

**RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
OF THE COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**

**Resolution Number: 24-**

**Record Number: PLN-2024-18885**

**Assessor's Parcel Number: 500-011-007**

**Resolution conditionally approving the Ridgefield Events Conditional Use Permit.**

**WHEREAS**, the Ridgefield Events submitted an application and evidence in support of approving the Conditional Use Permit for Special Events; and

**WHEREAS**, the County Planning Division reviewed the application and evidence and has referred the application and evidence to reviewing agencies for site inspections, comments and recommendations; and

**WHEREAS**, the Humboldt County Planning Commission held a duly-noticed public hearing on April 4, 2024, and reviewed, considered, and discussed the application for the Conditional Use Permit, and reviewed and considered all evidence and testimony presented at the hearing.

**Now, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Planning Commission makes all the following findings:

**1. FINDING:**

**Project Description:** A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to authorize a seasonal special event venue (primarily weddings) between April to October, with a maximum of 120 guests per event and a maximum of 30 events per year. Events are expected to occur for elopements from Monday through Thursday (typically between 2-20 guests max) and weddings on Friday through Sunday (typically between 30-120 guests). Hours of operations will be 9:30am to 9:30pm, with guests on site generally from 1pm to 9:30pm. Events will be centered in the terrace area in front of the existing residence. Portable toilets with handwashing stations will be used during events and on-site parking will be made available. Food for events will be provided through off-site catering. Water for handwashing will be provided by private water. No overnight accommodation is authorized by this permit.

**EVIDENCE:** a) Project File: PLN-2024-18885

**2. FINDING:** **CEQA:** The requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act have been met. The proposed project is exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15301 *Existing Facilities* and Section 15304 *Minor Alterations to Land* of the State CEQA Guidelines.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) The Class 1 exemption applies to the operation, permitting, repair, maintenance or minor alteration of existing public and private structures or topographical features involving negligible or no expansion of the former use. The subject site is developed and no new construction is proposed. Existing grassy areas onsite will be utilized as parking areas during events and one existing driveway encroachment along the private driveway from the intersection of Fickle Hill Road will be paved to comply with requirements set by the Land Use Division of Public Works.
  - b) The Class 4 exemption applies to minor or temporary use of land having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment. The project proposes use of the property for a total of up to 30 events per year during a 6-month period (middle of April through middle of October). It is reasonable to view the use as “temporary” given the frequency and limited duration of the activity seeking a permit.
  - c) The project does not have and of the exceptions to Categorical Exemptions contained in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2.

**3. FINDING:** **Public Comment:** Public Notice in excess of that required either by the State of California or the Humboldt County Code has been provided to potentially concerned residents for consideration of this Conditional Use Permit.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) The Planning Department mailed a Notice of Application (NOA) on February 16, 2024, to property owners and occupants within 1000 feet of the proposed project. The purpose of the NOA was to inform the neighborhood of the pending application and provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the application prior to the hearing. As of March 21, 2024, approximately 27 comment letters (or emails) were received, and the Applicant submitted a response to public comments. The letters contained comments both in support of the project and expressing concern about the project.

- b) Several comments of support were received for the project. In a comment letter dated January 20, 2024, the City of Arcata (City) indicated the Applicant has worked with the City to provide a conservation easement on the subject parcel, due to its proximity to the Arcata Community Forest, that would provide open space and habitat protection in perpetuity while also ensuring productive use of the existing developed area on the property. Additional comments recommend support based on community benefits, the absence of disturbance from past events, and that the size and location of the property provides for sufficient area and noise attenuation to support such events.
- c) Several comments of concern were also received regarding the project. The concerns included noise, traffic, fire risk, water use, wastewater, alcohol use, lighting, and hours of operation. Many of the concerns described were identified during staff analysis and conditions of approval were included to address the concerns voiced by the neighborhood. The Applicant also provided a response to public concerns and expanded project description, and a response letter to the neighbors.

#### **FINDINGS FOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT**

**4. FINDING:**

The proposed development is in is in conformance with all applicable policies and standards in the Humboldt County General Plan 2017.

**EVIDENCE:**

- a) The property is predominantly designated as Timberland with a small sliver designated for Residential Estates. Events would occur in the portion planned Timberland. The timberland designation is utilized to classify land that is primarily suitable for the growing, harvesting and production of timber. The event venue will be in an existing clearing on the property and will not interfere with the continued use of the property for growing timber.

The rental of space for weddings and similar special events is a use that is supplemental and temporary. The frequency and range of months targeted for events demonstrate that the use is limited and seasonal and will therefore not conflict with timber operations. The property owner signed a conservation easement with the City of Arcata, so timber harvesting will be minimal. The restriction imposed through the operations plan and permit conditions place limits on the number and duration of events minimizing potential conflicts with the primary use of the land.

- b) The proposed project will have no net effect on housing densities. The parcel was not included in the 2019 County Housing Inventory. The purpose of the proposed project is for a special events venue and will not affect the existing residential use of the property. The project is consistent with the County's Housing Element.
- c) Per review of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Biogeographic Information and Observation System (BIOS) which hosts the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) in February 2024, a total of two (2) unique species were identified as having the possibility of occurrence on Site the western lily (*Lilium occidentale*) and the American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*). The proposed project is for the use of a maintained open space (dirt and gravel roads and mowed grass/pasture areas) as an events space for small weddings of up to approximately 120 guests between the months of the middle of April through the middle of October. No ground disturbance is proposed. Review of the Humboldt County WebGIS (WebGIS) tool shows no Streamside Management Area or Wetland Area (SMAWO) on Site as defined by Humboldt County Code (HCC) Section 314-61.
- d) The subject parcel is located within areas of low and high instability and outside of any Alquist-Priolo fault hazard area. There are no mapped historic landslides. The Mad River Fault Zone runs east of the residence and on the eastern portion of the subject parcel. No new construction is authorized by this permit. There are no mapped flood zones on the subject parcel. The subject parcel is located within an area of high fire hazard severity. The parcel is located with the State Responsibility Area (SRA) and within the Arcata Fire Protection District (Arcata FPD). According to the Operations Plan, there is a fire-truck turnaround space on the subject parcel and there is 30,000-gallons of water storage. The Arcata FPD received a project referral and recommended approval of the project.
- e) The project was referred to the Northwest Information Center (NWIC), Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, Blue Lake Rancheria, and the Wiyot Tribe. Comments were received from NWIC, the Wiyot Tribe, and Blue Lake Rancheria. NWIC recommended further study and consultation with local tribes.

**5. FINDING:**

The subject parcel is zoned Timber Production Zone (TPZ). The

proposed development is consistent with the purposes of the TPZ.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is required for special events in accordance with §314-62.1 *Special Events and Attractions*. The CUP would authorize the use of the property as a seasonal venue for special events (primarily weddings) between April to October. An approximate maximum of 120 guests per event and a maximum of 30 events per year are proposed. Events are expected to occur for elopements from Monday through Thursday (typically between 2-20 guests max) and weddings on Friday through Sunday (typically between 30-120 guests). Hours of operations will be 9:30am to 9:30pm, with guests on site generally from 1pm to 9:30pm. It is reasonable to view the use as “temporary” given the frequency and limited duration of the activity seeking a permit.
  - b) The supplemental use as a event venue will not change the primary use of the property for growing timber.

- 6. FINDING:**
- The establishment of a special events venue for weddings and similar events and the conditions under which it may be operated or maintained will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare or materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) The venue site is surrounded on three sides by timberland. The closest residence to the west is 300 feet away and there are three other residences to the west that are between 565 and 800 feet from the venue location. The relatively limited size of the gatherings and the dispersed nature of development in the area limits the likelihood of a significant impact on the community.
  - b) The conditions of approval include restrictions on event-related noise requiring that speakers be directed inward and away from the nearest property lines.
  - c) Conditions of approval to require the applicant to improve the driveway apron at Fickle Hill to commercial standards, ensure visibility at the driveway meets County standards, apply for and obtain an annual permit from the Public Works Land Use office to provide temporary traffic control during each event which requires the submittal of a Traffic Control Plan prepared by a Registered Civil Engineer or Traffic Engineer and provide additional insurance to the County. Additionally, no on-street

parking along Fickle Hill Road would be authorized by this permit.

- d) There is sufficient area in the designated parking area and the overflow parking area to accommodate event attendees and space for the property owners, caterers, musicians, or others that may be in attendance to support the event.
- e) The event venue will be limited to 120 guests and 30 events per year.
- f) The parcel is large and the venue is surrounded on three sides by timberland. The developed area to the west consists of 4 houses also on larger lots. The closest house is 300 feet from the venue and the other three residences are between 565 and 800 feet away.

**7. FINDING:** Development permits shall be issued only for a lot that was created in compliance with all applicable state and local subdivision regulations.

**EVIDENCE:** a) The subject parcel has been determined to be one legal parcel as created prior to 1964.

**8. FINDING:** The proposed development does not reduce the residential density for any parcel below that utilized by the Department of Housing and Community Development in determining compliance with housing element law.

**EVIDENCE:** a) The parcel was not included in the housing inventory of Humboldt County's 2019 Housing Element.

**DECISION**

**NOW, THEREFORE**, based on the above findings and evidence, the Humboldt County Planning Commission hereby:

- Adopts the findings set forth in this resolution; and
- Conditionally approves the Conditional Use Permit (record Number: PLN-2024-18885) subject to the conditions of approval attached hereto as Attachment 1A.

Adopted after review and consideration of all the evidence **April 4, 2024**.

The motion was made by COMMISSIONER \_\_\_\_\_ and second by COMMISSIONER \_\_\_\_\_ and the following vote:

AYES:        COMMISSIONERS:

NOES:        COMMISSIONERS:

ABSENT:    COMMISSIONERS:

ABSTAIN:    COMMISSIONERS:

DECISION:

I, John Ford, Secretary to the Planning Commission of the County of Humboldt, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct record of the action taken on the above-entitled matter by said Commission at a meeting held on the date noted above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
John Ford, Director  
Planning and Building Department