SPECIAL PERMIT STATEMENT FOR NEW CANAAN COUNTRY SCHOOL
635 Frogtown Road, New Canaan, CT 06840

The applicant, New Canaan Country School (“NCCS”), was founded in 1916 and is a private school dedicated to the education of young children (starting at 3 years old) through the ninth grade. NCCS has been part of the fabric of the Town of New Canaan for over 100 years and it provides substantial benefits to the welfare of our Town. NCCS has been at its current location since 1936.

NCCS respectfully requests Special Permit approval1 to maintain a temporary tent on its school grounds, to provide for outside dining and a classroom for NCCS students in order to maintain physical distancing and for public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. As shown on the plan submitted herewith, the tent will be behind the existing Carver Commons dining hall building. Also, to provide necessary restroom capacity for the students in order to maintain the low-density bathroom usage and separation of cohorts necessitated by the pandemic, two (2) temporary bathrooms will be provided on the school grounds. As shown on the plan submitted herewith, one temporary restroom trailer is located outside the Stevens (Upper School) Building, and the second is outside the Middle School Building. These bathrooms are located immediately outside exterior doors where the classrooms (and children inside) need access to additional restrooms.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all areas of our daily life, and among other things it has acutely created a need for safe, sanitary, and practical school facilities for children. In August 2020, after obtaining the necessary permission from the New Canaan Building Department, NCCS erected a temporary tent behind the Carver Commons building in order to enable students to have meals and instruction in a safe setting that complied with current guidelines on COVID-19 physical distancing. In addition, NCCS identified two areas of the school where its existing bathroom capacity did not sufficiently allow for the low-density usage and separation of cohorts that is critical to public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic; accordingly, NCCS rented two temporary restroom trailers to provide additional capacity in those locations.

The tent is 40 feet wide and 60 feet long. It is 10 feet in height around its perimeter, and slopes up to a maximum height of 18 feet at its center. At its highest point, the tent is lower than the height of the buildings between it and Frogtown Road (including Carver Commons), and thus will not be visible from Frogtown Road. The tent will be approximately 600 feet to the east of Ponus Ridge Road, and will be partially obscured from street view by buildings and vegetation between it and Ponus Ridge Road. There will be no outdoor speakers in or near the tent. There will be two (2) LED lights inside the tent for interior visibility for lunch and classroom activity, but these lights will not be used after 4pm. The lights will be unplugged every day by 4:30pm, and an

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1 Pursuant to Section 8.2.8.1.b of the New Canaan Zoning Regulations (the “Zoning Regulations”) and as authorized by the Town Planner, no Site Plan Application is filed with this Special Permit Application because there are no permanent physical changes proposed for the site.
outlet timer will ensure that the lights cannot be turned on between the hours of 430pm and 730am.

The two temporary bathrooms are each 8 feet wide by 14 feet long. The bathrooms each have two (2) small, low-power lights on the exterior by the doors for safety, but these lights are not visible beyond the immediate vicinity of the bathroom. Both bathrooms are far from the streets and partially obscured by school buildings and vegetation.

NCCS respectfully submits that the temporary tent and bathrooms constitute a temporary use of land for educational purposes within the meaning of Section 3.3.B.7 of the New Canaan Zoning Regulations (the “Zoning Regulations”). Since that regulation limits such temporary use to a period of ten (10) days unless approved for a longer period of time by the Commission, NCCS respectfully requests the Commission’s approval, through this Special Permit process, to maintain the tent and bathrooms on its property for a time period to end thirty (30) days after the Governor of the State of Connecticut declares an end to the state of emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further to discussions with the Town Planner, NCCS respectfully requests that the Special Permit also allow NCCS to add additional temporary structures (such as modular classrooms, additional bathrooms, etc.), with the permission of the Town Planner, to the extent necessary to protect public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, for a time period to end thirty (30) days after the Governor declares an end to the state of emergency.

For the duration that they are in existence, the temporary tent and bathrooms will be situated behind taller buildings, far from Frogtown and Ponus Ridge Roads. They are almost entirely hidden from view by neighbors and located far from even the closest neighbor.

Therefore, the Special Permit criteria under Section 8.2.B.4 of the Zoning Regulations are all met:

(1) The locations of the temporary tent and the bathrooms are suitable for the use – the tent is adjacent to, and largely hidden from view by, the existing Carver Commons dining hall where students would normally have their meals prior to COVID-19, and the bathrooms are adjacent to exterior doors from the Upper School and Middle School Buildings, where they are needed for additional restroom capacity;
(2) It is an appropriate and necessary improvement, which will facilitate the health, safety, and education of students and help prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19;
(3) The design of the tent and bathrooms is suitable and it will not negatively impact the surrounding area – the exteriors of the tent and bathrooms blend in with the color scheme of the surrounding school buildings;
(4) The tent and bathrooms will not have any impact on transportation, parking or traffic;
(5) The tent and bathrooms will comply with all requirements with regard to public utilities and services;
(6) The tent and bathrooms will not negatively impact the environment or character of the area;
(7) Adequate provision has been made for the tent and bathrooms to be maintained as long as they are required by the pandemic, and they will be removed as soon as the pandemic allows; and
(8) Approving the tent and bathrooms would not conflict with any purpose of the Regulations and would further the goals of the Plan of Conservation and Development, which specifically recognizes NCCS as a community asset that helps to enhance the overall quality of life in New Canaan.

Therefore, NCCS respectfully submits that the temporary outdoor student tent and bathrooms should be approved via a Special Permit, to enable NCCS to continue to provide safe, quality educational services to children during the current pandemic.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.