



BLITHEWOLD
MANSION, GARDENS & ARBORETUM

March 5, 2024

Re: Blithewold, Inc. Request to Change Use of North Cottage, 111 Ferry Road and renew our previously submitted Master Plan for additional five years.

Dear Planning Board Members:

In 2014, the Bristol Planning board reviewed and approved Blithewold, Inc.'s Institutional Master Plan which included upgrades to our parking lot and Visitor Center/Carriage House.

With Blithewold's growing horticultural and grounds staff, I respectfully request approval to modify the use of the North Cottage, located at 111 Ferry Road from a private single-family residential home, to staff offices. This conversion is not a more intensive use than the residential dwelling and supports the museum operations, the principal use of the property.

No other changes, other than the use at the North Cottage, are being requested at this time.

Currently, the three horticultural staff and summer intern must work in the very small potting shed in the greenhouse which measures less than 300 square feet. The same space also serves as a gathering spot for ten garden volunteers four months of the year and where more than 3,000 plants are propagated and potted up each season. It's a very tight space, offers little privacy and no space for document storage and computer work.

Blithewold's three groundskeepers and the Director of Horticulture work out of the garage complex at the south end of the property. The workroom while larger at 600 square feet is not heated. This makes staff meetings, planning sessions and breaks for lunch less than ideal.

Lastly, and even more importantly for Blithewold's future and recognition as a premiere horticultural destination, Dan Christina, Director of Horticulture wants to unite his two departments under one building as it will improve communication and strategic planning, simplify work lists and offer a comfortable gathering space for the volunteers and staff to break and meet. Having the exclusive use of the basement and garage at the North Cottage will also significantly increase storage capacity for our growing horticultural equipment and supplies and return the greenhouses potting shed back to functional work space to improve flow and out from the gardens.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Dan Christina and I are happy to meet to discuss.

Sincerely,

Karen Binder, Executive Director, Blithewold Mansion, Gardens & Arboretum