

HIGHLAND Center for the Arts

Town of Greensboro
Development Review Board

Re: Highland Center for the Arts Trust, Ltd./Request for Amendment of
Conditional Use Permit Condition #5

To the Development Review Board:

On behalf of the staff and board of directors of Highland Center for the Arts Trust, Ltd., please treat this letter as HCA's request to amend Condition #5 from HCA's conditional use permit. The DRB approved our conditional use permit on September 16, 2014. Condition #5 provides that "performances and events conducted on the site will not utilize amplified sound outside of the structure."

HCA staff and board members have, for some time, considered seeking relief from this condition. HCA is fortunate to have a large outdoor patio which enjoys extensive use during the warmer months, hosting café diners and local crafters and business owners who join with café staff to present "garden parties" featuring local food and craft products. Live music is often a feature of these events. HCA has also hosted outdoor events during the town's "Funky Fourth" celebrations, including outdoor dining, cocktails, games and live music preceding the fireworks display. We have also hosted several large gatherings, memorial services, artist talks, rehearsal dinners, business meetings and other catered events in which many of the guests utilize our patio, lawn and grounds. We do not believe that any of these outdoor activities and uses have had any adverse effect on the character of the area; nor have we created any undue noise.

Relief from Condition #5 has become more urgent with the advent of the current Covid-19 crisis. After hosting Greensboro's annual town meeting on March 2, HCA closed its doors to the public for a planned two-week "spring cleaning." We have yet to reopen our facility to the public, our café remains shuttered and we have canceled all events during March, April and May. We are unable to be of service to the residents of Greensboro and the surrounding area and have been forced to furlough a large number of employees and substantially reduce the working hours of our remaining staff.

2875 Hardwick Street / PO Box 113 / Greensboro, Vermont 05841 / 802.533.9075

www.highlandartsvt.org

With the current crisis hopefully reaching its peak in the near future it is equally clear that restrictions on large, indoor gatherings and indoor, sit-down restaurants may remain in place indefinitely. HCA's remaining staff have worked hard to enable HCA to offer safe, alternative means of entertainment and social gathering as soon as conditions allow. In order to rehire staff and re-open our facilities for guests as soon as legally possible, we will need to offer sensibly sized events and services in an outdoor environment. For such gatherings, amplified sound will be necessary and would allow HCA to help alleviate the isolation and despair that many have experienced during the current crisis.

To enable these outdoor events, we have planned for a small outdoor performing space, on the far side of our existing patio, with guests gathering on the patio and surrounding lawn area to enjoy movies, plays and musical events. As depicted on the attached Sketch #1, a temporary stage, 24 feet wide and 12 feet deep, would be placed on a 2.5 foot base at the end of the existing patio. A 10 foot high rented or purchased box truss (see Sketch #2, attached) having the same width as the stage, would be erected at the front edge of the stage to allow for hanging of downward-facing lights and audio and for mounting of a projection screen for movies. The downward-facing lights would direct light only to the stage area, and sound would be directed downward toward the patio and away from any area residences.

HCA's site plan and conditional use approvals, as well as our Act 250 permit, also authorize the placement and use of an outdoor tent on our spacious grounds. This is the same tent previously used by the Greensboro Arts Alliance and Residency to present their productions within various areas of Greensboro. The approximate dimensions of the tent are 30 x 60 feet, with panel walls. We plan to erect this tent as soon as Vermont's "stay-at-home" orders are lifted. Our plans for the tent include summer camps for children, presentation of lectures and theatrical/musical events suitable for performance within the interior space of a tent setting. We anticipate that many of these activities would require some form of sound amplification so that guests can adequately hear the events.

We believe that the use of the tent and the portable outdoor performance space as described would be responsive to the needs of the community, would not cause undue or adverse levels of noise and would have no undue effect on the character of the area.

It has long been part of HCA's plans to seek relief from Condition #5 and offer these kinds of events in service to the community. The situation created by the Covid-19 crisis has created an urgent need for such relief.

Thank you.



Rob Halpert, Board Chair
Highland Center for the Arts Trust, Ltd.
April 17, 2020

