

Town of Wilton, NH
Application to the Zoning Board of Adjustment
(Revised August 2022)

General Information, Page 1 of 3

▶ RECEIVED ▶
FEB 24 2026

Property Information

Describe the lot involved in the application (the lot that you want to build a building on, subdivide, conduct a business or other activity on, etc.). If more than one lot is involved, then describe them all in this space if it is convenient, or attach additional copies of this page.

Tax Map and Lot Number A-30, A-21 / Lot Size 12.80, 6.41 acres

Street Address 325 Burton Highway, Wilton NH 03086

Zoning District (check one):

- Residential General Residence and Agricultural
 Commercial Industrial Office Park

Relevant Overlay Districts (check any that apply):

- Research and Office Park Floodplain Conservation Watershed
 Wetlands Conservation Aquifer Protection Elderly Housing

Owner

If the application involves multiple lots with different owners, attach additional copies of this page.

Name Faby Gagné and Luc Sirois

Mailing address 325 Burton Highway

Mailing address _____

Town, State, ZIP Wilton, NH 03086

This application must be signed by the owners of all lots involved in the application.

I approve the submission of this application. If an applicant or representative is named on the next page, the person named there has my permission to represent me before the Wilton Zoning Board.

Signature Faby Gagné, Luc Sirois Date Feb. 24, 2026

(continued on the next page)

clerk use only

Date and time received: _____

Received by: _____ Amount paid: _____

Case #: _____ Abutter list and labels included

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Applicant

The applicant is the person who actually wants to build the building, conduct the business, etc. This is usually the same as the property owner, but might be a tenant, someone who plans to purchase the property, etc. If the applicant is the same as the owner, just check "Same as owner" and leave the rest of this section blank.

Same as owner

Name _____

Mailing address _____

Mailing address _____

Town, State, ZIP _____

Signature of Applicant or Owner

I certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief, all information provided in this application is accurate.

Signature _____ Date _____

Representative

Fill out this section if the application is being submitted by a realtor, surveyor, engineer, attorney, etc., on behalf of the actual owner or applicant.

Name _____

Mailing address _____

Mailing address _____

Town, State, ZIP _____

I authorize the above-named representative to submit this application and to speak before the Zoning Board on my behalf.

Signature of applicant or owner (only if a representative is named)

Signature _____ Date _____

(continued on the next page)

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Contact Information

How can we get in touch with the applicant or the applicant's representative, if there are questions about or problems with the application? Provide at least one of the following. If you provide more than one, please check your preferred form of contact.

This information is for: the applicant the representative.

Daytime phone 603.318.6679 Evening phone 603.318.6679

Work E-mail touchinggrass.nh@gmail.com Personal e-mail _____

Proposed Use

Explain what you want to do with the property. (Do you want to build a building, subdivide a lot, have a business, ...).

Explain why you need the Zoning Board to let you do it. (The building will be too close to the lot line; the Planning Board wouldn't approve your subdivision; your lot is in a zoning district where businesses aren't allowed; ...).

Be specific. Identify the section or sections of the Zoning Ordinance that apply. If lot sizes or configurations or building placements are relevant, provide a scale drawing or plan showing all relevant information, such as lot lines, setbacks, present and proposed structures on your lot and neighboring lots, etc.

Description of proposed use and need for ZBA approval (attach additional pages as necessary):

I am requesting a special exception to operate small group fiber-based workshops and rental of dressage arena as a home occupation - secondary to residential use - on 19.21 acres with existing barn and arena.

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Application for a Special Exception

A Special Exception is a use which is permitted by the Zoning Ordinance, but requires approval from the Zoning Board. Every special exception is allowed by some section or subsection of the Ordinance. Most special exceptions have a list of requirements; the Zoning Board can only approve the special exception if it finds that all the requirements are satisfied.

Note that in addition to the specific requirements that may be listed for a particular special exception, all special exceptions are subject to the general requirements in Section 4.12 of the Zoning Ordinance.

What section of the Zoning Ordinance defines the Special Exception that you are applying for? 6.6.1, 5.3.1, 4.10

Explain why your proposed use satisfies the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance (attach additional pages as necessary):

Please see attached pages.

TOUCHING GRASS, LLC: Touching Grass represents a meaningful career pivot from educational technology to hands-on agriculture. I hold a PhD in Social Psychology and spent my career in higher education teaching health psychology and personality, then innovating with data to build educational tools and programs. I now work at Brookdale Fruit Farm, where owner Rick Hardy mentors me in practical farming. This operation combines that agricultural knowledge with my expertise in education and behavioral science to create a peaceful place for learning traditional fiber arts, raising cashmere goats (first 4 arriving summer 2026, harvest winter 2027), and future Christmas tree and lavender cultivation.

This home occupation satisfies all Special Exception requirements under Sections 6.1, 5.3.1, 4.10, and 4.12:

I. SECTION 6.1 CRITERIA:

LOCATION: The 19.21-acre property is ideal with existing barn (2,248 sq ft) and arena (66' × 197'), compliant setbacks (59 ft wetlands, 243 ft pond), access via Class VI roads, and natural wooded buffers providing screening.

AREA: Property size (nearly 10× minimum) easily accommodates cashmere goats, workshops (max 15 participants), and parking (4,975 sq ft, 8-10 spaces plus overflow = 15+ vehicle capacity) with no new construction.

SURROUNDING DEVELOPMENT: Low-density rural/agricultural district with compatible uses (farms, equestrian facilities, homes). Traffic (24-30 trips/week peak) consistent with residential patterns.

BUFFERS: Dense woods on all sides, natural vegetation between structures and property lines, barn/arena not visible from roads, no clearing proposed. Future Christmas trees enhance screening.

COMPATIBILITY: Small-scale agritourism supporting active cashmere goat farm with future Christmas trees and lavender (complements wellness mission through medicinal herbs, natural dyeing). My background in behavioral science ensures well-organized, respectful operations. Quiet activities (indoor workshops, private riding, small livestock), no impacts beyond normal agricultural use. Working at Brookdale under Rick Hardy's mentorship informs thoughtful farm management.

II. SECTION 5.3.1 HOME OCCUPATION REQUIREMENTS:

✓ **INCIDENTAL TO RESIDENCE:** Dwelling is principal structure, owners reside there, workshops periodic (not daily), arena by appointment only

✓ **MAX 2 NON-FAMILY EMPLOYEES:** Complies (will employ ≤2 non-family members). Career designing learning experiences with small teams ensures appropriate scale.

✓ **TRAFFIC CONSISTENT:** 24-30 trips/week peak season = 3-4 vehicles/day, comparable to typical residential traffic

✓ **NO OBJECTIONABLE IMPACTS:** Peace and quiet: conversation, gentle spinning wheels, soft fiber rustling. Cashmere goats small and quiet. Natural plant-based dyes, all lighting downcast/shielded. Place of calm, not commotion.

✓ **ADEQUATE PARKING:** 4,975 sq ft (8-10 spaces) plus overflow = 15+ total capacity, exceeds maximum occupancy, emergency access maintained

✓ **NOT EVIDENT FROM ROAD:** Barn/arena hidden by woods and topography. No exterior changes or signage. Appears as quiet rural home and farm.

III. SECTION 4.10 PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:

✓ **Lighting:** All fixtures shielded/downcast, no new lighting

✓ **Environment:** No new impervious surfaces, stormwater on-site, wetland setbacks maintained, natural/safe materials only

✓ **Traffic Safety:** Safe access, adequate sight distances, two emergency routes

✓ **Visual/Site Harmony:** No exterior changes, natural screening maintained, harmonious with rural character. Future Christmas trees and lavender enhance agricultural landscape.

IV. SECTION 4.12 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

✓ **NO NUISANCE:** Peaceful place—quiet workshops, small cashmere goats, traditional crafts. Work with hands, natural materials, quiet animals.

✓ **NO PROPERTY VALUE IMPACT:** Well-maintained agricultural operation preserving open space and rural character. Enhances agricultural viability.

✓ **NO TRAFFIC HAZARDS:** Adequate on-site parking, safe access, no pedestrian traffic on roads

✓ **NO SERVICE BURDEN:** Private well/septic, no additional demand on fire/police/schools

✓ **HARMONY WITH ORDINANCE:** Supports diversified agriculture (cashmere farm, future Christmas trees and lavender), maintains rural character, preserves farmland, promotes agricultural education and wellness through hands-on traditional skills.

V. DETAILED ZONING COMPLIANCE (24 POINTS):

1. Use Classification (§6.1): Educational fiber arts workshops and dressage arena rental constitute home occupation and agricultural activities permitted under §6.1(b).

2. Home Occupation - Incidental (§5.3.1(a)): Workshops and arena rental incidental and secondary to primary residential and agricultural use.

3. Employees (§5.3.1(c)): Maximum two non-family employees.

4. Traffic (§5.3.1): Combined traffic (max 15 workshop participants, max 4 arena riders) consistent with neighborhood patterns.

5. Regulatory Compliance (§5.3.1(h)): Operations comply with all Town regulations, State laws, and licensing requirements.

6. Scale (§5.3.1(i)): Operations appropriately scaled for home occupation.

7-16. Performance Standards (§4.10.1-10): No vibration, noise, odors, smoke, hazardous materials, or light trespass. Natural drainage maintained.

17. Site Harmony (§4.10.11): Structures harmonize with terrain; natural features preserved.

18-21. Setbacks: House: 59 ft from wetlands. Barn: 59 ft from wetlands, 243 ft from pond. Arena: 59 ft from wetlands. Fencing: 156 ft from wetlands.

22-23. Parking (§10.8): Total 15+ vehicles (8-10 designated 9'×18' spaces + overflow). Emergency access lane at barn front.

24. Arena Operations: Professional arena (66'×197') for private practice. Max 4 riders per session, weekends/select weekdays April-October. No competitions.

CONCLUSION: This career pivot from educational innovation to hands-on agriculture combines practical farming knowledge (learned at Brookdale under Rick Hardy's mentorship) with expertise in education and behavioral science. Touching Grass creates a peaceful place where people experience the wellness benefits of traditional fiber arts, connection with farm animals (cashmere goats arriving summer 2026), and agricultural life. Future Christmas trees and lavender complement the wellness and educational mission. Full compliance with all Special Exception requirements. Preserves agricultural land, maintains rural character, and supports local agriculture.

SPECIAL EXCEPTION JUSTIFICATION

Touching Grass, LLC

Educational Fiber Arts Workshops and Dressage Arena Rental

Cashmere Goat Farm - 325 Burton Highway, Wilton NH 03086

THE TOUCHING GRASS STORY

Touching Grass, LLC represents a meaningful pivot in my career—from higher education innovation to hands-on agriculture. I hold a PhD in Social Psychology and spent my career in higher education, initially teaching health psychology and personality, then becoming an innovator in educational technology. I worked with data to understand human behavior and applied those insights to build innovative educational tools and programs that helped students learn and thrive.

But somewhere along the way, I realized I wanted to put my hands in the soil, work with animals, and teach in a different way—through traditional crafts and direct connection with agricultural life. I now work at Brookdale Fruit Farm, where owner Rick Hardy has become my mentor in practical farming. Under Rick's guidance, I'm learning what it takes to run a successful agricultural operation in New Hampshire.

The name "Touching Grass" is intentional—it speaks to the fundamental human need to connect with the natural world, to work with our hands, and to slow down from our digital lives. My background in psychology and education informs everything about this farm: I understand how hands-on craft activities promote mental wellness, how connection with animals reduces stress, and how learning traditional skills builds confidence and community. But now, instead of designing digital learning programs, I'm creating a peaceful place where people can experience these benefits directly—through fiber arts, farm animals, and agricultural traditions.

Our first four cashmere goats arrive summer 2026, with our first fiber harvest scheduled for winter 2027. Students will learn to process this premium fiber from start to finish—sorting, washing, carding, spinning, dyeing with natural materials, and felting. These workshops apply everything I learned in higher education about effective teaching and human motivation, but in a completely different context: a quiet barn, working with natural materials, learning skills that connect us to centuries of tradition.

Looking ahead, we plan to diversify with Christmas tree cultivation and lavender field development—both agricultural enterprises that will enhance the peaceful character of the property. Lavender cultivation, in particular, complements the wellness mission, offering

opportunities to teach about soap making, natural dyeing, and aromatherapy. Rick Hardy has been instrumental in helping me think through the practical aspects of these agricultural ventures.

The dressage arena rental provides an opportunity for equestrians to practice in a quiet, professional setting, utilizing existing infrastructure in a way that aligns with the agricultural character of the property.

This pivot from educational technology to agriculture isn't really a departure—it's an evolution. I'm still an educator, still applying behavioral science insights, still creating learning experiences. But now those experiences happen in a barn, with fiber and animals and soil, instead of on screens. Touching Grass is my commitment to preserving agricultural land, teaching traditional skills, supporting mental wellness through hands-on craft, and creating a peaceful place where people can disconnect from modern stresses and reconnect with timeless practices.

COMPLIANCE WITH ZONING ORDINANCE REQUIREMENTS

Touching Grass, LLC demonstrates full compliance with the Wilton Zoning Ordinance as follows:

I. SECTION 6.1: HOME OCCUPATION SPECIAL EXCEPTION CRITERIA

A. LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED USE

The 19.21-acre property provides the perfect setting for this peaceful agricultural and educational operation. The existing 2,248 sq ft barn will house our cashmere goats and provide workshop space, while the professional dressage arena (66' × 197') offers a quiet practice venue. The property's remote location on Class VI roads, natural wooded buffers, and compliance with all setbacks (59 ft from wetlands, 243 ft from pond) ensure that our small-scale educational activities will remain harmonious with the rural neighborhood.

B. AREA OF THE LOT

At nearly 10 times the minimum lot size, the 19.21 acres provide ample space for our cashmere goats to graze, for future Christmas tree and lavender cultivation, and for small educational workshops (maximum 15 participants). Parking for 8-10 vehicles with overflow capacity ensures all activities can be accommodated safely and comfortably without crowding the property.

C. TYPE AND DENSITY OF SURROUNDING DEVELOPMENT

Our low-density rural setting, surrounded by farms, equestrian facilities, and woodlands, is ideal for this quiet agricultural operation. The small groups (15 max for workshops, 4 max for arena sessions) and modest traffic patterns (24-30 vehicle trips per week during peak season) are entirely consistent with the peaceful, residential character of the neighborhood. Our activities—teaching traditional fiber arts, tending cashmere goats, and offering arena practice time—fit naturally into this agricultural district.

D. EXISTING BUFFERS AND SCREENS

Dense woods on all sides, natural vegetation, and the property's topography create complete visual screening from roads and neighboring properties. Our barn, arena, and parking areas are not visible from Burton Highway or Stiles Farm Road. The cashmere goats will graze in interior pastures. Future Christmas trees will enhance natural screening, while the lavender field will be located in the property's interior, maintaining all buffers. The property will continue to appear as a typical rural residence and farm from the road.

E. COMPATIBILITY WITH THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD

Touching Grass, LLC embodies the agricultural values of this district. My transition from educational technology to hands-on farming reflects a deep commitment to agricultural preservation and rural traditions. Working at Brookdale Fruit Farm under Rick Hardy's mentorship has shown me how thoughtful, well-managed agricultural operations can thrive while being excellent neighbors.

Our mission—teaching traditional fiber arts, raising cashmere goats, cultivating specialty crops, and providing a peaceful place for people to connect with agricultural heritage—aligns perfectly with the rural, agricultural character of the neighborhood. My background in understanding human behavior and creating effective learning experiences ensures that our workshops will be well-organized, respectful of neighbors, and focused on the educational and wellness value that makes agriculture so important to community well-being.

Our small scale (15 max participants, quiet indoor workshops, small cashmere goat herd), peaceful activities, and commitment to preserving agricultural land make us compatible neighbors. We create no noise beyond conversation and occasional quiet bleating of goats. We use no machinery. We preserve open space. We maintain the working agricultural character that defines this district.

II. SECTION 5.3.1: HOME OCCUPATION REQUIREMENTS

A. INCIDENTAL AND SECONDARY TO RESIDENTIAL USE: Touching Grass remains first and foremost a home and a working farm. Workshops are periodic events, not daily operations. The arena is available by appointment. Our primary life here is residential and agricultural.

B. MAXIMUM 2 NON-FAMILY EMPLOYEES (§5.3.1.c): We will employ no more than 2 non-family members. My career in higher education taught me how to design effective learning experiences and work collaboratively with small teams. This home occupation will maintain that small, personal scale.

C. TRAFFIC CONSISTENT WITH NEIGHBORHOOD (§5.3.1.e): Even during our busiest weeks (24-30 vehicle trips), we generate less traffic than many residential properties. Workshop participants arrive for scheduled sessions, not drop-in visits. Arena users come by appointment. There are no delivery trucks, no commercial vehicles. Just people seeking a peaceful place to learn traditional skills or practice riding.

D. NO OBJECTIONABLE IMPACTS (§5.3.1.g): The essence of Touching Grass is peace and quiet. Workshops involve conversation, the gentle sounds of spinning wheels, and the soft rustling of fiber. Cashmere goats are small, quiet animals—no louder than dogs. Riders practice dressage, which is a disciplined, quiet equestrian activity. We use environmentally safe, natural materials for dyeing. All lighting is fully shielded and downcast. This is a place of calm, not commotion.

E. ADEQUATE PARKING (§5.3.1.h): With 4,975 sq ft of designated parking (8-10 spaces) plus overflow capacity along our private driveway, we can comfortably accommodate workshop participants and arena users simultaneously. Emergency vehicle access is maintained via our 16-foot-wide common driveway.

F. NOT EVIDENT FROM ROAD (§6.1.a): Natural screening ensures that Touching Grass appears from the road as what it is—a quiet rural home and farm. The barn and arena are hidden by woods and topography. No exterior changes. No commercial signage. Just a peaceful agricultural property.

III. SECTION 4.10 & 4.12: PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Touching Grass, LLC meets all performance standards:

VIBRATION (§4.10.1): None. We work with our hands, with natural materials, with quiet animals.

NOISE (§4.10.2): Quiet conversation, spinning wheels, soft goat sounds—nothing that disturbs the peaceful rural character.

ODORS (§4.10.3): No objectionable odors. Cashmere goats are small, clean animals.

SMOKE/PARTICULATES (§4.10.4): None. No combustion processes.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS (§4.10.5): We use natural, plant-based dyes and environmentally safe fiber processing materials only.

LIGHTING (§4.10.6): All fixtures fully shielded and downcast. No new exterior lighting proposed.

SIGNAGE (§4.10.7): Future signage, if any, will comply with Chapter 16.

STORMWATER (§4.10.10): Natural drainage maintained. All stormwater infiltrates on-site.

SITE HARMONY (§4.10.11): Structures harmonize with terrain. Natural features preserved. Future Christmas trees and lavender enhance the agricultural landscape.

NO NUISANCE (§4.12): This is a peaceful place—quiet workshops, small livestock, traditional crafts.

NO PROPERTY VALUE IMPACT (§4.12): Well-maintained agricultural operation that preserves open space and rural character.

NO TRAFFIC HAZARDS (§4.12): Safe access, adequate parking, no pedestrian traffic on roads.

NO SERVICE BURDEN (§4.12): Private well and septic. No demand on municipal services.

HARMONY WITH ORDINANCE (§4.12): Supports diversified agriculture, preserves farmland, promotes agricultural education and wellness.

DETAILED ZONING COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

1. Use Classification (§6.1): Educational fiber arts workshops and dressage arena rental constitute home occupation and agricultural activities permitted under §6.1(b).

2. Home Occupation - Incidental (§5.3.1(a)): Workshops and arena rental are incidental and secondary to primary residential and agricultural use.

3. Employees (§5.3.1(c)): Maximum two non-family employees.

4. Traffic (§5.3.1): Combined traffic (max 15 workshop participants, max 4 arena riders) consistent with neighborhood patterns.

5. Regulatory Compliance (§5.3.1(h)): Operations comply with all special exception conditions, Town regulations, State laws, and licensing requirements.

6. Scale (§5.3.1(i)): Operations appropriately scaled for home occupation classification.

7-16. Performance Standards (§4.10.1-10): Full compliance with all performance standards as detailed above.

17. Site Harmony (§4.10.11): Structures relate harmoniously to terrain; significant features preserved.

18-21. Setbacks: House: 59 ft from wetlands. Barn: 59 ft from wetlands, 243 ft from pond. Arena: 59 ft from wetlands. Fencing: 156 ft from wetlands.

22. Parking Capacity (§10.8): Total 15 vehicles (8-10 designated spaces + overflow). Meets requirements for agricultural use with agritourism component.

23. Parking Standards (§10.8): Standard 9' × 18' spaces on gravel. Emergency access lane at barn front.

24. Dressage Arena Operations: Professional arena (66' × 197') for private practice. Max 4 riders per session, weekends/select weekdays April-October. No competitions or public events.

CONCLUSION

Touching Grass, LLC represents a meaningful career pivot—from designing digital learning tools in higher education to creating hands-on agricultural learning experiences. My background in psychology, education, and understanding human behavior informs every aspect of this operation, from workshop design to the therapeutic value of working with fiber and animals.

Under the mentorship of Rick Hardy at Brookdale Fruit Farm, I'm learning what it takes to run a successful, sustainable agricultural operation in New Hampshire. Touching Grass combines that practical farming knowledge with my expertise in education and behavioral science to create a peaceful place where people can learn traditional skills, connect with farm animals, and experience the wellness benefits of hands-on craft and agricultural life.

Our cashmere goat operation (first animals summer 2026, first harvest winter 2027), educational fiber arts workshops, future Christmas tree and lavender cultivation, and arena rental all support the same mission: preserving agricultural land, teaching traditional skills, supporting local agriculture, and providing a wellness-focused educational experience that draws on both centuries of tradition and contemporary understanding of human well-being.

This application demonstrates full compliance with all requirements for a Special Exception under Sections 6.1, 5.3.1, 4.10, and 4.12. More importantly, it shows how Touching Grass will enhance the agricultural character of Wilton, preserve open space, support rural traditions, and create a peaceful place where people can learn, grow, and reconnect with agricultural heritage.

We respectfully request approval of this Special Exception.