



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 4/4/2024

File #: 24-407

To: Planning Commission
From: Planning and Building Department
Agenda Section: Public Hearing

SUBJECT:
Ridgefield Events; Conditional Use Permit
Assessor Parcel Number: 500-011-007
Record Number: PLN-2024-18885
Arcata area

A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to authorize the use of the property as a seasonal venue for special events (primarily weddings) between April and October. The events would include up to 120 guests per event and a maximum of 30 events per year. Elopement events would be scheduled 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 will be used during events and on-site parking will be made available. Food for events will be provided through off-site catering.

RECOMMENDATION(S):
That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the resolution (Resolution 24-__). (Attachment 1) which does the following:
 - a. Finds that the proposed project complies with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance; and
 - b. Finds the project exempt from further environmental review pursuant to Section 15301 *Existing Facilities* and 15304 *Minor Alterations to Land* of the State CEQA Guidelines, and that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment; and
 - c. Approves the Ridgefield Events Conditional Use Permit subject to the conditions of approval (Attachment 1A).

DISCUSSION:

Project Location: This project is in the Arcata area, on the northeast side of Fickle Hill Road,

approximately 800 feet northeast of the intersection of Wagon Jack Lane and Fickle Hill Road, on the property known as 2242 Fickle Hill Road.

Present Plan Land Use Designations: Residential Estates and Timberland (RE2.5-5, T) Humboldt County General Plan, Density: 2.5 to 5 acres per dwelling unit, Slope: Low/High Instability (1/3).

Present Zoning: Timber Production Zone (TPZ).

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): The project is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to Sections 15301 *Existing Facilities* and 15304(e) *Minor Alterations to Land* of the CEQA Guidelines.

State Appeal Status: Project is not appealable to the California Coastal Commission.

Major Issues: None.

Executive Summary: The applicant is seeking a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to authorize the use of the subject parcel as a seasonal venue for special events (primarily weddings) between April to October in the Fickle Hill area. The 79-acre parcel is zoned Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) and is developed with a single-family residence. The Applicant proposes the use of an outdoor terrace area in the northwest corner of the Site, which is where all events will be centered.

The special events venue would operate from mid- April to mid-October with events occurring Monday - Sunday. There would be a maximum of 30 events annually. According to the Operations Plan, elopements would occur from Monday through Thursday (typically between 2 - 20 guests) and weddings on Friday through Sunday (typically between 30 -120 guests). The hours of operation are from 9:30 am to no later than 9:30 pm with guests on site generally between 1:00 pm to no later than 9:30 pm. The site receives electrical power from PG&E which will be utilized to power the existing residence onsite, as well as onsite lighting and venue accessories.

The potential impacts associated with this Conditional Use Permit for special events is related to the degree to which the events could be disruptive to the community. 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.

Noise: Some events will feature amplified music. The conditions of approval include restrictions on event-related noise requiring that speakers be directed inward and away from the nearest property lines.

Access and Parking: Access to the subject parcel is from Fickle Hill Road, which is a paved, County-maintained road without pedestrian facilities. The Department of Public Works (DPW) commented that Fickle Hill Road has a varying width road right of way but is paved with a painted centerline stripe.

The road has adequate functional capacity to handle event traffic (Attachment 3). DPW noted the current driveway gate appears to only provide a single traffic lane which does not meet FIRE SAFE standards. DPW recommends 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, obtain an encroachment permit for this work, 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.

Parking for the event will be provided on-site. Humboldt County Code (HCC) Section 109-1.2.9 *Parking Spaces for Uses Not Specified* Parking requirements assigns the Director of Planning and Building with responsibility for determining appropriate parking requirements for uses not specified. An average of two (2) people per vehicle is assumed to determine parking demand. Based on a special event with 120 people, 60 parking spaces would be required. The site plan shows 81 dedicated parking spaces in a grassy area in the southern portion of the parcel (Attachment 1C). The site plan also shows an overflow parking east of the residence.

The Operations Plan indicates that shuttle options may be used by attendees as well, which would reduce the parking demand. Sufficient parking for the events can be accommodated on site.

The driveway is approximately 600 feet from the intersection with Fickle Hill Road to where the driveway turns into the site. The driveway appears to serve two other residences, so traffic on the driveway is minimal. The addition of traffic from infrequent limited scale events is not likely to adversely affect the functioning of the driveway. If all 30 events were of the largest size (120 attendees), which would result in 60 cars coming to the site, this would be less than one event per week between April and October. Vehicles coming to and leaving the site associated with events would be vehicles arriving for approximately an hour prior to the event and then vehicles slowly dispersing over time. Vehicles will not be constantly coming and going over prolonged periods of time. If there were more than one event per week, this would result in weeks where there are no events. The access to the site is sufficient to serve the proposed event venue at the scale proposed.

The driveway travels along the east side of another residential lot. That neighboring parcels access is to the west of the subject driveway so the event trips will not conflict with that driveway or place traffic too close to the residence. There is a residence directly on Fickle Hill Road east of the driveway. This house is close to Fickle Hill Road and the event traffic will be a small portion of the traffic on that road. Parking and traffic will not adversely affect the neighboring properties.

Fire Safety: The subject parcel is located within an area of high fire hazard severity. The parcel is located within 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 (Attachment 1B). The Arcata FPD received a project referral and recommended approval of the project.

Water Use and Wastewater: The subject parcel is served by a small water system, groundwater well and an On-site Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS), however, the use of the on-site water and wastewater treatment system will be minimized. No onsite food preparation is proposed by this permit. All food preparation will be performed offsite through appropriate catering services. The only private water that will be used is for the caterers to wash their hands when handling food prior to the event. The applicant estimates less than 5 gallons per event would be required for handwashing. Beverages for events, including water, will be brought to the site by the caterers. Used dishes will be collected and washed off-site. Portable toilets with handwashing stations will be provided for each event and on-site parking will be made available in an area of mowed grass/pasture with a secondary overflow parking area designated onsite. No overnight stays would be authorized by this permit. The Department of Environmental Health (DEH) recommended that caterers have access to potable water at events and access to approved handwashing and toilet facilities, which is added to the conditions of approval.

Public Comments: The Planning Department mailed a Notice of Application (NOA) dated 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 (Attachment 4). The letters contained comments both in support of the project and expressing concern about the project.

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.

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 (Attachment 1D), and a response letter to the neighbors (included in Attachment 4).

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The project was referred to responsible agencies and all responding agencies have either responded with no comment or recommended approval or conditional approval. (Attachment 3)

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Planning Commission could elect to add or delete conditions of approval. The Planning Commission could elect not to approve the project, or to require the applicant to submit further evidence, or modify the project. Modifications may cause potentially significant impacts, additional

CEQA analysis and findings may be required. These alternatives could be implemented if the Planning Commission is unable to make all of the required findings. Planning Division staff has concluded that the required findings in support of the proposal have been made.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
 - A. Conditions of Approval
 - B. Operations Plan
 - C. Site Plan
 - D. Applicant Response to Public Comment and Expanded Project Description
2. Applicant's Evidence in Support of the Required Findings
3. Referral Agency Comments and Recommendations
4. Public Comments

Applicant

Ridgefield Events
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Arcata, CA 95521

Owners

Robert Davies and Christina Marie Stenborg Living Trust
Attn: Jonathan Westleigh Stenborg-Davies
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Arcata, CA 95521

Agent

Same as Applicant.

Please contact Max Hilken, Assigned Planner, at 707-443-5054 or by email at hilkenm@lacoassociates.com <<mailto:hilkenm@lacoassociates.com>>, if you have any questions about the scheduled item.