate and Jessica bring to this project. Projects like The Barns demonstrate that working farmland can be both economically viable and genuinely enriching to the public, and the County should be eager to support landowners willing to make that commitment. It is, after all, economic viability of farmland that ensures its long-term preservation and the rural character of Albemarle.

I am well-positioned to evaluate the merits of this proposal. I operate Timbercreek Farm, a working thoroughbred breeding and training operation, where we have firsthand experience navigating the practical and regulatory dimensions of agricultural land use in Virginia. We have managed pasture restoration, integrated regenerative land management practices, and worked to balance active farm operations with community and environmental responsibility. My family has operated Timbercreek for 50 years. I understand what serious agricultural stewardship looks like, and what Kate and Jessica are proposing reflects exactly that.

The Barns will beautify this landscape, put the land to productive use, and offer meaningful access to the community — all while remaining well within the character of the surrounding rural area. Further we see the great care and sensitivity that Kate and Jess have brought to the design and presentation of their plan. We know that this will translate into the way they operate their agricultural business and the special events that they host. I strongly encourage the Board to approve this application.

Sincerely,



Zachary Miller
Owner, Timbercreek Farm
Charlottesville, Virginia