

To: Town of Norfolk Zoning Commission, C/O Stacey Sefcik  
Date: February 26, 2025

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing in support of Rachel Roth's application for the Manor House Inn property. As the broker/owner of William Raveis Lifestyles Realty and one of Litchfield County's top-selling agents with over 25 years of experience, I offer my professional perspective on how small inns benefit residential communities.

### **The Vital Role of Country Inns in Village Settings**

Country inns are essential cornerstones of thriving New England communities. They serve as:

- Economic engines that create local jobs
- Contributors to the town's tax revenue
- Stewards of historic properties that might otherwise deteriorate
- Showcases of local character that attract visitors who support other local businesses

### **The Manor House: A Perfect Case Study**

Having shown the Manor House numerous times during its previous listing, I can attest that its size and layout make it impractical for conversion back to a single-family residence. Potential buyers were consistently deterred by the extensive renovations required. The property's highest and best use is clearly as a country inn—a use that honors its architectural heritage while ensuring its economic viability.

### **Evidence-Based Benefits, Not Speculative Fears**

Throughout my career, I've witnessed initial resistance to projects like:

- The Mayflower Inn
- Winvian
- The Wykeham Rise Inn
- The Washington Montessori School
- The Bulls Bridge Country Club

These projects faced opposition based on speculative concerns about noise, traffic, and property values. However, once operational, these establishments became beloved community assets that neighbors now proudly reference when selling their own properties.

## **Success Stories in Our Region**

The Mayflower Inn serves as a prime example where neighboring property values have significantly increased despite initial concerns. I have personally sold many homes in close proximity, including an abutting Rossiter home for over \$3 million that is now worth approximately \$4.5 million. Proximity to the inn is actively marketed as a benefit when selling neighboring properties.

Similarly, the Winvian in Morris initially faced restrictions against serving community members due to concerns about noise and traffic. Today, the entire town benefits greatly from its operation, and those restrictions have been lifted with no adverse effects. Living near the Winvian is considered a substantial asset for property owners where the entire community can dine and where weddings take place regularly in a quiet and respectful manner.

The Kent Collection represents another compelling example. These tastefully developed inns have transformed Kent's economy by attracting visitors who patronize local shops and restaurants. They have become the lifeblood of the local economy, creating a virtuous cycle of investment and improvement throughout the town. This collection of small inns demonstrates precisely how thoughtful hospitality development can enhance a village setting while preserving its essential character.

## **The True Alternative: Decline, Not Status Quo**

Without this investment, the Manor House faces an uncertain future. The property has already demonstrated it lacks appeal as a single-family home, and converting it to apartments or Section 8 housing would be financially impractical. Without proper investment, this historic property could deteriorate, becoming the very type of neglected eyesore that genuinely damages neighboring property values.

## **A Community Asset Worth Embracing**

Norfolk should recognize its good fortune in having investors willing to commit substantial capital to preserving and enhancing the Manor House. This project represents a significantly smaller scale of development than the successful examples mentioned above, yet offers similar community-wide benefits.

The Manor House Inn has the potential to become a showcase property that enhances Norfolk's charm, preserves its architectural heritage, and contributes to its economic vitality. The town, including the immediate neighbors, will benefit from supporting this thoughtful development that balances preservation with economic sustainability.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stacey Matthews

**Owner - Broker**

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