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Huntley couple hope to transform farmstead into events venue



Chris and Barb Lincoln of Huntley are looking to transform 2.75 acres of farmland on Route 47 into an event venue for weddings, graduations, reunions and more. They bought the property at 8401 Route 47 in October 2016.

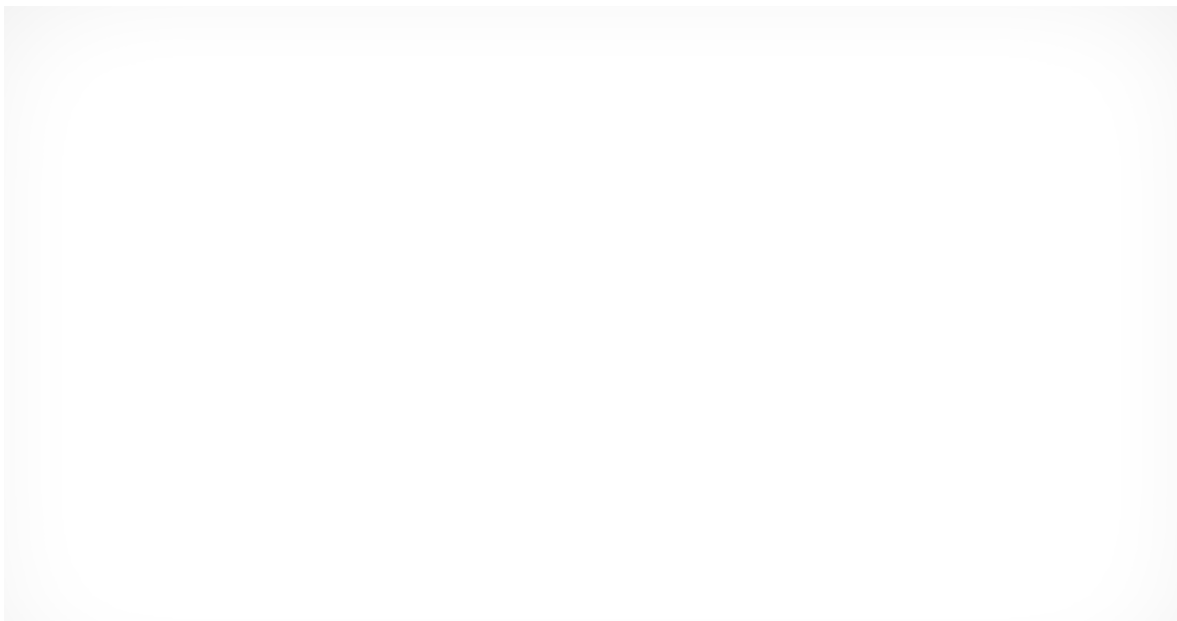


Madhu Krishnamurthy

The rustic country charm of a barn wedding is a vestige of a bygone era that Huntley residents Chris and Barb Lincoln hope to revive.

The couple bought a 2.75-acre farmstead off Route 47 for \$250,000 last year with a dream of turning the old dairy farm into a venue for wedding receptions, graduations, family reunions, corporate dinners and other gatherings.

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They moved into the single-family farmhouse, spending more than \$100,000 to renovate it, and are cleaning up the grounds to remove dilapidated structures. They seek village permission to renovate existing farm buildings, including a large barn where they hope to host larger functions. With the help of investors and a business loan, the couple plan to open the venues next summer.

"We so admire all of the history that is here and would like to preserve it as much as possible," said Chris Lincoln, 50, vice president of purchasing with Glenview-based Ryan Building Group. "We would like to just restore it (to its) original character. It's like going back in time almost."

The village board Thursday night reviewed the conceptual plan, which includes a request for a special use to be granted amending the property's current residential estate district zoning to allow an "agribusiness."

Officials agreed it was a needed venue and allowed the proposal to move forward through the development review process.

The proposal includes two indoor venues on the upper and lower levels of the barn with new entrances, new bathroom facilities, a bride's room, a covered pavilion overlooking acres of farmland, a courtyard patio and gardens. There would be three covered, paved areas suitable for seating and dining, as well as grass and landscaped areas for graduation and birthday parties and small weddings.

"When you drive onto the property, you're swept back to a time when life was simple and peaceful," said Barb, 49, who worked as an interior designer decorating model homes for 20 years. "That's the experience we want to share. It's just a more peaceful, laid-back atmosphere. Renovated dairy farms ... that rustic feel, there is not really many in our area. There's demand for something other than a banquet hall."

The couple plan to host only one event per weekend.

The site has enough room to erect a tent, where businesses could have beer or wine tastings with local brewers and food trucks. Customers would have to hire a caterer for food. If the venue is granted a liquor license, alcohol could be served from portable bar carts, according to the proposal.

Parking would be accommodated in open grass areas behind the property, and portable restrooms would be brought in for events. The village would have to grant a zoning exception to allow parking on grass rather than a paved surface.

The department of transportation has to review a proposed access to Route 47, and owners would need to make all structures compliant with building codes, including fire suppression and compliance with the state's accessibility code, officials said.