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Ms. Angela Birchett
Chatham County Planning Department
PO Box 54
80-A East Street – Dunlap Building
Pittsboro, NC 27312-0054

September 11, 2008

Dear Ms. Birchett,

Triangle Land Conservancy respectfully asks the Chatham County Planning Board and the Chatham County Commissioners to consider this letter regarding the rezoning and conditional use requests by Irene Faircloth Gattis and Joseph Mosnier dba Historic Mann's Chapel Event Center and Café.

Triangle Land Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization serving six counties in the Triangle region including Chatham, Durham, Johnston, Lee, Orange, and Wake. Our mission is to protect important open space—stream corridors, forests, wildlife habitat, farmland and natural areas—to help keep our region a healthy and vibrant place to live and work.

TLC has conserved more than 4,000 acres in Chatham County—the most of any county in our region. TLC owns 840 acres on eight properties and has worked with seven private landowners to protect another 1,068 acres through conservation easements. TLC purchased then transferred to state ownership 760 acres, and has assisted in the protection of another 1,410 acres—most notably 1,151 acres for the Lower Haw River State Natural Area.

Three of Triangle Land Conservancy's current conservation priorities are centered in Chatham County:

Our work on the Deep River has resulted in the conservation of more than 2,700 acres, including almost 1,800 in Chatham, development of a canoe/kayak launch at McIver Landing in Gulf, development of the White Pines Nature Preserve, and authorization of the Deep River State Trail state park unit.

Our work on the Haw River has resulted in the conservation of 1,150 acres, the creation of the Lower Haw State Natural Area, and the conservation of the scenic gateway to the Haw River on US 15-501.

Our Chatham Working Lands Initiative has supported the formation, at the request of the County Commissioners, of a Working Lands subcommittee under the county's

Agricultural Advisory Committee, and will soon yield its first significant on-the-ground success with the conservation of the 170-acre Chestnut Hill Farm in Silk Hope through a \$664,300 grant from the NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund.

It should be clear that Triangle Land Conservancy has had a strong and abiding interest in protecting the environmental resources of Chatham County. New strategic directions of the organization solidify that interest.

One of those new directions is the support of small farms. TLC is aware of the growing importance of small, local market-oriented farms to the region's economy. In Chatham, those farms are the fastest growing sector of the agricultural industry, which is the county's largest industry. We are exploring options to support that movement and the sustainable farming practices engaged by its farmers. TLC believes in keeping quality farming soils in production, and that the best way to accomplish that is by supporting efforts that keep farming profitable. By extension, TLC supports efforts to provide markets for locally grown products.

One additional economic fact points to our interest in supporting agricultural and related initiatives in Chatham County. The April 2007 study, "The Cost of Community Services in Chatham County," found that agricultural and forest land is a net contributor to the county budget—for every dollar in county property tax revenues from agricultural and forest land, the county spends only 58 cents in services (compared to \$1.14 spent for every dollar in residential revenue). It makes sense to us to support efforts that promote the continuation of agriculture as a mainstay of the Chatham economy.

For Triangle Land Conservancy, our interest in the proposal for the Historic Mann's Chapel Event Center & Café lies in the return to production of the Faircloth farm, which is envisioned as providing fresh produce for the Event Center & Café. The proposal suggests that this small farm enterprise will keep farmland productive, will provide a local market for locally grown products, and will promote awareness of the connection between farms and consumers. Triangle Land Conservancy supports all of those things.

Respectfully,



Kevin Brice
President and Chief Executive Officer
Triangle Land Conservancy

Cc: Joseph Mosnier