

VILLAGE OF OLD BENNINGTON BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT
FOR THE MT. ANTHONY SEMINARY UNDER VILLAGE'S INTERIM BYLAWS
(Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4415 (d))

Background and Procedural History

On January 5, 2026, the Village of Old Bennington Board of Trustees (the "Board") adopted Interim Bylaws for the Restoration and Reuse of Certain Historic Structures pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4415(a) (the "Interim Bylaws").

Said Interim Bylaws authorize the issuance of permits for the restoration and recommencement of historic uses of certain historic structures, subject to conditional use review and authorization by the Board of Trustees under 24 V.S.A. § 4415(d).

On May 2, 2026, The Walloomsac Property, LLC (Casey Sunderland & Rafe Churchill) ("Applicants"), owners of the property located at 3 Seminary Lane, applied for authorization to restore and operate the historic Mt. Anthony Seminary ("The Seminary") as a six-bedroom guest house, consistent with the property's historic use (the "Application").

The Board of Trustees held a duly warned public meeting on July 2, 2026, to consider the Application and, after due deliberation, did make the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law:

Findings Of Fact

A. Property and Proposed Use (Interim Bylaws § 2)

1. The Mt. Anthony Seminary, including its accessory structures and infrastructure, is a contributing structure within the Old Bennington Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. The following description appears in the National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form:

Mt. Anthony Seminary, 3 Seminary Lane, c. 1829. This large, clapboard structure was built c.1829 to house the chapel and classrooms of the Mt. Anthony Seminary, a private, non-denominational secondary school. A domed belltower originally surmounted the roof. Today it appears as a large gabled rectangular block, 6 × 3 bays, 2½ stories, with a molded cornice, pedimented gables, and evenly-spaced windows. Sash is 6/1; paired 6/6 in gables. On the north wall is a glazed door with pedimented entry portico; on the south side are two glazed doors and a shed dormer on the roof. On the west gable end is a small hipped utility wing. Originally there were lunettes in the gables. When the building was converted to a golf clubhouse in the 1890's, a circular Shingle Style porch, now gone, was added on the south side. The seminary's dormitory stood to the south.

Stable, c. 1870. A 40' × 15' clapboard stable with gable roof, cornice returns, 6/6 sash, garage doors; built c.1870 as part of Mt. Anthony Seminary.

2. The Mt. Anthony Seminary ("The Seminary") is an approximately 4,000 square-foot structure originally constructed in 1829. It has long served institutional and commercial purposes: originally the Bennington Seminary (1829–1864), it later became the Mt. Anthony Seminary (1864–1897), the Mt. Anthony Country Club clubhouse

(1897–unknown), and faculty housing for Bennington College (1934–1944), before transitioning to a private residence. The historic commercial operation of the Seminary was lawful and existed long before the Village’s adoption of the Zoning Bylaws restricting the property to residential/noncommercial use.

3. Commercial operation of The Seminary is believed to have gone into hiatus in or around the 1950s or 1960s, prior to the creation of the current Zoning Bylaws, a period well exceeding the time otherwise allowed under the Zoning Bylaws for recommencement of a nonconforming use.
4. Applicants propose to restore the building and resume its historic function as a guest house, operating it as a six-bedroom guest house with no food and beverage service, mandatory quiet hours from 9pm to 7am, and an age restriction of 21+.
5. The building was in a deteriorated condition prior to the Applicants’ restoration, including failing second-floor plaster, failing mechanical systems, non-working bathrooms, significant rot to siding, trim, and windows, a deteriorating chimney, a failing roof, a deteriorated barn, and an unkempt landscape. The property also exhibited historically inaccurate alterations, including vinyl screen and storm doors and windows. The bell tower, a defining architectural feature of the structure, had been lost entirely. Restoration of this structure is in the public interest.

B. Statutory Criteria under 24 V.S.A. §§ 4414(3) and 4415(e)

(1) Capacity of existing or planned community facilities, services, or lands

6. The proposed guest house structure will utilize existing municipal infrastructure, including roadway access and utilities adequate for historic-scale operation.
7. No expansion of public sewer, water, or road capacity is required beyond ordinary maintenance.
8. Police, fire, and emergency services are already available in the area and sufficient to serve the use.

(2) Existing patterns and uses of development and character of the area affected.

9. The property is centrally located within the historic Village core, surrounded by a mixture of residential and institutional uses, including historic inns, churches, museums, and single-family homes.
10. Operation of The Seminary would reinstate a traditional and defining use that historically coexisted with surrounding development.
11. The architecture of The Seminary is consistent with the surrounding historic Village. The Seminary is a large gabled rectangular block, 6 × 3 bays, 2½ stories, with a molded cornice and pedimented gables. The applicant has reconstructed the historically accurate bell tower, restored all exterior millwork, repaired original historic windows, removed a historically inaccurate dormer, and installed historically appropriate cedar shake and copper roofing.
12. The proposed use as a quiet, six-bedroom guest house, with no food and beverage service, limited parking, mandatory quiet hours from 9pm to 7am, and an age restriction of 21+, is among the least intensive commercial uses contemplated under the Interim

Bylaws and will not adversely impact the character of the surrounding area or the broader historic character of the Village.

(3) Traffic on roads and highways in the vicinity.

13. The Seminary is located on Seminary Lane within the historic Village core.
14. Traffic associated with six guest rooms is not materially different from that of a single-family residence and is well within the current capacity of Seminary Lane. No events, food and beverage service, or additional programming generating incremental traffic are proposed.
15. The project is not expected to generate significant additional traffic on Seminary Lane or surrounding roadways.

(4) Environmental limitations of the site or area and significant natural resource areas and sites

16. The site is previously developed, contains no wetlands or mapped natural resource constraints, and lies outside flood hazard areas.
17. Restoration will occur within the existing building footprints, with no adverse environmental impact or loss of open space.

(5) Municipal plans and other bylaws, ordinances, or regulations in effect.

18. The existing Village Plan (currently under revision) emphasizes preservation of the historic Village core and the adaptive reuse of significant historic structures.
19. The Interim Bylaws specifically contemplate restoration and reuse of historically significant buildings for their original or related purposes.
20. The proposed use meets all applicable dimensional, landscaping, design, and signage requirements of the Zoning Bylaws. Parking for the six-bedroom guest house is provided at a ratio of one space per sleeping room, consistent with Section 55(A)(4). There will be no signage beyond the plaque next to the front door, consistent with Section 54. The barn at the rear of the property will be restored to its exterior shell and maintained solely as storage with no guest programming or access of any kind.

(6) Utilization of renewable energy resources.

21. The project will not interfere with the Village's ability to use of renewable energy resources.

Conclusions of Law

1. The Mt. Anthony Seminary, together with its accessory structures and infrastructure, is a contributing structure within the Old Bennington Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places.
2. The Seminary was lawfully used for nonresidential purposes prior to the adoption of current Zoning Bylaws prohibiting such use.
3. The commercial use of The Seminary was discontinued for a period exceeding the time otherwise allowed for continuation as a nonconforming use under the Zoning Bylaws.

4. The proposed reuse of The Seminary as a six-bedroom guest house is substantially the same as the building's historic use and would not adversely impact the character of the surrounding area or the broader historic character of the Village.
5. The structure has historical significance, and restoration from its deteriorated condition is in the public interest.
6. The Application to restore and operate The Seminary as a six-bedroom guest house satisfies each of the criteria set forth in the Interim Bylaws.
7. Existing and planned community facilities and services are adequate to accommodate the proposed use of The Seminary without undue burden.
8. The proposed use is compatible with existing patterns and will restore a historically integral land use within the Village.
9. The architectural design of The Seminary, as restored by the Applicants, is consistent with the character of the immediate area and more generally with the historic character of the Village.
10. The addition of project traffic will not create an undue adverse impact on the condition, capacity, safety, or function of Seminary Lane or other roads and highways in the Village.
11. The property presents no adverse environmental impacts to significant natural resource areas or sites that would preclude the proposed use.
12. The proposed use is consistent with the Village's bylaws, ordinances, and regulations, including dimensional, parking, landscaping, design, and signage requirements.
13. The project will not result in an undue adverse effect on the utilization of renewable energy resources.
14. The application satisfies the considerations set forth in 24 V.S.A. §§ 4414(3) and 4415(e).
15. The Mt. Anthony Seminary is a uniquely historic structure whose preservation serves an important public purpose consistent with the Village's heritage and planning goals.
16. Restoration and operation of the building as a six-bedroom ancillary guest house is a feasible and sustainable use consistent with its size, design, and historic function.
17. Authorization of this use will advance the Village's legitimate governmental interests in historic preservation and community welfare.

DECISION

It is therefore ORDERED and AUTHORIZED that, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §§ 4415(d) & (e) and the Interim Bylaws, the Board of Trustees hereby approves the Application and issues a Conditional Use Permit authorizing Applicants to restore the building known as the Mt. Anthony Seminary located at 3 Seminary Lane and to operate the same as a six-bedroom Guest House as described in the Application, subject to the following conditions, all of which are necessary and material to ensure that the project as approved will not adversely impact the character of the surrounding area:

1. The use shall be limited to six (6) sleeping rooms with no commercial kitchen or food and beverage service of any kind.

2. Mandatory quiet hours shall be maintained from 9:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.
3. Occupancy shall be restricted to guests aged 21 years and older.
4. The barn at the rear of the property shall be maintained solely as storage and shall not be used for guest programming, events, or access of any kind.
5. No events, food and beverage service, or programming generating incremental traffic beyond that associated with a residential property shall be conducted at The Seminary.
6. The maximum allowable number of parking spaces at 3 Seminary Lane shall be limited to eight (8).
7. A site plan for the remainder of the property outside the current proposal shall be submitted to the Village for review if required by applicable bylaws, however the entire property shall be subject to conditions 1 through 6, above.

Attest: Mary Walsh
Clerk, Village of Old Bennington

Approved: James Hatch
Chair, Board of Trustees