

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FORT EDWARD ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2026, AT TOWN HALL
COMMENCING AT 6:00 P.M.**

Chairman LaFay called the meeting to order at 6:00pm

PRESENT: Chairman LaFay
Dolores Cogan
James Maskell
Philip King

ABSENT: Richard Fisher

OTHERS PRESENT: Lori Leemans, Ashley Leemans, Frank Leemans, Laura Niles, Tara Kimble, Chris Kinble, Town Engineer Chris Koenig and Zoning Board Clerk Aimee Ives.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: MOTION by James Maskell, seconded by Dolores Cogan to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 10, 2026, **ALL AYES**

BUSINESS:

**Use Variance
Lori & Ashley Leemans
116 State Route 197**

Ashley Leemans: We are looking to do some landscaping to add a small parking area for a small 50-person wedding venue. We would also like to do a small tree nursery, micro-operation, and start planting some native gardens as an educational aspect for people to learn about plants and the importance of wild habitat areas.

Lori Leemans: For the wedding venue, we are fine with saying no alcohol at all on our property as well as if they get their own insurance and person that carries that in and out with them. We are looking to put in a small pond and the only structure we want to build is an arch that is removable. They will bring their own tent as well as tap into our electricity and water. The fruit trees would be used for educational purposes only, we are not a farm, anything grown will be used by us or given away. This will be a seasonal, spring/summer/fall operation.

Chris Koenig:

- The pond, fruit trees and educational aspects could be covered under Principle Permitted Uses in the R-Ag zone.
- The wedding venue is not laid out as a Special Use in R-Ag so a Use Variance is needed.
- Consider noise impacts from outdoor music or outdoor entertainment. (Review Town Noise Ordinance)

Lori Leemans: The venue area is about 600' from the road.

Chris Koenig: Is the driveway currently a single lane road?

Lori Leemans: Yes

Chris Koenig: With a venue you can anticipate there will be two-way traffic with cars coming in and out onto a state highway. You don't want to get into a situation where people are trying to turn in at the same time as people are turning out; that could cause some conflict on the highway. That could require some widening of that area to prevent an issue with traffic.

Lori Leemans: What is the width that it should be?

Chris Koenig: A 2-lane road is typically 16'-20'. An 80'x80' gravel parking lot is proposed behind the garage for 20 spaces; you may need to expand that a little to accommodate 25 spaces.

Lori Leemans: We also have about 5 spaces in front of our garage as well.

Chris Koenig:

- Unlisted Action for SEQR review
- County referral is required
- If there are wetlands on the site, then the applicant should comply with regulations from DEC and Army Corp.

Ashley Leemans: We filed for a jurisdictional inquiry regarding wetlands, and they have 90 days to respond. We haven't heard anything and the time is almost up.

MOTION by James Maskell, seconded by Dolores Cogan to refer the Use Variance to the Washington County Planning Board **ALL AYES**

Dolores Cogan: Where will you be storing the arch?

Lori Leemans: It will stay where it is at all times but can be easily removed.

MOTION by James Maskell, seconded by Philip King to declare the project an unlisted action for SEQR review and declare the Town Zoning Board Lead Agency **ALL AYES**

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Chris Kimble: We are here to support the project.

Items needed for the next meeting scheduled for March 19, 2026 at 6pm:

- Noise Timeframe
- Measurement of driveway
- Show overflow parking in front of existing garage
- Educational component breakdown and benefits to the community

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION by Dolores Cogan, seconded by James Maskell to adjourn the meeting at 6:58pm
ALL AYES

Dated: January 27, 2026

Aimee Ives, Zoning Board Clerk