

May 15, 2020

VIA EMAIL

Michael Harvey
Current Planning Supervisor
Orange County
P.O. Box 8181
Hillsborough, NC 27278
mharvey@orangecountync.gov

RE: Advisory Opinion Update Request

Dear Mr. Harvey:

On behalf of Pluck Farm LLC, I respectfully request an update, revision, or other appropriate addendum to your March 30, 2020 Advisory Opinion as to the status of property located at 6900 NC HWY 54 West (PIN 9820-51-5399). This request is specifically directed to Part 5 on that Opinion, in which Staff recommended additional information be submitted to assess whether a proposed barn structure and processing facility used to brew beer as well as cider and fruit wine qualifies as a bona fide farm purpose as defined by the NC General Statutes.

In support of this request and attached hereto, please find:

- Pluck Farm LLC & Steel String LLC: Farm Plan – Operational Overview (Spring 2020)
- Pluck Farm LLC: Representative Product & Ingredient Chart (Spring 2020)

Please note that Pluck Farm LLC is not seeking to conduct any agritourism in a farm structure at this time. This request is limited to the use of the barn and processing facility to produce beer, cider, and fruit wine.

Very truly yours,



Andrew J. Petesch, Esq.

enclosures

cc: James Bryan (via email)
Eric Knight (via email)
Will Isley (via email)
Andrew Scharfenberg (via email)

Pluck Farm LLC & Steel String LLC
Farm Plan – Operational Overview
Spring 2020

Pluck Farm is a fifty-seven (57) acre farm in western Orange County located along NC HWY 54. The farm plan is based on holistic, integrated crop and livestock regenerative models of agriculture that increase soil fertility, reduce erosion, encourage biodiversity while producing a wide variety of value-added products. Agricultural products include pastured meat, honey, herbal extracts, compost, fruit, and nuts as well as beer, cider and wine. In addition to approximately twenty (20) acres of pasture, orchards and crops fields, we have approximately thirty-seven (37) acres of woodlands and a half-acre pond. In 2027, approximately eleven (11) acres of pine forest are marked for partial harvesting (improvement cuts) and reseeded. In addition to these operations, Pluck Farm will be open to the public seasonally for weekend farm tours.

Livestock operations will consist of rotational grazing of sheep and some poultry throughout our pastureland. The pasture will be seasonal covers and forage to help build soil fertility for future orchard plantings. The livestock will be stocked at a rate under carrying capacity of the land. In addition to yielding high-quality grass-fed meat, livestock operations will improve soil fertility and sustainable land management for the full range of present and future farm operations. Grazing pastures are integrated into orchards as a system to improve productivity of fruit and nut crops. During late fall and winter, livestock will rely on hay and spent grain and fruit from brewing, cider and fruit wine operations for sustenance. Perimeter fencing will be set up around each pasture, with mobile livestock fencing used to set up for rotational paddocks.

Covering almost two acres, the orchards will primarily be planted with apples, hazelnuts, pecans, persimmons, plums and pawpaw. Hop plants will surround the north, south and eastern walls of the barn and processing facility. Totalling roughly fifty (50) plants with best suited varieties to be planted along trellises in currently allocated fields once the rhizomes are acclimated to the soil and climate of the land. Hops will be harvested and used fresh as well as aged to produce traditional Belgian style farmhouse beers. Nearby will be other

trellis crops, e.g. Muscadine grapes and Maypops. Initially, one half-acre plot will serve as an intensive berry operation for blueberries, blackberries, goumi berries, aronia, mulberries with approximately 2500 square feet reserved for annual crop production (e.g. melons, corn). An additional acre in this area may be eventually utilized for crop production. Over time, more pasture will be planted with fruit and nut trees including chestnut. Not only will these fruits allow us to produce unique beers, ciders and wines but also preserves, juices and pickles.

Plans include the construction of a processing facility barn that is vital to support, process, store, treat and pack agriculture and agricultural products produced on a farm. This includes the brewing of beer and fermenting of wine, mead, and cider utilizing the fruits, nuts and herbs grown on site. The processing facility will also be used to wash and prepare raw produce for the market including vegetables, fruit and mushrooms. And to package and process value added goods such as sauerkraut and kimchi, hot sauces, jams and jellies, pickles and more. Finished products will be stored in the refrigerator in the processing building and also sold as retail sales in the gift shop as permitted under the NC General Statutes. The building will also be used to store equipment used in the various agricultural processes (e.g. crates, egg shells, pots, pans, bottles, jars), along with equipment used in the cultivation of trees for both nuts, timber, and fruit orchards and row crops (e.g. chainsaws and other forestry equipment, farm implements, plastic sheeting, wood, seeds and starts).

Steel String Brewery, which is also owned by Eric Knight, will be the primary brand for beer brewed on site and oversee the brewing beers, ciders, fruit wines and other packaged agricultural liquids. Steel String will also be in charge of processing solid waste either as compost or livestock feed. Steel String is a certified Got To Be NC agricultural product by the NC Department of Agriculture and uses North Carolina grown ingredients whenever possible.

The process of brewing involves taking malted grains (wheat, barley, oats) – grown on Pluck Farm or other local farm where possible – and mixing them with water drawn from the well on site, boiling the product with hops and any additional sugars, such as Pluck

Farm honey, and then fermenting with yeast, which we also plan to capture from fruit trees on the farm. After fermentation, fruit and/or additional hops may be added along with CO² to finish the beer. All ingredients added to Steel String beer are farm products. We do not and will not in the future add food products to beer.

Several small herb gardens will be placed around the brewing facility along the property's front pasture. These will be used in making beer as well as extracts and tea. Honey harvested from our apiary will be used in beer production and sold separately as a separate product. Honey bees will also assist in pollinating orchards and other crops.

Pluck Farm and Steel String plan to have about ten (10) brewed products available throughout the year, although the exact recipes will vary based on seasonality of ingredients and other factors. A representative sample of products and their respective ingredients is attached.¹ Cumulatively, over fifty (50) percent of the non-water agricultural product ingredients, as measured by weight, will be grown on Pluck Farm.² Approximately ninety-nine (99) percent of non-water ingredients are sourced from either Pluck Farm or another North Carolina farm – leaving on average less than one (1) percent of non-water ingredients from farms outside this State.³

Pluck Farm will develop walking trails through sections of the thirty-seven acre woodlands and be available to visitors on days when we are open to the public and include educational and artistic displays about the plants, animals, systems and values we have

¹ See attached product & ingredient chart. Two Berliner Weisses, two IPAs, two Saisons, a dark beer, and several sours is representative of product types distribution at any given point during the year.

² Although all water used in the brewing process will be sourced from Pluck Farm wells, water weight is excluded from the analysis as it is assumed that water is not an agricultural product.

³ These calculations do not include cider or fruit wines, which are also part of the Farm Plan and will be brewed, mulled, or fermented on the farm. Non-water ingredients for ciders and fruit wines would be one hundred (100) percent grown on Pluck Farm. Feasible batch sizes and yields from Pluck Farm orchards and berry operations are not yet reliably quantifiable, so these values are not part of the cumulative percentages, but obviously the proportion of Pluck Farm sourced ingredients used in all beer, cider, and fruit wine products made at Pluck Farm would only increase.

built into the farm. Outdoor farm tours, foraging walks, and volunteer workdays will encourage the public to be more invested in sustainable high-quality food production and conservation of dwindling productive farmlands. No agritourism, including tours or events, will take place in the processing facility and barn structure until Pluck Farm LLC or other appropriate entity under the NCGS has obtained qualifying farmer sales tax exemption certificate from NCDOR,

Product	Product Volume (gallons)	Product Weight (lbs)	Non-Water Inputs		Pluck Farm Non-Water Inputs Weight (lbs)	Base %	Scaled*		NC Farm Non-Water Inputs Weight (lbs)	Base %	Scaled*		Other Non-Water Inputs Weight (lbs)	Base %	Scaled*	
			Weight (lbs)	Scaled* Weight (lbs)			Weight (lbs)	Scaled %			Weight (lbs)	Scaled %			Weight (lbs)	Scaled %
Big Mon	418	3,490	1045	1045.00	120	0.54	120.00	0.56	880	0.45	880.00	0.44	45	0.01	45.00	0.01
Up on the Hill	418	3490	665	665.00	120	0.54	120.00	0.56	880	0.45	500.00	0.44	45	0.01	45.00	0.01
Lonesome Ellen	200	1670	1197	2501.73	867	0.51	1812.03	0.56	330	0.45	689.70	0.44	45	0.01	45.00	0.01
Pluck Wit	200	1670	519	1084.71	189	0.51	395.01	0.56	330	0.45	689.70	0.44	0.25	0.01	0.52	0.01
Tempo Saison	200	1670	465	971.85	120	0.54	250.80	0.56	330	0.45	689.70	0.44	15	0.01	31.35	0.01
Unconditional Sikes	200	1670	740	1546.60	410	0.51	856.90	0.56	330	0.45	689.70	0.44	2	0.01	2.00	0.01
Watermelon Berliner	418	3490	1947	1947.00	1505	0.51	1505.00	0.56	440	0.45	440.00	0.44	2	0.01	2.00	0.01
Hazelnut Porter	200	1670	645	1348.05	210	0.51	438.90	0.56	440	0.45	940.50	0.44	5	0.01	10.45	0.01
Myth of Fingerprints	200	1670	1045	2184.05	765	0.51	1598.85	0.56	280	0.45	585.20	0.44	2	0.01	4.18	0.01
Mulberry Berliner	200	1670	940	1964.60	660	0.51	1379.40	0.56	280	0.45	585.20	0.44	2	0.01	4.18	0.01
Totals			9208	15258.59	4966	0.54	8476.89	0.56	4150	0.45	6689.70	0.44	114.25	0.01	138.50	0.01

* Scaled numbers equalize percentages based on volume of 418 gallons for all ten products.