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Dear Dr. Klemens and fellow members of the Planning & Zoning Commission:

Thank you for the months upon months of hearings and deliberations you have devoted to the Aradev application, both this year and last. As an abutter of the Wake Robin Inn property, I am urging you not to issue a special permit to the applicants.

What you've heard from the vast majority of local residents over the last several meetings is not knee-jerk obstructionism. Nearly all of us would welcome a new and improved Wake Robin Inn. When the inn was in better shape, my wife and I put up friends and family there. We even hired out the venue for a family celebration.

But the Aradev plan is simply too supersized. I don't believe this is a tricky determination to make. For all the talk in recent meetings of subjectivity and the meaning of the word "nuisance," there is not much in the way of gray areas where Salisbury's zoning regulations are concerned.

These hearings have had a specific purpose: to help you, the commissioners, determine if the applicants meet the criteria to receive a special permit as described in Section 213.5 of the town's zoning regulations, which in turn bounces us over to Section 803, "Standards for Special Permits."

The applicants have scaled down their plans, but they still fail to meet the standards as described in Section 803.2, which states, "**The size and intensity, as well as the design, of the proposed project or development shall be related harmoniously to the terrain and to the use, scale, and siting of existing buildings in the vicinity of the site.**" The application also fails to meet the standard set out in Section 803.3, which states, "**The proposed uses shall not unreasonably adversely affect the enjoyment, usefulness and value of properties in the general vicinity thereof, or cause undue concentration of population or structures.**"

#### Size and Intensity

Aradev's revised application remains disproportionate to the plot of land the applicants seek to develop. The Wake Robin Inn sits on a modest wedge of property between a residential street, Wells Hill Road, and Sharon Road, a stretch of Route 41 that nominally meets the definition of a state highway but in day-to-day reality is a curving segment of a two-lane country road. Indeed, in 1993, the state of Connecticut designated the Salisbury segment of Route 41 a scenic road, a term reserved in this state for rural roads of beauty and special character.

The Granbery and Sharon Road properties, taken together, occupy about 13.5 acres of land. The applicants plan to have 53 guest rooms and four cottages at the revamped Wake Robin. By contrast, Troutbeck, in Amenia, per its own website, has a total 37 guest rooms and suites. Like Troutbeck, the Aradev version of the Wake Robin would have a spa, a gym, a pool, a large event hall, and a restaurant open to the public. Yet Troutbeck—again, per its website—sits on a campus of 250 acres. The actual hotel, nestled within this campus, has no abutting residential neighbors.

Closer to home, the Interlaken Inn in Lakeville, per its website, sits on 30 acres and has 40 guest rooms and five cottages: a greater density than Troutbeck but still a far cry from what Aradev proposes.

Perhaps the closest comp to the Wake Robin, footprint-wise, is the White Hart Inn in Salisbury, which also sits on a smallish wedge-shaped parcel between two roads. But it has a mere 16 guest rooms. Another crucial difference: the White Hart sits in a commercial zone, with its front lawn doubling as the Salisbury town green, the place where we gather for ice cream after the Memorial Day parade and chili during the Fall Festival.

The Wake Robin has historically been a low-key, tucked-away country inn, or, if you like, an oversized bed and breakfast: a nice fit for an otherwise residential neighborhood. The applicants intend to supersize it into a full-fledged resort and event center. Even in their revised plan, their project, to use the vocabulary of the zoning regulations, is of a **size and intensity** that does not **relate harmoniously** to its surroundings. That the applicants even need to bring in experts to explain the elaborate measures they'll be taking to mitigate potential noise and light pollution is telling—an acknowledgment that what's being proposed is way beyond the scale of all previous iterations of the Wake Robin Inn.

### Undue Concentration of Population

There is some sleight of hand in the way the applicants have presented the footprint of their proposed redevelopment as being only incrementally larger than the existing inn's footprint. Much of the square-footage "savings" in their plan comes from tearing down the motel building, which occupies about 7,100 square feet. The motel currently sits dormant, but even when it was in regular use, it was seasonally used and presented no significant disruptions to our neighborhood.

By contrast, the proposed 5,430-square-foot event and dining space, while smaller than the motel, is a major escalation of how the property will be used. It will accommodate up to 125 guests, up to 24 times a year. And that's on top of the people who will be staying in the 53 guest rooms and four cottages. This amounts to an **undue concentration of population** on this modest parcel, and, again, it does not **relate harmoniously to the terrain and to the use, scale, and siting of existing buildings in the vicinity of the site.**

### Wells Hill Road concerns

In their re-application package submitted to the P&Z Commission on April 30<sup>th</sup> of this year, the applicants assert, "The photographs of the historical and current use of the Wake Robin Inn contained in the application package illustrate the long history and existence of a hospitality use at 104-106 Sharon Road and 53 Wells Hill Road."

As regards the latter parcel, this simply isn't true. 53 Wells Hill Road has been a headmaster's home, an innkeeper's home, and, most recently, a private residence. There is zero precedent for indoor hospitality use—zero—on Wells Hill Road. When we first moved to Wells Hill Road, Tor Olsen, then the Wake Robin's owner and innkeeper, lived in 53. He treated it like anyone else who has a house on Wells Hill Road: as his private residence. Even if we take into account the Wells Hill Road-abutting parts of the existing Wake Robin property, the "hospitality use" of the Wells Hill side never amounted to anything more than a swimming pool, a tennis court, and a croquet court. So what the applicants propose in 2025, even in scaled-back form from what they proposed in 2024, is still a radical departure from this neighborhood's history.

Furthermore, in their August 26 presentation, the applicants offered a disingenuous response to Dr. Klemens's question about potentially not including 53 Wells Hill Road in their plans. In their slide of pros and cons, they warn that if they don't take over the Granbery property, some other owner could "operate [it] as a farm, construct and build a new 5000+ sf home closer to the road, operate [it] as an Airbnb [or] construct a 6-8 unit apartment building." This is a straw-man argument, suggesting that Aradev is saving us from some menacing new buyer waiting to pounce, when the truth is that any such new use of the property would be subject to the same diligent P&Z hearing process we're going through right now.

I was one of the people who took a cordial meeting with the applicants, Steven Cohen and Jonathan Marrale, last fall. I appreciate that Steven and Jonathan are charmed by our tranquil little corner of northwest Connecticut, just as my wife and I were when we moved here in 1997. They've picked the right neck of the woods—but the wrong property.

Sincerely,

David Kamp