

VILLAGE OF OLD BENNINGTON BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT
FOR THE WALLOOMSAC INN 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 January 7, 2026, 2025, The Walloomsac Property, LLC (Casey Sunderland & Rafe Churchill) (“Applicants”), owners of the property located at 67 Monument Avenue, applied for authorization to restore and operate the historic Walloomsac Inn as an inn/lodging/hospitality establishment consistent with its historic use (the “Application”).

The Board of Trustees held a duly warned public meeting on February 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 Walloomsac Inn, 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:

Walloomsac Inn, 1764, 1900. The Walloomsac Inn was constructed in or about 1768. It was built for Elijah Dewey, the son of Reverend Jedediah Dewey, Bennington's first minister. During Bennington's heyday as the jumping-off point for settling the Vermont frontier, the Walloomsac was one of the village's commercial and social centers, as well as an important stage stop. Today it stands on an important corner site in the village, looking substantially as it did two centuries ago.

The original inn is a 3-story clapboard building with a 5 x 3 bay, central hall plan. The gable roof, oriented eaves-front, is trimmed by a molded cornice with returns, inside end chimneys and quadrant lights in the pedimented gables. A 6 x 5 bay veranda with plain columns extends around the east and south elevations. In the rear are gabled utility wings and ells. A large 3-story, 10 x 3 bay annex wing is joined to the southwest corner and fronts on West Road. It is faced with large 2-tiered porches and has a large belvedere rising above the gable roof. This wing was built in 1900 by Walter Berry, who also added the veranda to the main block at that time. Originally, the inn had a gambrel roof. The present 3rd story and gable roof were added c.1800 to accommodate a ballroom. A tall, Federal style portico was added to the facade at that time as well. An ornate Italianate style porch replaced it c.1860; French doors on the ground floor and 2/2 sash on the main block remain from this alteration. The main entrance is very wide and deeply recessed. Glazed double doors are framed by heavily paneled reveals. The exterior surround is composed of pilasters supporting an entablature, and may date to the building's original construction. Above the entrance is a 3-part window.

The 1900 annex has eight glazed doors with transom lights on each of the first two stories. The porches serving these entries have chamfered and bracketed posts, with plain balustrades. The roof has pedimented gables and three large gabled dormers on the south side. The square belvedere has a hip roof. On the west gable end are Queen Anne style windows with latticework muntins. In the rear are two 2-story gabled utility ells with cornice returns, 6/6 sash, inside end chimneys; now in very deteriorated condition.

2. The Walloomsac Inn is an approximately 17,000 square-foot structure originally constructed in the late 18th century as a tavern and later expanded into a 51-room inn with a restaurant and ballroom. The historic operation of the Inn was lawful and existed long before the Village's adoption of the Zoning Bylaws restricting the property to residential/noncommercial use.

3. Operation of the Walloomsac Inn as an Inn/Lodging/Hospitality Establishment is believed to have gone into hiatus in or about the mid-1990s, beyond the six-month allowance under the Zoning Bylaws for recommencement of a nonconforming use.

4. Applicants propose to restore the building and resume its historic function as an inn with guest accommodations and dining facilities.

5. The building has fallen into disuse and is now in very deteriorated and blighted condition such that immediate restoration 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 inn 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 churches, museums, and single family homes.

10. Operation of the Walloomsac Inn would reinstate a traditional and defining use that historically coexisted with surrounding development.

11. The architecture of the Inn is consistent with the surrounding, historic Village. The Inn is a 3-story clapboard building. The gable roof, oriented eaves-front, is trimmed by a molded cornice with returns. In the rear are gabled utility wings and ells. The 1900 annex has eight glazed doors with transom lights on each of the first two stories. The porches serving these entries have chamfered and bracketed posts, with plain balustrades. The roof has pedimented gables and three large gabled dormers on the south side.

12. The property is centrally located within the historic Village core, surrounded by a mixture of residential and institutional uses, including historic churches, museums, and single family homes.

13. Operation of the Walloomsac Inn would reinstate a traditional and defining use that historically coexisted with surrounding development.

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

14. The Inn is located on VT Route 9 at the intersection of West Main Street and West Road.

15. Within the Old Bennington Village area, VT Route 9 has a posted speed limit of 30 miles per hour.

16. Traffic associated with an inn and restaurant generally will be sporadic as customers come and go. The project is not expected to generate significant additional traffic on VT Route 9 or surrounding roadways.

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

17. The site is previously developed, contains no wetlands or mapped natural resource constraints, and lies outside flood hazard areas.

18. Restoration generally 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.

19. The existing Village Plan (currently under revision) emphasizes preservation of the historic Village core and the adaptive reuse of significant historic structures.

20. The Interim Bylaws specifically contemplate restoration and reuse of historically significant buildings for their original or related purposes.

(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 Walloomsac Inn, 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 Walloomsac Inn was lawfully used for nonresidential purposes prior to the adoption of current Zoning Bylaws prohibiting such use.

3. The commercial use of the Inn 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 Inn 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 fallen into disuse and is in deteriorated condition such that immediate restoration is in the public interest.

6. The Application to restore and operate the Walloomsac Inn as an inn/lodging/hospitality establishment 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 Inn 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 Inn 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 VT Route 9 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.

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 *Walloomsac Inn* 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 an inn is the only 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 Walloomsac Inn located at 67 Monument Avenue and to operate the same as an Inn/Lodging/Hospitality Establishment as described in the Application.

Attest: Mary Walsh _____

Clerk, Village of Old Bennington

Edward Woods

Approved: _____

Chair, Board of Trustees