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October 28, 2024

**Via Overnight Delivery**

Chairwoman Anne Thurlow  
c/o William Mulholland, Zoning Official  
Zoning Commission  
Town of East Lyme  
108 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Niantic, CT 06357

Received

OCT 29 2024

Town of East Lyme  
Land Use

**FILE COPY**

Re: Application for Special Permit  
Niantic KOA Journey Campground  
271 West Main Street, Niantic, Connecticut  
Our File No. 8308.271621

Dear Chairwoman Thurlow:

I represent John and Sally Kelsey (the "Kelseys"), the operators of the Niantic KOA Journey Campground located at 271 West Main Street, Niantic, Connecticut. On behalf of my client, enclosed please find an Application for Special Permit requesting to modify their legal pre-existing non-conforming camping resort, pursuant to Section 12.1.1A of the Zoning Regulations, from seasonal to year-round operations. As there is no associated site work or other physical changes proposed to the campground associated with this Application, my client is also requesting a waiver of all Site Plan requirements. I would request that this Application be received at the Commission's next regular meeting and scheduled for the required public hearing.

In January of 1971, Mrs. Kelsey's father obtained approval from the East Lyme Planning Commission for the construction of a seasonal campground on the subject property consisting of 190 campsites along with various amenities. The campground has operated continuously for the last 53 years with the campground being closed between November 1<sup>st</sup> and March 31<sup>st</sup> annually. While permitted prior to current zoning regulations and is therefore considered legal pre-existing non-conforming, the subject property is today in a SU Zoning District which permits camping "resorts" as a special permit use.

Management of the campground shifted over the years between different family members, but the Kelseys ultimately purchased the campground in 2017 and took over operations. Since 2017, the Kelseys have addressed many deferred maintenance issues at the campground, invested significant resources into the repair, replacement and upgrade of campsites and amenities, and have overseen a recent revival of the campground's popularity. However, the campground's seasonal status has posed an obstacle for continued growth of the business and the lack of revenue during the winter months has

hampered efforts to reinvest in the property and make further improvements and upgrades.

Other existing camping resorts within East Lyme currently operate on a year-round basis. To remain competitive and provide convenient accommodations for their growing customer base, my clients wish to open the campground for an additional "winter season" between November 1<sup>st</sup> and March 31<sup>st</sup> annually. Campers will not be able to stay in place at a specific campsite through both the summer and winter seasons and must vacate their campsites at the end of each season. While my clients expect the number of interested winter campers to be minimal initially, they hope to grow interest in the winter season with additional repairs and upgrades to the existing campground facilities.

Considering there is no proposed site work or other physical changes to the subject property, the campground will certainly remain in harmony with the orderly development of the SU Zoning District and will not discourage the appropriate development and use of adjacent land and buildings or impair the value thereof. Further, the proposed extension of the camping resort's operations for an additional five (5) months each year will have no additional objectionable impact on nearby properties other than what currently exists during the much busier summer season or what would be associated with operations of any other year-round permitted use.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter and I will look forward to appearing before you at the upcoming public hearing on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wm R. Sweeney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

William R. Sweeney, Esq.

Enclosures