

Conditional Use Temporary Suspension
Highland Center for the Arts
May 20, 2026

To consider a request by the Highland Center for the Arts to temporarily suspend Condition #5 of their 2014 Conditional Use permit. Condition #5 prohibits amplified sound outside of HCA's physical building.

Warnings were posted on April 29, 2026, at the Greensboro Town Hall, the Greensboro Post Office, the Greensboro Bend Post Office, and Willey's and Smith's Stores. The warning was sent to the applicant and the following abutters and neighboring property owners: Mountain View Country Club; Town of Greensboro; Patricia Mercier; the Bishop Family Trust; David Allen; NEXT 1, LLC; the Niemi Trust; Brian Niemi; Hardwick Electric Department; Arthur and Julie Brochu; Brenden and Lindsay Beer, on April 29, 2026. It was published in the Hardwick Gazette on Wednesday, April 29, 2026.

Development Review Board members present: Nat Smith; Wayne Young; Tim Brennan; Lise Armstrong; BJ Gray; Galen Fisher (alternate); Brett Stanciu (ex officio member).

Development Review Board members absent: Jane Woodruff; Mike Metcalf; Rob Brigham (alternate).

Others present: Keisha Luce.

Others present via Zoom: Christine Armstrong.

Correspondence from interested persons: None.

The hearing was conducted in person and via electronic communication (ZOOM).

Summary of Discussion:

Mr. Smith, vice chair, began the hearing at 7:30 p.m. and explained the process for the quasi-judicial hearing.

Ms. Luce, Highland Center for the Arts' Executive Director, said the request is for a temporary suspension of Condition #5 for three events. The first, on June 13, is for the annual Highland Games. This request is for three 45-minute performances. Last year, these performances were held on the HCA's indoor Main Stage. This year, HCA has an opportunity to host a Highland dance competition for children to participate as part of a national competition. The dance competition will be held on the Main Stage, as that stage is sturdy enough for dancing. The all-day dance competition requires moving the musical performances outdoors. Only two performances will require amplified sound; the Catamount Pipe Band will not need amplified sound.

The second request is part of the town-wide Funky Fourth celebration. Last year, the Vermont Philharmonic had 350 attendees. The concert was under the tent, where 70 people could be accommodated. Attendees outside the tent could not hear the conductor. The request is for a vocal microphone for the conductor's explanation. The music will require no amplification. The speakers for the conductor's voice would be placed outside the tent. This event is weather-dependent.

The third request is for the annual Fairy Festival on July 25. This event would utilize small speakers about the size of the town's Meeting Owl. The music would not be a live band; recorded harp music would add to the event's vibe and magic.

Questioning from the Board clarified that the Highland Games event would conclude by 3:30 p.m. HCA will have other outdoor music, such as bagpipes, which would not require amplification. The Funky Fourth date was confirmed to be July 4, not July 5 as specified in HCA's written request of April 25. If the Fairy Festival is rained out, the event would be moved to Sunday, July 26. Further questioning confirmed that the Main Stage is indoors. Ms. Luce reiterated that the dance competition is a nice opportunity for kids.

Mr. Smith noted that the current request under consideration is for a temporary suspension of the Highland Center for the Arts' 2014 Conditional Use permit which specified "Performances and events conducted on the site will not utilize amplified sound outside of the structure." The Board noted that, in the past, there had been complaints. No opposition was voiced for the request under consideration.

The Board entered deliberative session at 7:47 p.m. and came back into public session to announce their decision at 8:05 p.m.

Decision and Conditions:

The Board voted (5-1) to approve a temporary suspension of Condition #5 of Highland Center for the Arts' 2014 Conditional Use permit, for three events as presented in the April 25 request: on June 13 for the 3rd Annual Highland Games, consisting of three 45-minute mini concerts under the tent between 11 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.; on July 4 for a vocal microphone for the Vermont Philharmonic conductor from 6:30-8 p.m. as part of the town-wide Funky Fourth celebration; on July 25 for the annual Fairy Festival, for ambient recorded music on the patio and under the event tent from 12-4 p.m. Ms. Armstrong voted nay. No abstentions.

The Board granted this suspension with the expectation that these events will take place as presented to the Development Review Board at the May 20, 2026, hearing. The Board sees this short-term reprieve of Condition #5 as only short-term; this reprieve should not be interpreted as the beginning of outdoor, amplified sound concerts at Highland Center for the Arts.

Conditions:

1. Any changes in dates or times will be promptly conveyed to the abutting landowners and the Greensboro zoning administrator.
2. Highland Center for the Arts shall comply fully with the Greensboro Fire Chief's parking and traffic requests.
3. The Board expects Highland Center for the Arts shall comply with the April 25 request as written: "A dedicated staff member will monitor and record decibel levels during each event, with particular attention to sound levels at the edge of the property."
4. The Board expects "there will be limited to no sound bleed beyond the property boundaries" as presented in the April 25 request and as conveyed in the May 20 hearing.

Signed:

_____, vice chair
clerk

Nathaniel Smith

date _____

Brett Ann Stanciu

date _____

NOTICE:

This decision may be appealed to the Vermont Environmental Court by an interested person who participated in the proceeding (in person or in writing) before the Development Review Board. Such appeal must be made within 30 days of the date of this decision, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. #4471 and Rule 5(b) of the Vermont Rules for Environmental Court Proceedings.