

Subject: FW: Planning Commissioners of Humboldt County
Date: Tuesday, September 2, 2025 2:44:03 PM

From: Adrienne tomkinson
Sent: Tuesday, September 02, 2025 2:36 PM
To: Planning Clerk <planningclerk@co.humboldt.ca.us>
Subject: Planning Commissioners of Humboldt County

Caution: This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

Ivar Skavdal, Dist 1
Thomas Mulder, Dist 2
Noah Levy, Dist 3
Jerome Qiriazzi Dist 4
Peggy O'Neill Dist 5
Lorna McFarlane, At Large
Sarah West, At Large

This letter concerns the proposed modification of RidgeField's conditional use permit. I previously submitted comments opposing RidgeField's original application, noting that the use was inconsistent and incompatible with the TPZ and U zoning. I also expressed concerns about noise, as most property owners in this area chose to live here specifically for the peace and quiet of a rural setting. In addition, I raised serious safety concerns about Fickle Hill Road—its steep, winding nature makes it especially dangerous when combined with impaired drivers leaving events after consuming alcohol. This creates a situation of not "if," but "when" a tragic accident will occur.

Now, in a very short time, RidgeField is seeking to expand the venue. The noise issue I originally raised has unfortunately come to pass. It is a real disturbance every Saturday afternoon and evening. I can no longer enjoy a peaceful evening in my yard during the summer and fall months—the very time when Humboldt's weather encourages outdoor living. It is clear RidgeField is not monitoring noise at their property lines. The amplified sound, including an MC shouting into a microphone, carries directly into my yard, which is about 600 feet from the property boundary. This is extremely disruptive. While I respect personal property rights, they do not extend to activities that clearly and consistently disturb neighboring residents. RidgeField has failed in this regard and has not shown themselves to be

a good neighbor.

Because of RidgeField's demonstrated inability to manage noise, I am writing to object to this modification. I urge all commissioners to vote no on the request to expand their conditional use permit. I also ask that the commissioners require RidgeField to implement an ongoing noise monitoring and reporting system as a condition for retaining their current permit. Failure to demonstrate compliance with the noise limits set forth in the original CUP should result in its immediate revocation.

Additional concerns with this type of venue include:

- The impact on local residential wells and the availability of household water.
- The risk to water quality from a large-scale wastewater disposal system located uphill from our wells.
- Increased traffic safety hazards on Fickle Hill Road, which is already steep and curvy, especially given the additional pedestrian and bicycle use following the opening of the Ridge Trail.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Tomkinson

2145 Fickle Hill Road

Arcata, CA 95521

From: [Boyd, Brian](#)
To: [Planning Clerk](#)
Subject: Planning Commission Meeting, Sept 4, 2025 Ridgefield Events, Conditional Use Permit Modification: Arcata Area, Record Number PLN-2025- 18885-MOD01 (filed June 12, 2025); Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 500-011-024, (formerly APN 500-011-007)
Date: Monday, September 01, 2025 6:24:26 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Caution: This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

To: Humboldt County Planning Commissioners

(Ivar Skavdal, Dist 1

Thomas Mulder, Dist 2

Noah Levy, Dist 3

Jerome Qiriazzi Dist 4

Peggy O'Neill Dist 5

Lorna McFarlane, At Large

Sarah West, At Large)

This letter pertains to the proposed modification of RidgeField's conditional use permit. I wrote in opposition to RidgeField's original application for the conditional use permit, citing concerns that the use was inconsistent and incompatible with the TPZ and U zoning. I also cited concerns about noise as most property owners in this area bought homes in this rural location for the peace and quiet that comes with living in a rural area. I also cited concerns about the curvy and steep conditions that Fickle Hill Road present to party goes driving down the road after consuming alcohol and this created a situation of not "if" but "when", as it is only a matter of time where this combination leads to a tragic and deadly accident.

In a very short time Ridgefield is now seeking to expand the venue. The noise is a DISTURBANCE on Saturday afternoons and evenings. It seems to be clear that Ridgefield is not monitoring noise at their property lines, because it is very loud and extremely disturbing. I am a believer in personal property rights; however, their use should not disturb others outside their property and clearly they are failing at keeping the noise of their events from disturbing their neighbors. Ridgefield is NOT A GOOD NEIGHBOR in this regard.

Because of their demonstrated failures to manage noise. I am writing to object this modification and I urge all commissioners to vote no on this request to modify the CUP for expanded use. I also, would like the Commissioners to direct Ridgefield Events to subscribe to an ongoing noise monitoring and reporting protocol to retain their current CUP and failure to verify that noise levels are below levels noted in the conditions of approval associated with the original CUP will result in the immediate revocation of their CUP.

Other concerns associated with this type of venue:

1. Impact to residential wells in the area and the availability of water in our wells for our

household use.

2. The impact on water quality associated with a large scale wastewater disposal field located topographically above our wells.
3. Fickle Hill Road is a curvy and steep, and the opening of the Ridge Trail has brought a significant increase of pedestrian and bicycle traffic on the hill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brian W. Boyd
Senior Natural Resources Scientist
Cell: 775.223.9020
56 Wagon Jack Lane, Arcata CA 95521
Brian.Boyd@jacobs.com
www.jacobs.com



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From: [John Bergenske](#)
To: [Planning Clerk](#)
Subject: RidgeField Proposed Modification to Conditional Use Permit
Date: Monday, September 01, 2025 2:00:27 PM

Caution: This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

To: Humboldt County Planning Commissioners

(Ivar Skavdal, Dist 1
Thomas Mulder, Dist 2
Noah Levy, Dist 3
Jerome Qiriazzi Dist 4
Peggy O'Neill Dist 5
Lorna McFarlane, At Large
Sarah West, At Large)

This letter pertains to the proposed modification of RidgeField's conditional use permit. I wrote in opposition to RidgeField's original application for the conditional use permit, citing concerns that the use was inconsistent and incompatible with the TPZ and U zoning. I also cited concerns about noise as most property owner in this area bought our homes in a rural location for the peace and quiet that comes with living in a rural area. I also cited concerns about the curvy and steep conditions that Fickle Hill Road present to party goes driving down the road after consuming alcohol and this created a situation of not "if" but "when", as it is only a matter of time where this combination leads to a tragic and deadly accident.

In a very short time Ridgefield is now seeking to expand the venue. The noise concern that I originally voiced have come to pass. It is a REAL DISTURBANCE on Saturday afternoons and evenings. I have lost my right to enjoy a peaceful evening in my yard every Saturday late afternoon and evening during the summer and fall months when the weather in Humboldt is actually conducive to being outside. It is clear that Ridgefield is not monitoring noise at their property lines, because it is very loud and having an MC screaming in the crowd of guests is traveling right into my yard, which is approximately 600ft from the edge of Ridgefield's property line. It is extremely disturbing. While I am a believer in personal property rights, their use should not disturb others outside their property and clearly they are failing at keeping the noise of their events from disturbing their neighbors. Ridgefield is NOT A GOOD NEIGHBOR in this regard.

Because of their demonstrated failures to manage noise. **I am writing to object to this modification and I urge all commissioners to vote no on this request to modify the CUP for expanded use.** I also, would like the Commissioners to direct Ridgefield Events to subscribe to an ongoing noise monitoring and reporting protocol in order to retain their current CUP and failure to verify that noise levels are below levels noted in the conditions of approval associated with the original CUP will result in the immediate revocation of their CUP.

Other concerns associated with this type of venue:

1. Impact to residential wells in the area and the availability of water in our wells for our household use.

2. The impact on water quality associated with a large scale waste water disposal field located topographically above our wells.
3. Fickle Hill Road is a curvy and steep road and the opening of the Ridge Trail has brought a significant increase of pedestrian and bicycle traffic on the hill.

Thanks you for your consideration,

John Bergenske

John Bergenske

Bergenske Professional Consulting Services

707.496.9742

www.bpconsultingservices.com





BENCHMARK Realty Group

Mark W. Burtchett
Broker/Owner

RECEIVED

By mkein2 at 3:27 pm, Sep 02, 2025

September 2, 2025

Humboldt County Planning Commission
825 5th Street
Eureka, CA 95501

SUBJECT: Ridgefield Events; Conditional Use Permit Modification
APN 500-011-024
Record Number: PLN-2024-18885-MOD1
Agenda Item: 25-1080

Dear Planning Commission Members,

I'm writing to address the noise pollution produced by the Ridgeview Events property use and how it can negatively affect contiguous property values.

There was a statement made by the applicant in the original CUP application titled "What About Impacts On Property Values?" where he tried to make the case that their proposed use of the property would somehow "bolster" (his words) and support property values, not diminish them.

That statement is just not true. When a neighboring property owner sells a property, there are certain required written disclosures that they must provide to the buyer. One such disclosure specifically pertains to any neighborhood noise issues. In this case an adjoining or nearby property would be legally required to disclose the neighboring use as an event venue with noise, traffic, etc. Such a disclosure would most definitely limit the number of buyers interested in a property, thereby likely affecting the ultimate value the property could be sold for.

I have observed neighborhood noise issues many times in my 40+ year career in real estate sales in Humboldt County affecting properties we have represented for sellers. To intensify the use through this proposed modification is only going to make the situation worse than it already is to surrounding property owners. To downplay the effect of such a property use to adjoining neighbors is just not correct in my opinion.

Sincerely,

Mark Burtchett

Broker/Owner

Benchmark Realty Group

Subject: FW: Ridgefiled events public comment
Date: Wednesday, September 3, 2025 5:14:54 PM

Sent: Wednesday, September 03, 2025 5:03 PM
To: Planning Clerk <planningclerk@co.humboldt.ca.us>
Subject: Ridgefiled events public comment

Caution: This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

Hello,

My name is William Scott and I am commenting on file number 25-1080, agenda number 1, regarding the Ridgefield events conditional use permit modification.

I have lived on Fickle Hill for 5 years now, and have a few concerns about proposed increase in guest allowances as well as it turning into an overnight event center.

My main concerns are increased stress on the local aquifer, wear and tear on Fickle Hill, and the dangers of combining alcohol with a lack of familiarity of our curvy and wildlife abundant road, and noise pollution.

The aquifer already gets low in the summer months, and I for one have to adjust my water usage, and am assuming my neighbors do as well. With an increased guest size, in addition with those guests most likely not being from the area nor being aware of such issues, I can see easily how it would negatively effect our water table. With summer being a popular season for weddings, this seems to me to be the most pressing issue.

In addition, our road can be quite dangerous to drive on, with the dense cloud and fog layers that can really cut down on visibility, combined with the heavy deer, fox and skunk presence. I am concerned about the safety of myself, my friends, my neighbors, and the patrons of Ridgefield.

Thank you,

William

From: [David White](#)
To: [Planning Clerk](#)
Cc: [Kein, Michael](#)
Subject: Comments on Conditional Use Permit Modification: PLN-2025-18885-MOD01 Agenda Number 25-1080
Date: Tuesday, September 02, 2025 8:42:43 AM
Attachments: [CUP Modification Written letter 8-2025.pdf](#)

Caution: This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

I am resubmitting with the **Agenda Item Number 25-1080**.

Humboldt County Planning Commission

3015 H Street

Eureka, CA 95501

Re: Comments on Conditional Use Permit Modification: **PLN-2025-18885-MOD01** APN 500-011-007

This letter is regarding the Conditional Use Permit Modification Application to increase the size and number of events at the Ridgefield Weddings and Events Facility at 2242 Fickle Hill Road. **I am requesting that the modifications be denied** for the reasons noted below.

We purchased our property at 2066 Fickle Hill Road in 1983, and built our own house as owner/builders, occupying the house in 1985, and we have lived here since. Our property is located 600' to the west of the Ridgefield property.

I believe that a venue of this sort has been, and will continue to be, completely inappropriate and incompatible in a rural residential neighborhood. Enlarging events will only increase the issues with neighbors. Ridgefield's most immediate neighbor is approximately 300' away from the proposed venue and there are multiple homes within 300' – 1000' that have been and, will continue to be, affected by their events.

Since Ridgefield started having events, there have been a number of events where the music and DJ, as well as shouting people, are clearly audible throughout the neighborhood. The most recent was in the last few weeks, where music was quite audible and the DJ could be clearly heard encouraging people to get up and dance. We have no way of going to the Ridgefield property to see if they are complying with the 80dba sound requirements that were laid out at the 2024 CUP Public Hearing. Either Ridgefield is not complying, or the sound levels need to be modified downward to less affect neighbors. To date, we have not made any complaints to the County as we are not sure how to do this. I could not find a clearly defined process on the County website, and I recently talked to a planner and his description of the process was vague.

We purchased our property to live in a rural area so we would not have to listen to loud neighbors and could enjoy sitting out on our deck in the afternoon and evening, enjoying the peace and quiet of the Redwood Forest. In a number of instances, this has not been possible due to the noise from Ridgefield. The applicants are proposing to increase both the size (to 175 people) and number (up to 40 per year) of their events. Additionally, they want to turn the house located on site into a "hotel" for up to 14 people to stay in. This brings up additional

questions of nighttime noise and the impact to the community water table and also increased septic use affecting that water supply for nearby properties. The 2024 CUP stated events were to be over by 9:30 p.m. If there are people staying overnight onsite, it is likely that the “party” will continue on into the night.

Other possible problems I see are the potential traffic increase on Fickle Hill Road which is a narrow two lane road and is deteriorating in many areas. The large, short term increase in traffic, possibly with alcohol involved, will pose a hazard for cars, and particularly bicycles and pedestrians. Also, there is an increase in fire hazard from cars parking in the grassy field and also from people wandering away from the event to the wooded portion of the site to smoke.

All of the above issues will have a negative effect on nearby property values. Who wants to buy a house where they will have to put up with the effects of a nearby event on a regular basis? Known neighborhood noise issues are required to be disclosed on real estate sale forms.

Section 6 of Resolution Number: 24-017, Approving the Condition Use Permit for the Ridgefield venue states: *“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”*. We believe that a number of the issues that have been raised are not in conformance with this section and raise safety issues and are injurious to our property.

This portion of Fickle Hill is made up primarily of residential homes. Increasing the size of events at a venue, already conducting large, noisy events, will only make it worse if these modifications are approved. **Please deny the requested modifications, or put stricter conditions on it that will eliminate the impacts on neighborhood homes, especially noise, from their events.**

Approved or not, Ridgefield should be required to conduct sound motoring any time there is amplified sound and report the results to County Planning to mitigate the current noise issue.

If the Commission decides, against the requests of neighbors, to approve the application, I request that the following additional conditions be added:

1. No loud noise or amplified sound after 9:30 p.m. All group activities must be moved indoors or off site at this time.
2. The County will require Ridgefield to do sound monitoring (80dba or less at the property line limit per the General Plan) as outlined in the original use hearing and the County will review sound levels after each outdoor event and take enforcement action as needed.
3. If there are two or more complaints on two separate events, or five or more on a single event, the County will suspend the entire Conditional Use Permit and schedule a new Public Hearing on the Conditional Use Permit.

County Planning only notified property owners within 300’ of the Ridgefield property that this application had been submitted. We only became aware of this application by word of mouth less than a week before the scheduled Public Hearing. Several residents made requests to Planning Director Ford to postpone the meeting and do a wider spread of noticing, (1000’) all of which were denied.

The neighborhood has not been adequately notified nor given adequate time to prepare which the holiday weekend has further complicated. The hearing should be postponed, or if it is held, any decision be continued to a later meeting. In the interim, additional notifications will be made further out in the neighborhood (1000'). Additional input should be allowed and a decision made at this later meeting.

Thank you,

Dave and Donna White

2066 Fickle Hill Road

Arcata, CA 95521

707-822-5404

davewhite@sbcglobal.net

September 1, 2025

Humboldt County Planning Commission
3015 H Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Re: Comments on Conditional Use Permit Modification: **PLN-2025-18885-MOD01** APN 500-011-007

This letter is regarding the Conditional Use Permit Modification Application to increase the size and number of events at the Ridgefield Weddings and Events Facility at 2242 Fickle Hill Road. **I am requesting that the modifications be denied** for the reasons noted below.

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I believe that a venue of this sort has been, and will continue to be, completely inappropriate and incompatible in a rural residential neighborhood. Enlarging events will only increase the issues with neighbors. Ridgefield's most immediate neighbor is approximately 300' away from the proposed venue and there are multiple homes within 300' – 1000' that have been and, will continue to be, affected by their events.

Since Ridgefield started having events, there have been a number of events where the music and DJ, as well as shouting people, are clearly audible throughout the neighborhood. The most recent was in the last few weeks, where music was quite audible and the DJ could be clearly heard encouraging people to get up and dance. We have no way of going to the Ridgefield property to see if they are complying with the 80dba sound requirements that were laid out at the 2024 CUP Public Hearing. Either Ridgefield is not complying, or the sound levels need to be modified downward to less affect neighbors. To date, we have not made any complaints to the County as we are not sure how to do this. I could not find a clearly defined process on the County website, and I recently talked to a planner and his description of the process was vague.

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Other possible problems I see are the potential traffic increase on Fickle Hill Road which is a narrow two lane road and is deteriorating in many areas. The large, short term increase in traffic, possibly with alcohol involved, will pose a hazard for cars, and particularly bicycles and pedestrians. Also, there is an increase in fire hazard from cars parking in the grassy field and also from people wandering away from the event to the wooded portion of the site to smoke.

All of the above issues will have a negative effect on nearby property values. Who wants to buy a house where they will have to put up with the effects of a nearby event on a regular basis? Known neighborhood noise issues are required to be disclosed on real estate sale forms.

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The neighborhood has not been adequately notified nor given adequate time to prepare which the holiday weekend has further complicated. The hearing should be postponed, or if it is held, any decision be continued to a later meeting. In the interim, additional notifications will be made further out in the neighborhood (1000'). Additional input should be allowed and a decision made at this later meeting.

Thank you,

Dave and Donna White
2066 Fickle Hill Road
Arcata, CA 95521

707-822-5404
davewhite@sbcglobal.net

RECEIVED

By mkein2 at 9:15 am, Sep 02, 2025

Regarding: CUP Modification PLN-2024-18885-MOD1 Ridgefield Event Center
Friday, August 29, 2025 12:17:33 PM

Caution: This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

August 29, 2025

County Of Humboldt Planning and Building Department 3015 H Street, Eureka, CA 95501

Re: Record Number CUP Modification PLN-2024-18885-MOD1

AP# 500-011-007

2242 Fickle Hill Road

Project Title: Ridgefield Events MODIFICATION to Conditional Use Permit for Wedding Events.

Dear Director Ford,

My name is Phylis Geller. I am the property owner and resident of 33 Inga Road, which is located off Fickle Hill Road, adjacent to the City of Arcata. My residence, as well as future investment properties I own situate at 124 and 176 Inga Road, are located approximately 685 feet and due west of the venue area known as the Ridgefield Event Center.

Thanks to Michael J Kein, MBA, Associate Planner, for providing me with appurtenant documents regarding a Modification to the original Permit.

As a close neighbor to the venue (one who can still regularly hear the sounds, ie: noise, from the venue) I respectfully request Notification be mailed to ***all neighboring properties within 1,000 feet of the venue***, as well as request for a ***postponement*** of the scheduled September 4th Public hearing. With the holiday weekend and being uninformed and therefore unaware of these numerous proposed changes, I think this is a reasonable request.

Very Truly,

Phylis J Geller
33 Inga Road,
Arcata, CA 95521

From: [David White](#)
To: [Ford, John](#); [Wilson, Mike](#)
Cc: [Kein, Michael](#); [Bohn, Rex](#); [Bushnell, Michelle](#); [Arroyo, Natalie](#); [Madrone, Steve](#)
Subject: CUP Modification PLN-2024-18885-MOD1
Date: Friday, August 29, 2025 10:12:01 AM

Caution: This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

Planning Director Ford,

As a nearby resident to the property in the above application, I am writing to request a broader notification of neighboring properties and postponement of the scheduled August 4th Public hearing.

According to Planner Michael Kein, notifications were only sent out to properties within 300' of the subject property. This does not even begin to cover the properties affected by noise and other issues caused by Mr. Davies facility. **I request that notifications be sent out to all neighboring properties within 1000' of Mr. Davies property.** When Mr. Davies filed the initial CUP request last year, the notifications were eventually sent out to properties within 1000' to give all neighbor the opportunity to comment.

Additionally, because the time to the Public Hearing is so short, **I further request that the Public Hearing be postponed** so that the further notifications can be sent out and that nearby neighbors have an opportunity to make a decision on whether they want to comment on the application.

Sincerely,

Dave White
2066 Fickle Hill Rd.
Arcata, CA 95521

707-499-0461
davewhite@sbcglobal.net

Dear Supervisor Wilson and Commissioner Ford,

I am emailing you to request a delay in the hearing regarding Ridgefield Events, Conditional Use Permit Modification that is currently scheduled for September 4, 2025 until a later date.

The first I heard of this matter was in mid-August when I received the first notification for a hearing planned for August 21st, but then moved back two weeks to September 4th. My wife and I are adjacent property owners to the South (APN 500-011-023) of the subject parcel as well as owners of APN 500-011-022. We were originally supportive of the original CUP. However, after nearly two seasons during which weddings and events have been undertaken next door we are 100% opposed to any proposed modifications and have a number of reasons why we have done a 180 degree about face.

While the parties seeking this modification have been planning for this and working on it since before June 12, 2025 when they opened the new file, we have only recently been able to start to develop our responses to this proposed modification. We believe this modification has such significant impacts on our own family and property, as well as the neighborhood, and all those who travel Fickle Hill Rd. that I am requesting some additional time to develop our response. For example, I am submitting a Public Records Request to California Highway Patrol, who patrols Fickle Hill Rd., to determine the number of accidents and whether alcohol (potentially DUIs) were involved in traffic incidents on Fickle Hill Rd. since April 2024; unfortunately, I do not believe that I will have the results of this request by September 4th as an officer has to review all the potential incidents individually. I am particularly aware of this situation because in the 43 years we have driven the road, our family has been involved in 4 accidents, three involving alcohol and two resulting in DUI arrests (no, I was not a driver under the influence!). I've also hit a deer one night that popped out of the brush.

In addition, we have only been able to see this past week some of the CUP's supporting documents, including a letter submitted to the Planning Commission staff and Commissioners during the original application process which were both a revelation and a surprise to us.

We are a past supporter of the CUP who after 2 seasons of weddings/events have now seen the results and changed our minds 100%. I want to be certain that I can develop the thorough and appropriate responses that this application warrants and demonstrate to the Planning Commission that this CUP should not be modified to increase the number of events or number of guests.

Fortunately, time is NOT of the essence, as Ridgefield Events calendar for the remaining portion of the 2025 season through mid-October is fully booked, and according to their website they only have 5 open dates left for their 2026 season beginning mid-April of 2026.

Thanks for your consideration of my request for a delay of this hearing.

Respectfully,

Ken Stumpf

2300 Fickle Hill Rd.

Arcata, CA 95521

(707)-822-7737

APNs 500-011-023 and 500-011-022

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Thu, Mar 27, 2025 at 9:18 PM

Subject: Ridgefield neighbor

Hi Scott,

We appreciate your direct communication and respect for the needs of the neighborhood and consideration for the impact to the neighbors regarding your event space. I think it's really great you have provided written communication to all neighbors every time there has been a change to the use permit for your event space. I am an event coordinator (Humboldt County's farmers markets) in my day job, so I understand this process and the value of community input. Your communication has been excellent.

We live on Wagon Jack Lane, just down the road, and I personally have no problem with what you have been doing and what you have planned. I love events and love seeing our beautiful and special neighborhood enjoyed by visitors and others in our community. For me, and my young kids, it's fun to sit on our back deck and hear (very faint, hardly discernible and absolutely not disruptive) music in the distance at night. We hear many neighbors playing live music frequently, and we can hear *every* event at Cal Poly and Crabs Ballpark, and those seem much louder than anything I've ever heard from your events given the way sound travels up the hill. We enjoy all of it!

We have never had any issues with vehicle traffic or folks parking on our lane or on our property, and we are practically across the street.

My parents also live on this lane and worry about traffic, but have had no actual impact from your events :)

Keep up the great work and thank you for the good communication.

Sincerely,

Portia Bramble
Wagon Jack Lane, Arcata

8/29/2025

Dear Planning Commission and Planning Staff:

Initially we supported the Ridgefield Events venue as it was presented to us – as neighbors opening their home to a limited number of weddings, emphasis on small elopements. In fact, we became excited to possibly host some wedding attendees in our home on the front of our parcel as we are preparing for a short-term rental in the front of the property then tackling building a little mother-in-law unit in the back for our retirement years.

A year and a half after approval of the original CUP, we've experienced our property being impacted negatively by traffic and noise. We do not support this modification to the existing Conditional Use Permit PLN-2024-18885.

We do not agree with Finding #5 of the “Resolution of the Planning Commission of the County of Humboldt”, Record Number: PLN-2024-18885-MOD1. Following are many reasons why.

Negative impact to our property:

The venue has decreased the tranquility of our parcel.

Due to the proximity of our home next to the driveway, cars pulling into the venue can be seen and heard from our house.



One can hear the music and DJ commentary at the back of our parcel. The reason we were drawn to purchasing this property 25 years ago was because of the back of the property which is surrounded by redwoods and is quiet and serene. We're struggling with the fact that we can hear events into the night. The property is being impacted such that there's a negative impact on its value and desirability.

Original concept for the wedding venue:

Direct quotes from the 'Operations Plan for Ridgefield Events' stamped and dated as received by Humboldt County Planning Jan. 16, 2024:

"We have envisioned Ridgefield Events as a complement to the CE [Conservation Easement gifted to the City of Arcata]. Instead of traditional development, we will instead host events that allow guests to appreciate and celebrate the beauty of the redwood forest, while maintaining the forest for its habitat and aesthetic value."

"Our venue will only be open from mid-April to mid-October as we are operating as an outdoor venue. My wife and I will run the business, there will be no employees.....Our goal over the next 3 years is to grow to 30 combined annual events with the majority being elopements which are smaller and lower impact events. Therefore, we anticipate operating for less than 10% of the year."

The initial proposed venue set forth above is from when the owners lived on site and events were held at what was their home. We supported this venue as presented, but the model has not been followed. They no longer live onsite distancing them from the effect of their business on the neighborhood and they have many employees. The constant booking of events has changed the neighborhood and affected our parcel and likely others. Due to our proximity near the Ridgefield driveway and the sound in the back of our parcel the solitude has been compromised. Even when the sounds are dulled/muffled it's not serene. This is something we didn't have to contend with before...it's not the sound of wind blowing through the trees and wildlife.

Number of events:

The current CUP allows for a couple of weekends a month during the summer and fall to enjoy our parcel without music interspersed with low frequency booming, microphoned DJ's, and cars coming and going in front of and along the northwesterly side of our house.

To put this into context, the current CUP allows up to 30 events between April and October, which if spread out among 30 weeks, allows for approximately 1 event per week. If the events truly are a combination of elopements (2-20 guests) and weddings (30-120 guests) as the current CUP permits, this allows the possibility of keeping a rural, quiet neighborhood. Any more than this is too much.

Capacity:

The request for a jump to 175 guests is overburdensome. By way of example, two people per car is 87 cars - not including all the cars entering and exiting for catering, decorating, employees cleaning up, etc.

Increased capacity equals increased noise. Noise is already an issue under the current CUP.

Fickle Hill road safety issues and impact beyond just the properties neighboring the events:

Fickle Hill Road is a narrow winding road often bounded by a steep slope on one side and a ditch on the other. There are obstacles like tree roots that are pushing up the roadbed and potholes, making it tricky to navigate as a local let alone someone not familiar with the road and possibly tipsy. The current CUP has increased traffic flow, which in turn causes wear and tear on the roadway as well as increased potential for accidents. The permit as it stands tests the limits of the road and community, so allowing more traffic will only worsen the road's condition.

Transparency and accountability:

It's hard for the County or Fickle Hill residents to monitor the number of events being held. We would like a way to see when events are being held and approximate number of attendees like a calendar with blanked out dates and type of event.

In the letter to County Planning staff and Planning Commissioners stamped "APPROVED APR 4 2024 Humboldt County PLANNING", owner responded to a question "What about website information?", noting that the website information [was] corrected to reflect [their] operations plan.

In April of 2025, the County found that the Ridgefield Events website was advertising the event facility as offering overnight lodging and special events with a capacity of up to 300 people, both of which were not consistent with the approved permit. Upon contacting the operator, it was explained that the website was based on an out-of-date business plan which had not been updated to reflect what had been approved in 2024.

In reviewing the website on 8/24/2025, the capacity is for 150 (not 120 as in the current CUP) and there's no statement of their Seasons of Operation, but there's a whole section explaining Seasonal considerations for all four seasons with pictures of their venue with each season implying year-round weddings. The current CUP doesn't allow for year-round events but allows for a six month season from mid-April through mid-October.

At the top of the website, it reads "ONLY 5 2026 DATES LEFT! NOW BOOKING 2027." My question is how many events have been booked, of what type, when? Up until April of this year the website was advertising 300 capacity and overnight lodging.

Compatibility with surrounding neighborhood:

The isolation provided by larger, rural parcels attract people to living on Fickle Hill. This venue began as neighbors opening their home to a limited number of events and now it's looking to become a commercial business on a TPZ, which appears to want to operate year-round.

Conclusion:

The impact to the surrounding homes is starting to seem overburdensome and it's not clear the current CUP has been complied with. We respectfully request this Modification be denied.

If the Planning Commission finds the applicant to be in compliance with the existing permit and elects to approve the modification, we request the following conditions of approval:

- Create a way for the public to see when events are being held and approximate number of attendees like a calendar with blanked out dates and type of event.
- Traffic study of Ridgefield driveways ingress/egress for full season to quantify increase in traffic.
- Engage whole of community downhill not just residences within 1000'.
- Clarify the language in the modified CUP. Do not leave loopholes for year-round events or overnight stays beyond the 6-month season from mid-April to mid-October.
- Clarify if there's an employee on site all night to monitor overnight stays for late night parties.

In Closing, please keep in mind that if the owners of the property have chosen to no longer live onsite, it may be because they no longer have the quiet enjoyment they once had ...and neither does the neighborhood, especially with the proposed modification to the venue.

Sincerely,

Tony and Lorien Sanchez

Michael Kein, Associate Planner

Humboldt County Planning Commission

Re: Ridgefield Events Conditional Use Permit Modifications

Record Number: PIN2025-18885-MOD 01

Sir:

As owners of a property directly across Fickle Hill Road from the site of Ridgefield Events, we write to oppose the modifications proposed to the existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP).

The current CUP allows for the use of the property at 2242 Fickle Hill Road as a seasonal venue for a maximum of 30 events (primarily weddings) per year with a maximum of 120 guests per event and no overnight stays. However, Applicant's website (ridgefieldweddings.co) appears to offer events throughout the year with as many as 150 guests per event and overnight stays for two participants. The CUP required Applicant to submit a monitoring report to the Planning Department to insure compliance with the conditions of approval. This would allow neighbors to keep apprised of the frequency and fashion of events. We are unaware of any monitoring reports being submitted and, if they do exist, how to access them.

Applicant's request to increase the number of events and the number of guests per event would significantly increase the impact on surrounding properties. Fickle Hill Road is a narrow, winding road with poor paving and obstacles like tree roots impairing the flow of traffic. Increased traffic on Fickle Hill Road would adversely affect property owners already using the road. Also, noise associated with these events would be more persistent than neighbors currently experience. Applicant also wishes to allow 14 "special event" guests to stay overnight on the property without specifying if these "special" events are included in the maximum of 40 events per year or how many "overnights" each special event would involve.

Recently, neighbors have reported a disturbing increase in the noise associated with events at Ridgefield. These reports raise questions about the onsite monitoring of events. Will there be a responsible person on site during the entire duration of the event, including overnight stays? This and other potential violations of the existing CUP have increased neighbors' concerns about the use of this Wildland Urban Interface property to host large gatherings of celebrants.

Our fundamental issue with the proposed modifications to the CUP is that there is currently no method of insuring compliance with the limits it imposes on Ridgefield Events. Until compliance with the current limits can be confirmed, we would oppose any modifications to the existing CUP. We would propose that Ridgefield Events make available to the community a monthly account of the dates of events it hosts and the number of attendees at each event.

Sincerely,

Joann and Eric Olson

Planning Commissioners and County staff,

Out of respect for your time and an understanding of how long meetings can sometimes go, I am writing to introduce my project ahead of time so as to keep my presentation brief at the hearing.

When you approved our CUP last April, you made clear that the 2 most important areas of concern were traffic and noise issues, and to date we have received zero complaints for either concern. This is due in part to the fact that my wife and I work every event along with our team. I personally lead my parking and traffic team and greet every guest when they enter the property. Additionally, I monitor sound levels at every event with a professional decibel meter at my property boundaries. This strict attention to compliance is something we have drilled into our entire team and is evidenced by our successful compliance with your conditions of approval.

You also asked me about my ongoing commitment to being a “good neighbor” as a business, which has echoed in my mind since then. It was at the top of my mind when I began working on this modification application and when I walked my neighborhood delivering more than 60 copies of a letter (in your packet) introducing my planned modification, seeking any questions or comments, and making my wife and I available in person for an open house. We received 3 positive responses from neighbors, **zero complaints or questions**, and no neighbors came by for our open house to ask questions. I provided neighbors with my personal cell phone number and encouraged them, if they had any questions at all, to text, call, or email me directly. In the 6 months since then, not one neighbor has reached out with any questions or concerns. We did however receive some positive feedback. In her response, one of our neighbors (whom I do not know and have never spoken with) wrote:

“We appreciate your direct communication and respect for the needs of the neighborhood and consideration for the impact to the neighbors regarding your event space. I think it's really great you have provided written communication to all neighbors every time there has been a change to the use permit for your event space.....For me, and my young kids, it's fun to sit on our back deck and hear (very faint, hardly discernible and absolutely not disruptive) music in the distance at night. We hear many neighbors playing live music frequently, and we can hear every event at Cal Poly and Crabs Ballpark, and those seem much louder than anything I've ever heard from your events given the way sound travels up the hill.”

In our off season, we completed a *voluntary* upgrade and added 2 new ADA compliant commercial restrooms to our venue. These restrooms allow us to better serve the ADA community and help elevate our venue experience for all guests. This project required the addition of a completely new septic system dedicated to these restrooms. The cost of this project was \$93,000 which I mention as evidence of our ongoing commitment to making Ridgefield an exceptional destination for weddings from across the country. This vision is taking shape: Our 2025 season (25 events) has been sold out since last September, our 2026 season (30 events) is 95% booked, and we are already booking into 2027. Expanding our guest total, increasing our number of events, and adding weekend packages will all support our continued hiring of additional staff and delivering more work to the more than 50 people who are directly employed at every event we host.

We are requesting a modification to our CUP that will allow us to accomplish 3 goals:

- Enable us to host guests in our house for 2-3 nights for a “weekend experience”
- Raise our total allowable guest count from 125 to 175
- Increase our total number of allowable events from 30 to 40.

These are all in response to the success of our business model, which is bringing couples from across the country to have their destination weddings in Humboldt County in the redwoods. Couples have repeatedly asked for the opportunity to stay onsite with their wedding party and/or family. Enabling these longer visits will reduce the number of guests we host in a given weekend by at least 200 people. We have thus far sold more than \$263,000 worth of these weekend packages from guests coming from Los Angeles, Sacramento, Austin, Denver, Seattle, and New York.

A point worth clarifying is that our request for 40 events is based on doing *only* single-day events. If the weekend packages continue to be as popular as we anticipate and as early sales numbers suggest, then each weekend package takes the place of 3 possible single day events. Therefore, if we were to do only weekend packages, we would be hosting a maximum of 20-25 events. We anticipate that our bookings will trend towards a balance of events and as such, we may never get to a season of 40 events. However, the demand is there, and the ability to do more hiring is there, and if we can expand our number of events then we can continue to increase the overall financial contribution of Ridgefield to our regional economy as well as adding employees to our team. Our business is continuing to grow, our vendor team is expanding, and we have hired 14 employees since receiving our CUP, including an event manager (70K annual salary position), 2 day-of coordinators and 4 bartenders (\$25/hr) and 8 staff (\$20/hr). All positions also include an annual bonus structure and a catered meal with every shift for every employee.

Ridgefield is bringing *new* capital into Humboldt County from outside our area as opposed to circulating existing capital as would be the case if we were doing weddings solely for local couples and families. New capital is an economic force multiplier and has a much greater positive impact on our economy than operating in a more closed (or local only) model. A conservative calculation of our net economic impact on our regional economy, based on a 40-event season, is **\$8,400,000** spent in Humboldt County by Ridgefield guests.

My favorite 2 things about running Ridgefield are being able to support so many small locally owned businesses and creating local jobs, as well as seeing the wonder that visitors from out of our area experience when seeing our redwoods and coastline for the first time. It reminds me of why I love living here and is a core part of my appreciation for our business.

Thank you for your consideration.

Scott Davies - Owner

From: MARTHA Haynes <graminator0@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, October 10, 2025 2:08 PM

To: Bohn, Rex <RBohn@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Arroyo, Natalie <narroyo@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Mike Wilson <mike.wilson@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Steve Madrone <smadrone@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Bushnell, Michelle <mbushnell@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Ford, John <JFord@co.humboldt.ca.us>; Scott Davies <scottdaviesarcata@gmail.com>

Subject: Ridgefield Events CUP

Caution: This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

Dear Supervisors,

It is with pleasure that I write this letter of support for Scott Davies and the CUP modification

that was approved by the planning commission last month. He is a wonderful, helpful, supportive neighbor which is evident by the measures he has taken to make sure his business has a minimum effect on all his neighbors. He has invited us all to visit the site and to ask questions. He hired a sound firm from San Francisco and uses a sound device to check levels at various distances from Ridgefield itself. As his closest neighbor I will attest to the steps he has taken to insure the sound is not invasive. In order to hear music and voices I have to go outside, and even then it is minimal. At 9:30 on the dot music stops, as I have gone outside to check that point more than once.

Scott has gone to great lengths to minimize the impact of traffic. A parking attendant sits at the end of his driveway on Fickle Hill Road so guests know where to turn and do not need to turn around in private driveways. Traffic enters on one driveway and exits on another, which also makes it easier for guests to arrive and depart. Finally, the financial impact of Ridgefield Events in Arcata and Humboldt County is important. Scott employs more than two dozen individuals. Their salary combined with the funds left here by wedding guests is significant to the local economy.

From the beginning Scott has been open about his plans, open to concerns and more than willing to discuss solutions. His approach, concern for, and attitude toward the local community is the type of business I hope you are eager to support.

Martha Haynes
2234 Fickle Hill Road Arcata, CA 95521
707-834-4353
graminator0@gmail.com

I would like to bring to your attention a pattern of Ridgefield Events advertising on their website not in accordance with their approved Conditional Use Permit PLN-2024-18885...

- 1) April of 2024, per letter to County Planning staff and Planning Commissioners stamped “APPROVED APR 4 2024 Humboldt County PLANNING”, owner responded to a question “What about website information?”, noting that the website information [was] corrected to reflect [their] operations plan.
- 2) April of 2025, the County found that the Ridgefield Events website was advertising the event facility as offering overnight lodging and special events with a capacity of up to 300 people, both of which were not consistent with the approved permit. Upon contacting the operator, it was explained that the website was based on an out-of-date business plan which had not been updated to reflect what had been approved in 2024.
- 3) August 23, 2025, the capacity is for 150 (not 120 as in the current CUP) and there’s no statement of their Seasons of Operation, but there’s a whole section explaining Seasonal considerations for all four seasons with pictures of their venue with each season implying year-round weddings. The current CUP doesn’t allow for year round events but allows for a six-month season from mid-April through mid-October.



Welcome

Weddings

Venue Gallery

More Details

Download Our Pricing

Seasonal Considerations For Redwood Celebrations

Season	Temperature	Atmosphere	What To Expect
Spring	60-75°F	Fresh & Ethereal	Morning mist, wildflowers, dramatic light
Summer	65-80°F	Bright & Golden	Longest daylight, natural cooling from trees
Fall	55-70°F	Moody & Magical	Dramatic fog, golden light, crisp air
Winter	45-60°F	Intimate & Dramatic	Misty mornings, potential rain, early sunset

Spring (March-May)



Summer (June-August)



- 4) August 28, 2025, they are advertising as though the PLN-2024-1885-MOD01 has been approved, even though the hearing has not been held.

OUR EXCLUSIVE RIDGEFIELD RETREAT PACKAGE

A Weekend In The Redwoods



Not Just A Day – An Experience

Our *Ridgefield Retreat Package* is for couples who want a complete getaway, rather than just a wedding day. It gives you two nights and three days to connect, celebrate, and truly experience this milestone, all with the redwoods as your backdrop.

Whether it's quiet mornings with coffee beneath the trees, heartfelt toasts at your rehearsal dinner, or dancing under the stars, this is a wedding experience built for more—more time, more connection, and more unforgettable moments.



Your *Weekend* Essentials

• Exclusive Redwood Access

- Venue rental from Friday afternoon through Sunday morning
- Lodging accommodations for up to 14 guests
- Private gated hiking trails in the Redwood forest

Gourmet Culinary Experiences*

- Friday – three-course plated Rehearsal Dinner for 20
- Saturday – breakfast grazing table for 20
- Wedding dinner for up to 75 guests
- Sunday – champagne brunch for 20

Planning & Event Support

- Professional wedding planner
- Event staff for setup, takedown, and day-of coordination
- Tables, chairs, a tent, and bistro lighting

Entertainment & Decor Credits

- \$3,500 floral credit
- \$1,000 dessert credit
- DJ services for your wedding day

Extra Touches

- Bar services for the rehearsal dinner and the wedding day
- Lawn games



1360 G Street, Arcata, CA 95521

707.630.5021

cafephoenixarcata@gmail.com

October 5, 2025

To: Board of Supervisors

Re: Ridgefield Weddings

Greetings Board of Supervisors,

My name is Conny Peña. I have owned Cafe Phoenix since 2015 and have been part of our local restaurant community since 1991. I have known Scott and Krista Davies, both separately and together for the majority of the time I have lived here. It is with great enthusiasm that I speak on their behalf with regards to Ridgefield Weddings.

Over the course of the many years I have lived here, both Scott and Krista have been active members of our community and have supported the local economy through various ventures. They are incredibly community minded and always looking to bring something new and much needed to Humboldt County. Scott and Krista are incredibly motivated, very personable and incredibly hard working. Everything they do is with utmost integrity and respect.

The wedding venue they are proposing involves many other businesses in our area, including mine and in an economy that has been tumultuous for the past few years, I welcome the opportunity they are creating by making Humboldt County, specifically Arcata, a destination place to celebrate. This business plan is solid, well thought out and an incredible way to bring people visiting from out of the area.

I have worked with quite a few wedding planners/venues and when I learned of Ridgefield Weddings, I had no reservations that they would go above and beyond to showcase our area in the best possible way. I believe these are the types of businesses that we need to see more of and should encourage. Working together with other small businesses keeps our local economy flowing and thriving and brings much needed attention to the creative outlet we have curated in this area.

I truly hope you find their business proposal as lucrative and invested in our community as I do.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Conny Peña
Owner

Humboldt County Planning Department
3015 H Street
Eureka, CA 95501

September 2, 2025

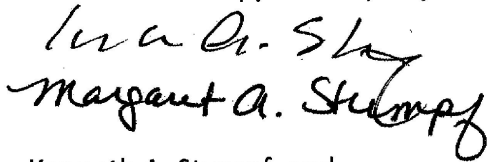
Re: Conditional Use Permit Modification: PLN-2024-18885-MOD1
Agenda Item: 25-1080

Dear County Planning staff and Planning Commission members,

The following document is our response to the Proposed Conditional Use Permit Modification: PLN-2024-18885-MOD1. While we did not choose to actively participate in the original review process for Conditional Use Permit PLN-2024-18885 we have decided to take the opportunity to present our own experiences, observations, and findings to the review of this proposed modification.

Will you please see that this is included in the documents concerning this modification and distributed to all of the appropriate staff.

Thanks for the opportunity to participate,

Handwritten signature of Margaret A. Stumpf in black ink.

Kenneth A. Stumpf and
Margaret A. Stumpf

2300 Fickle Hill Rd (residence)
2340 Fickle Hill Rd (rental)
Arcata, CA 95521
(707) 822-7737
(707) 834- 5023 (cell)
Encl:(1)

Response to Proposed Modification PLN-2024-18885-MOD1
(MOD1) for Conditional Use Permit PLN-2024-18885 (CUP) – 2242
Fickle Hill Road

Agenda Item 25-1080

By

Kenneth A. Stumpf and
Margaret A. Stumpf

Residing at 2300 Fickle Hill Road (APN 500-011-023) and
Owners of 2340 Fickle Hill Road (APN 500-011-022)

Arcata, CA 95521

September 2, 2025



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Executive Summary

In mid-August, 2025 the Humboldt County Department mailed a public hearing notice to landowners within 300 feet of APN 500-011-024 (subject parcel) of a proposed modification PLN-2024-18885-MOD1 to Conditional Use Permit PLN-2024-18885(CUP).

The most significant aspects of this modification are a proposed increase in number of events from 30 to 40 events, a 33.3% increase; a proposed increase in maximum number of guests from 120 to 175 guests; and the proposed ability to offer overnight stays of up to 3 days to up to 14 guests associated with an ongoing event. The proposed increases in number of events, maximum number of guests, and over-night stays results in a nearly 100% increase in the potential number of the guests that can visit the venue during one six month season.

Kenneth (Ken) and Margaret Stumpf provide background and pertinent information, input, and feedback regarding the proposed modification MOD1. They reside at 2300 Fickle Hill Road (APN 500-011-024) and own and lease their property at 2340 Fickle Hill Rd (APN 500-011-022) approximately 2.3 miles outside of Arcata, California.

Based on discussions and communications with Scott Davies about the planned operation of Ridgefield Events the Stumpfs originally decided to give the operation of the venue a chance and see how it worked.

Now, after nearly two seasons of experiencing wedding/event problems, the Stumpfs have reversed their position and are now 100% against the current proposed modification to the original CUP, as well as 100% against the approval of the original CUP.

The Stumpfs' concerns and reasons are many, but most of them concern the detrimental aspects of noise pollutions, public safety, the potential loss of material value to the two parcels they own next to the subject parcel and the change in primary land use of the Ridgefield Events parcel.

They have suffered intolerable Noise Pollution on several occasions that has disrupted the prior rural residential character of their neighborhood. They now know that so long as Ridgefield Events operates in the vicinity of their parcels, Noise Pollution is a "known defect" that must be declared on any future California Real Estate document that concerns either the parcel they live on or the parcel they own and lease to tenants. Such a declaration can only have a detrimental negative effect on their parcels' financial values and result in material harm to their properties.

They are concerned about the safety and welfare of Fickle Hill residents who travel the road due to the increased risks of encountering a potentially under the influence driver who has consumed alcohol at the venue and now leave and drive down a high risk unfamiliar poorly maintained road. Their other safety concern involves the increased risk of ignition that might start a forest fire.

The Stumpf ask the County Planning Commission to NOT approve the proposed modification, and in fact to revisit the original Conditional Use Permit to determine if it still conforms to County regulations and policies.

Introduction

In mid-August, 2025 the Humboldt County Department noticed landowners within 300 feet of APN 500-011-024 (subject parcel) of a proposed modification PLN-2024-18885-MOD1 to Conditional Use Permit PLN-2024-18885(CUP). The most significant aspects of this modification are an increase in number of events from 30 to 40 events, a 33.3% increase; and increase in maximum number of guests from 120 to 175 guests; and the ability to offer overnight stays of up to 3 days to up to 14 guests associated with an ongoing event. The math associated with these changes results in the maximum seasonal number of guest increasing from 3,600 guests to 7,000 guests, a possible increase of 94.4%. The potential addition of an unknown number of overnight guest opportunities further increases the total number of seasonal guests, as well as the number of days on which the venue is used. The possible increased number of guests under this modification could represent as a 100% increase over the current maximum number of seasonal guests who visit the venue.

The purpose of this document is to provide background and pertinent information, input, and feedback regarding the proposed modification MOD1 by Kenneth (Ken) and Margaret Stumpf (Stumpfs), who reside at 2300 Fickle Hill Road (APN 500-011- 024) and own and lease the property at 2340 Fickle Hill Rd (APN 500-011-022) approximately 2 miles outside of Arcata, California.

Background

We, the Stumpfs, purchased our property on Fickle Hill in 1982 after a long search for a property with acreage near Arcata on which we could raise our children, go to work in Arcata, and eventually retire and spend the rest of our time on our property. When we first saw the property we believed we had found a very unique setting of a 12+ acre parcel 2 miles from Arcata that was half pasture and half Redwood forest on which we could reside and subsequently build our dream home. When presented with the opportunity to purchase this property we paid full asking price, not wanting to miss what we considered an opportunity to fulfill our dreams.

In 1987 we initiated building our dream home, a 4-bedroom house on the back portion of our parcel and subsequently, in 1993, split our original 12+ acre parcel into the current 8+ acre we live on and the 4+ acre parcel along the frontage of Fickle Hill Road that we lease.



Figure 1:Stumpf Residence

Margaret worked her entire career in Arcata as a registered nurse until she retired in 2018; Ken owned and managed a company in Arcata for 33 years, Geographic Resource Solutions, and basically retired in 2022. Ken is a California Registered Professional Forester #1845 whose license is still active.

Both parcels that we own are connected to the subject parcel. The parcel we reside shares several hundred feet of the southern boundary of the subject parcel and our house is situated close to the shared boundary. Our other parcel, with road frontage touches the subject parcel at a common point at the southwesternmost corner of the subject parcel, along with the parcel owned by Lorien and Tony Sanchez (APN 500-011-006). In addition, we share a common boundary with another parcel owned by the owner(s) of the subject parcel, which is a 2+ acre parcel (APN 500-011-026) located between the subject area parcel, our parcel, and the Sanchez's parcel.



Figure 2: Immediate Vicinity of the Subject Parcel

Sometime prior to the submittal of the original Conditional Use Permit PLN-2024-18885 we spoke with Scott Davies about his plan to develop a wedding/event venue on his larger parcel. Based on the way that he described his plans we were assured that there wouldn't be noise issues and to contact him if there were. We also discussed road safety and even provided suggestions regarding how to possibly improve road safety by putting up temporary signs alerting drivers coming down

Fickle Hill Rd that there was an event ahead and to slow down. Based on these conversations and communications we decided to give the venue a chance and see how it went. In essence, we supported the opportunity for Scott Davies to give his dreams a chance. **Now, after nearly two seasons of experiencing wedding/event problems, we are 100% against the current proposed modification to the original CUP, as well as 100% against the approval of the original CUP.**

The owners of Ridgefield Events resided on their property at 2242 Fickle Hill Rd at the time of our discussions with Scott Davies regarding Ridgefield Events wedding/event venue plans and prior to the submittal/notification/approval process for the CUP in 2023-2024. Throughout the entire review process of the CUP the property was described and reviewed as a “residential property.” Sometime since then, we do not know when, the owners moved off the property and we believe down the hill into the City of Arcata. The owners never provided any sort of notice or communication about their departure from the subject parcel of the CPU and MOD1. The owners also have never provided any information regarding the status of the subject parcel and residence; is it leased to a year-round resident(s), occupied by a caretaker/employee, or simply left vacant and empty except when the Ridgefield Events owners or staff are working in some manner for their company at the parcel. The parcel should no longer be described as a residential parcel, but rather as a commercial property.

Issues, Concerns, and Objections to the Proposed Changes in Modification PLN-2024-18885MOD1

Our reasons for changing our minds about the Ridgefield Events operations involving the original CUP and this modification (MOD1) are many. While they are many, we did not file any sort of complaint until 8/23/25 after mulling over whether or not to complain. Ken did not wish to be that type of neighbor, but after several episodes during the summer of 2025, the loud noisy episode in mid-August was finally the straw that broke the camel’s back. An email¹ was sent to Scott Davies complaining about the loud DJ/MC Ken experienced while working in his garden approximately 1320 feet or ¼ mile from the Ridgefield venue. The email was sent to Scott because we did not have a phone number and had no idea how to submit an “official” complaint regarding the CUP.

While our experiences and observations that have resulted in our objections to this matter primarily involve Finding 5 and supporting Evidence, they also involve other Findings and Evidence listed in MOD1. As Finding 5 represents our most serious and significant objections to MOD1 we’ll start our discussion with this Finding.

Finding 5 of MOD1

5. Finding "The Project 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."

The Evidence items stated in MOD0,1 as well as in the original CPU, basically state that the operations at Ridgefield Events will NOT have a detrimental effect on a "public health, safety, or welfare or materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity." We believe that there is reason to believe that the operations of Ridgefield Events have already caused detrimental impacts and that the requested modification to increase the number of events from 30 to 40 events and the maximum number of guests from 120 to 175, along with allowing up to 3-night stays at the venue for up to 14 people will only increase the likelihood of greater detrimental impacts occurring in the future.

Public Health and Welfare - Noise Pollution

Enchanting, majestic, towering, magical, private, one-of-a-kind, distinctive ambiance, and serene ... those are words we used to describe how we felt in 1982 when we originally saw the property, bought it at full asking price, and then built our home in 1987 resulting in a residential property that was so unique that Warner Brothers, after searching the county, used it as a movie setting in the movie Outbreak when filming in Humboldt County back in 1994. Such a unique property and home was a dream we had for our future before we bought the property that we made a reality.

Enchanting, majestic, towering, magical, private, one-of-a-kind, distinctive ambiance, and serene ... those same words are used by Ridgefield Events on their website to describe and market their wedding/event venue. We used to be able to say the same as Ridgefield Events says on their website, but now must say it in the past tense - "There **was** nothing quite like it in Humboldt County." They market the very attributes that drew us to the area 43 years ago, but in their endeavor to make money they are now compromising our present and future opportunity to continue to experience that quiet, peaceful, serene environment where you can go out on your deck and hear the bird's sing. "Private" "Magical" "Enchanting" ?? Not now. Now we have noise pollution that is detrimental to our health and welfare. It is likely detrimental to the health and welfare of others in our neighborhood.

The initial complaint made by Ken Stumpf was a noise complaint based on August wedding reception noise which became intolerable when Ken was in his garden approximately 1320 feet or approximately ¼ mile from the venue. After several occasions of being subjected to loud music during the summer, the unsettling booming voice of the DJ/MC giving commands to the wedding guests was the final straw, and Ken left the garden and went inside to escape the noise. As mentioned, this was not a one-off experience, as previously our property had been subjected to loud music several times in prior months. We tolerated the loud music not wanting to complain, as

we had in essence approved of the Ridgefield Events operations. We didn't want to be confrontational and that "bad guy" in the neighborhood that might possibly negatively impact someone's wedding reception by complaining about the noise; and so we bit our tongues and kept quite. However, the loud noise that we have been experiencing was not what Scott Davies had described when we initially discussed his plans. We wondered if other neighbors were experiencing the same problems, but never asked, and now we felt particularly bad because we had, based on discussions with Scott, given them a chance to start their operations.

As a landlord (2340 Fickle Hill Rd) we have had times (nearly all in the 1990's) when we needed to tell one of our tenants that their music is too loud, and eventually tell them to no longer have their band practice in our barn. The actual neighbor who complained any time he heard loud music was Loring Swanlund, who just happened to live at 2242 Fickle Hill Rd previous to Scott Davies. Surprisingly, noise carries quite far up here. We actually now have a "Noise Clause" regarding disturbing housemates or neighbors in our current lease agreement for 2340 Fickle Hill Rd and repeated violation of that clause can result in being asked to leave.

The problem is no longer mitigated by turning down the noise so that it is not "too loud", but rather by not making the noise in the first place. Noise that wasn't there in previous years that is loud enough that it invades your space, serenity, and peace of mind is "too loud!" For example, who wants a mosquito or fly buzzing around their head? It's not necessarily so problematic because it is too loud, but it is also because it is annoying and often invasive of your space and peace of mind!

The original CUP references 80 decibel limits along the western property boundary. That is the equivalent of being in a room with a garbage disposal running or operating a leaf blower. 80 decibels is much too loud when you have not previously had to endure any noise level like that! Evidently, that was chosen during consideration of the original CUP as the noise limit to which a neighbor can be exposed based on Humboldt County's allowable noise level for TPZ lands being logged. But logging operations are truly temporary and short-term as we found out during the three to four months when Scott Davies converted/clear-cut the 2+ acre parcel situated along our property line 90 feet from our house.

We expect to faintly hear chickens crowing in the distance in the morning, but I don't expect to hear loud announcements or blaring music or crowds cheering that invade our serenity and privacy. We moved up here so we would not be disturbed by our neighbor in a nearby apartment or the house next door. We moved up here to avoid this sort of noise pollution and not have to complain about any of our neighbors. We didn't find this property, move up here, and build a house and reside for 40+ years to now have our seclusion, peace of mind, and quite serenity interrupted periodically by loud noise and music, not of our choosing.

We believe that modification MOD1 of the CUP to allow more events and more guests and overnight stays will only increase the likelihood of further detrimental impacts due to noise pollution. Scott

Davies had told us in preliminary discussions that led us to approve the initial CUP that they would monitor and take care to see that noise would not be a problem. So far as we are concerned, they have already had their chance with us, and failed to manage the noise like he had said they would.

Why should we think that management of the noise will be different this time if the MOI is approved. Under Evidence b) in the MOI it states "... the events are conducted at such a frequency and fashion so as to minimize the disturbance of nearby residents." Increasing the number of events or guests as proposed in the MOI would likely increase the risk of future problems as there could be almost twice the number of total guests present and 33% more events under the MOI. Allowing overnight guests would likely broaden the window of potential noise pollution to include the late night or early morning hours when we have not had noise pollution problems.

Under Evidence b) in the MOI also states "conditions of approval are designed to ensure that neighboring landowners and occupants are kept apprised of events." We interpret this to mean that there will be some sort of schedule that enables the neighborhood to modify our plans so that potential problems with the wedding events do not impose on our lives. Are we alerted of events so we can stay indoors and not be disturbed by the noise? Should we plan to go out those days/evenings so we won't be home to be disturbed. All a schedule will do is alert us in advance when there will be risks of noise pollution so that we can plan to take steps in advance to avoid that noise. This proposed schedule in essence asks us to change our experience at home and our activities to fit around the Ridgefield Events schedule. Should we stay on the property when an event is planned, or not have friends over for a barbeque, or plan some other activity that takes us off our property? While we do think this proposed schedule should always have been part of the original CUP, it is NOT a solution to the noise pollution problem.

The noise pollution from the venue has detrimentally affected our enjoyment, peace of mind, and well-being associated with being outside on our property; on days of events Ken now has anxiety about whether he should be outside and is this event going to be another disturbance that will require filing another noise complaint. Such an experience having to file a complaint against your neighbor is not the kind of relationship we would like to have with any of our neighbors. It is one of the primary reasons we moved out of the city neighborhood setting and into a rural residential neighborhood like Fickle Hill.

If the County chooses to approve this MOI, or if the CUP can just be modified to improve the current noise situation, these are suggested conditions of the MOI/CUP that we believe would be helpful in addressing some of the issues and should be included:

1. Enumerate the number of small events and large events to be held rather than leaving the number of events as a total number and the number of guests as a maximum. Instead, specify X number of small events with no more than 20 guests and Y number of large events with a maximum of 120 guests where $X+Y$ = the total number of events allowed. It is apparent to us that the large events are most likely to result in noise problems and there

should be a known limit on the large events (e.g. no more than two a month?). The number of events and maximum people/guests should NOT be left open-ended such that the owners of the venue can choose to operate at the maximum levels, but rather at levels similar to those they have described in their documents supporting the CUP and MOI.

2. Set a maximum limit on the total number of people at the venue, not just guests. As noise is quite likely related to the number of people at the venue rather than the number of guests, as more people will generate more noise. Louder amplification is likely required so that announcements, speeches, and music and other activities at a wedding reception may be heard over the din of the large(r) crowd.
3. Venue operations should be transparent - Monthly operating reports during the remaining portion of this operating season and all subsequent seasons that indicate dates, number of guests, number of guests overnight, start and stop times, number of employees present, accidents reported related to the venue's operation, and the number and type of complaints registered with owners or staff during the venue's operation. Report will be made to the County Planning Department and distributed to anyone in the vicinity of the venue upon request.
4. Lower the allowable noise levels at property boundaries from 80 decibels, the level allowed for a TPZ parcel, to the level allowed for neighboring rural Ag 2.5-5 properties in the neighborhood, with an exception that the noise level can be set at 80 decibels when the TPZ parcel is being actively logged under the NTMP.
5. One County Planning Staff member should be assigned to administer and monitor this CUP and MOD and see that the conditions of the CUP and MOI are being followed. Random unscheduled spot checks of events may be performed without disturbing venue operations to determine conformance with CUP and MOI requirements.
6. Venue operations should be transparent - Monthly operating reports will be generated by Ridgefield Events during the remaining portion of this operating season and all subsequent seasons that indicate dates, number of guests, number of guests overnight, start and stop times, number of employees present, accidents reported related to the venue's operation, and the number and type of complaints registered with owners or staff during the venue's operation. These reports will be made to the County Planning Department staff member assigned to this venue and distributed to anyone in the vicinity of the venue upon request.
7. The venue must be owner occupied and the residence must truly be a residential property having a permanent venue based phone number so that the neighborhood can easily communicate with the owners on an immediate basis, if necessary.

8. Each day of an overnight stay initiated on a day different than the guests' associated ongoing event shall be counted as an additional small event.

Safety and Welfare

We are concerned about two categories of safety issues that include fire safety and transportation safety. Fire safety relates to concerns regarding the risk of a fire starting at the Ridgefield Events venue. Transportation safety relates to the safety of all those who travel on Fickle Hill Rd from the vicinity of the Ridgefield Events venue up and down the road from and to the City of Arcata.

Fire Safety

California has experienced, as recently as January of this year, the incidence of catastrophic fires completely devastating residential areas in and near the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). In fact, the Pacific Palisades fire in January burned in a hillside community of homes overlooking the ocean. There is always the possibility during the fire season of experiencing a similar catastrophic fire on Fickle Hill, an area comprised of interspersed houses and outbuildings built amongst the mosaic of dry pastures, meadows, shrubs, and redwood forests.

The original CUP Resolution includes mention of several ways that fire safety may be increased, such as by undertaking efforts to clear away any brush and other potentially flammable materials around the venue. There is also mention of a small source of water that might be used to suppress a fire, in the event one starts on the property or burns in the vicinity of the property.

The venue is located in is located in a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) as represented in Figure 3. FHSZ in SRA became effective April 1, 2024. (<https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/community-wildfire-preparedness-and-mitigation/fire-hazard-severity-zones>).

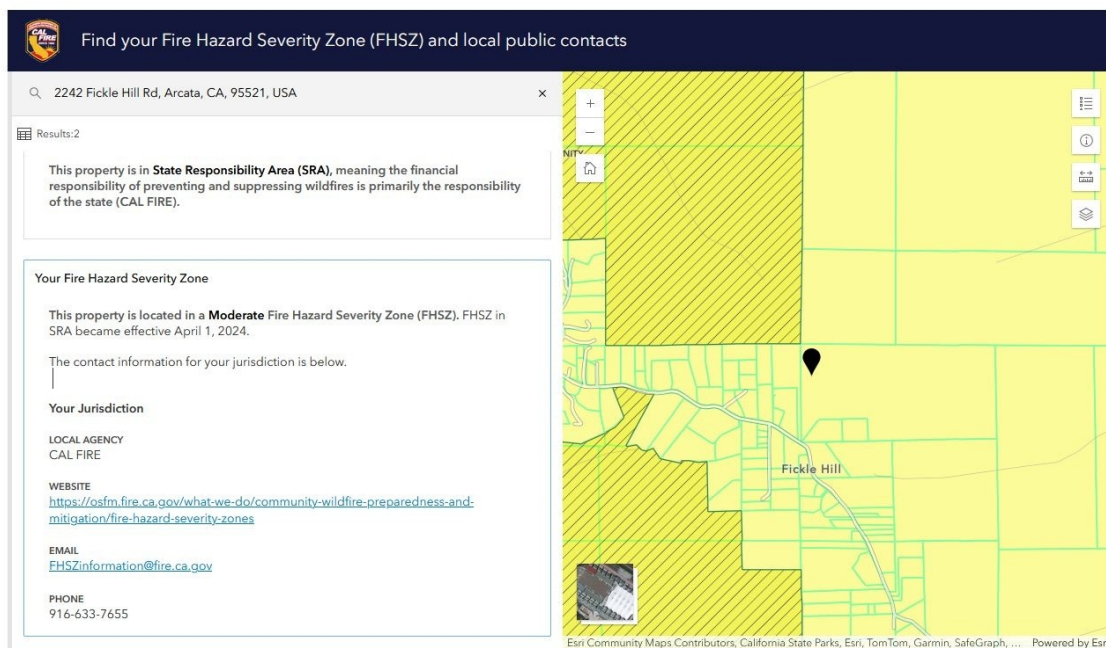


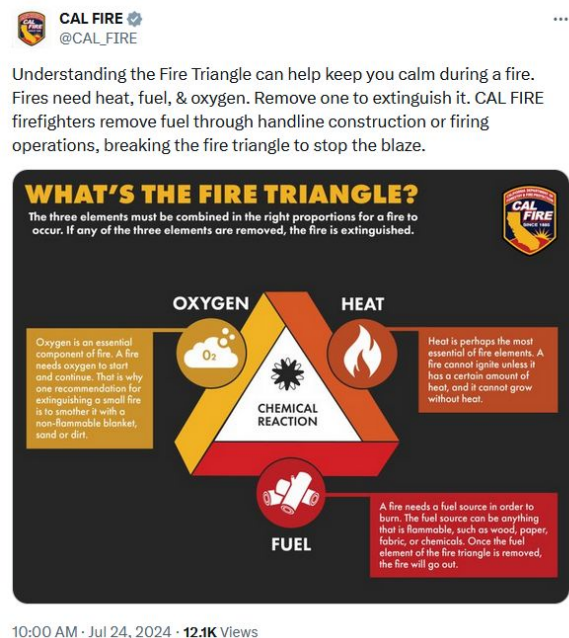
Figure 3: CALFIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map

Figure 3 also shows that “the financial responsibility of preventing and suppressing forest fires is primarily the responsibility of the state (CAL FIRE)” and not the Arcata Fire District, as inferred in the CUP.

We are concerned that the Ridgefield Events venue greatly increases the risk of a fire starting in our neighborhood that could cause catastrophic detrimental damage to neighboring properties and timberland.

A forest fire of the nature that we are concerned about requires three components, as shown in Figure 4 downloaded from the CALFIRE website. These components are Oxygen, Fuel, and Heat. No fire can start in the vicinity of the Ridgefield Events venue without heat, “perhaps the most essential of fire elements” according to the diagram. In this case we are most concerned with the large number of visitors to the venue under the CUP and potentially even larger number by nearly 100% under MOD1 during what is typically our fire season here on Fickle Hill. The large and potentially larger numbers of visitors, if MOD1 is approved, do not include the staff that also work at the venue during all of the events.

We pose the question “Is the venue a non-smoking venue?” If the venue is a “smoking allowed,” venue then all of those smokers pose a potential risk of providing the heat (ignition), in the form of a lit cigarette butt, ash, or match, as they most likely smoke in areas away from the main venue facilities (designated smoking area), and maybe in the dry grass/mowed pasture parking area or along the edge or in the woods away from people who might be disturbed by their smoke. If the venue is a “non-smoking” venue, then we are concerned about those guests or employees who might wander away from the venue into the parking area or woods to sneak a smoke that won’t be detected by anyone. These clandestine smokers pose a potential risk of providing the heat, in the form of a lit cigarette butt, ash, or match. Whether or not the venue is a “non-smoking” or “smoking allowed” venue, the smokers who are a subset of the large number of guests and employees create a greater risk of providing a source of ignition to start a fire on the property that could then burn onto neighboring properties and cause significant loss of property. If MOD1 is approved and the number of possible guests is increased by nearly 100%, the risk of fire due to a guest or employee providing a source of ignition is nearly doubled relative to the currently allowed level of guests in the CUP.



10:00 AM · Jul 24, 2024 · 12.1K Views

Figure 4: CALFIRE Fire Triangle

Another potential source of ignition may be outdoor bonfires, open fires, or fire-pit fires for the benefit of guests or employees or fires by maintenance workers who might burn piles of wood branch trimmings, mowed grass clippings, or other organic material on the property while maintaining the venue.

We believe that approval of MOD1 will only increase the chances of igniting a catastrophic fire at the venue and be detrimental to the safety of the Fickle Hill neighborhood in the vicinity of the Ridgefield Estates venue.

If the County chooses to approve this MOI, or if the CUP can just be modified to improve the fire safety, these are suggested conditions of the MOI/CUP that we believe should be included to address some of the fire safety:

1. The venue will be designated as a “non-smoking” venue with the appropriate notifications and signage visible to guests and employees. Guests should be notified prior to visiting the venue that it is a “non-smoking” venue. Guests determined to be smoking at venue will have to leave the venue and not return. Employees should be notified of the “non-smoking policy during their training, notified that smokers who start fires may be financially liable for the suppression costs and damages of forest fires, and notified that smoking at the venue would be grounds for dismissal.
2. No bonfires, open fires, or fire pit fires will be allowed except as allowed under item 3. below.
3. Any fires associated with NTMP timber harvesting or the maintenance of the venue by employees will be performed on Burn Days under the rules and regulations of the North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District.

Transportation Safety

Ridgefield Events’ driveway off Fickle Hill Rd is approximately 2.2 miles up the road from the intersection of Bayside Rd and Fickle Hill Rd in the City of Arcata (City). The road is a two-lane County road patrolled by the California Highway Patrol once it leaves the City about 0.7 miles up the road. Law enforcement issues fall under the jurisdiction of the Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office. People and businesses travel Fickle Hill Rd by car or truck, but the road is also hiked on by residents for exercise, biked on by cycling enthusiasts, and crossed by both hikers and bikers using the City of Arcata Community Forest Arcata Ridge Trail crossing.

Our driving history on Fickle Hill Rd since acquiring our property causes us concerns about the safety of all those who frequent this section of road, including the guests and staff of Ridgefield Events. Since 1982 Ken has been involved in 4 significant traffic accidents. The worst accident totaled our car and sent one of our children to the doctor. This accident was caused by a 19-year old drunk driver careening out of control at excessive speed through the S-turn about one mile up the road; Ken avoided a head on collision by driving off the road, but was still hit by the young man

completely destroying the vehicle he was traveling in up the hill with his two children. 3 of these accidents involved drivers under the influence (never Ken) and 2 accidents resulted in DUI arrests. Ken also hit a deer one night that suddenly jumped off the high slope along the downhill lane near 1700 Fickle Hill Rd onto the roadway immediately in front of his pickup truck; it all happens so fast there was no time to respond. Overall totals are 5 accidents and 3 that involved under the influence drivers, an average of about one accident every 8-9 years.

Fickle Hill Rd is a fairly typical rural County road comprised of a patchwork of asphalt patches rather than a well maintained road surface. For nearly all of this length of the road there are no shoulders and the white lines along the sides of the road are often indiscernible due to how long it's been since they were painted and the accumulation of dirt, tree litter, and duff from the vegetation that border the road. There are at best maybe 2 or 3 safe places where one can pull over to stop and let traffic go by when travelling down the hill. There have been cases over the years where sober residents familiar with the road have lost control of their vehicles and gone off the road into the ditch along the side of the downhill lane when traveling down the hill.

It is a county road with many driving risks. Consider the following points:

1. In the uphill lanes there are approximately 14 or more slumps in the fractured pavement surface along the right (downhill) side of the lane; local residents will slow down and often veer into the left (downhill) lane, if clear, to avoid many of these slumps;
2. In the downhill there are three significant hazards that Fickle Hill drivers are aware of:
 - a) Near 1862 Fickle Hill Rd there are redwood roots that have grown under the downhill lane surface resulting in a very bumpy road surface. Local drivers avoid this hazard by slowing down and veering into the uphill lane, if clear.
 - b) Just before 1672 Fickle Hill Rd is the Arcata Ridge Trail crossing which can be characterized as having very limited warning of hikers or bikers approaching or even crossing the road and very confusing warning signs located at (not sufficiently before) the road crossing. There are no warning lights or other cautionary devices to alert drivers of people that may suddenly pop out of the woods onto the road surface. Locals know to slow down in this stretch of the road.
 - c) The driveway at 1544 Fickle Hill Rd closest to the start of Boynton Prairie Rd has a significant bump along the right hand portion of the downhill lane that provides a very significant jolt to a vehicle if, driven over at the 30 MPH speed limit. Locals know to try and avoid this bump by slowing down and veering out into the uphill lane, if clear.
 - d) The two sets of tight downhill winding turns starting after Del Mar Vista Rd, the first marked with warning signs indicating 10 MPH, but the second unmarked, but just after a 25 MPH speed limit sign. Locals know to SLOW DOWN!

3. Numerous deer travel along and across the road day and night;
4. Log trucks travel up and down the road typically from early daylight to shortly after sunset;
5. The Ridgefield Events driveway at 2242 Fickle Hill Rd is just before a nearly blind turn that is considered so dangerous by the County Planning staff that Tony and Lorien Sanchez, owners of 2246 Fickle Hill Rd, were told by Planning staff several years ago that they could NOT put in a new driveway to their property at a location within 75 feet of the Ridgefield Events entrance. Many drivers, those coming up or going down the hill, speed into this nearly blind turn and either cut the turn or swing out into the other lane, in both cases crossing over the centerline of the road. This is a dangerous turn marked by warning signs, but with no notification to slow down. There has been one DUI related accident here in the past 6 years and there will likely be more. Drivers and passengers are placed in a dangerous position if they have to have to stop due to congestion just before this nearly blind turn while waiting to turn left into Ridgefield Events driveway.

Fickle Hill Rd, up the hill out of Arcata until the Ridgefield Events driveway, is a potentially dangerous road to drive with many hazards and risks, even for the experienced drivers who live on Fickle Hill. The CUP currently allows for up to 30 events a season with as many as 120 guests, presently resulting in as many as 3,600 guests per season. MOD1 would allow an additional 10 events and a maximum of 175 guests resulting in as many as 7,000 guests per season, as well as an unknown number of additional overnight guests. Nearly all of these venue guests will be unfamiliar with the road and its hazards. In addition, all the staff working the events at the venue will also be required to drive this hazardous road.

The vast majority of Humboldt County guests at the venue are likely unfamiliar with Fickle Hill Rd and its hazardous nature. Furthermore, Ridgefield Events website addresses being a destination wedding site for people from San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and other places for couples who wish to have a wedding event in the redwoods. Such marketing is likely to attract many out-of-towners and city dwellers to their events who are also likely to be completely unfamiliar with Fickle Hill Rd and its hazardous nature.

Ridgefield Events serves alcoholic drinks at the venue during their events. Weddings are known to be celebratory events often with several toasts of alcoholic beverages and frequent social drinking during the reception. The vast majority of all of these event guests are going to be in a festive mood here on Fickle Hill and likely consume one or more alcoholic drinks that may simply be available at a table or on a tray carried by a server, as opposed to having to go to the bar to request a drink from a bartender, certified to review their state of sobriety before serving them. By the end of such a celebratory event with eating, drinking, dancing, toasting, and other wedding reception activities guests may have experienced a long afternoon and evening and are feeling tired as they head for their car to leave the venue at as late as 9:30 to 10:00 pm. There exists the risk that some of these people may leave the venue not only tired, but also impaired by the alcohol they have consumed.

The alcohol consumption at the venue in combination with the activities at the venue and the subsequent nighttime driving down Fickle Hill Rd to Arcata is a recipe for a disastrous under-the-influence accident that is detrimental to the health and safety of those leaving the venue under-the-influence, as well as the innocent people who had the misfortune to be driving up Fickle Hill Rd at that time. We believe these safety concerns should have been given greater consideration during the original review and approval of the CUP. MOD1, which proposes to increase the number of events and number of guests, can only increase the odds of an under-the-influence driver, unfamiliar with any one of the aforementioned hazardous road conditions, losing control of their vehicle resulting in a tragic accident potentially involving innocent people driving, biking, walking, or crossing Fickle Hill Rd.

Ken visited the CHP station in Arcata to determine if there were accident statistics and under-the-influence statistics for Fickle Hill Rd. He was told there were and that he could make a California Public Records Act (PRA) request to obtain that information. The PRA was filed 8/26 but the list of individual under-the-influence accidents, incidents, and arrests for the prior 10 year period will not be available for another 2-3 weeks. Ken spoke with one CHP officer that has patrolled Fickle Hill Rd about the situation with the venue's CU and proposed MOD1 and his response was "No reasonable person, given the hazards of Fickle Hill Rd, the late night driving situation, and the drivers' unfamiliarity with the road should consider increasing the number of potentially under-the-influence drivers on that road."

Lastly, under-the-influence accidents occur all the time by drivers thought to be sober enough to drive by certified bartenders. You can become a certified bartender in California by taking an approximately 2-hour online course for as little as \$11.99 (https://servingalcohol.com/california-rbs-certification-training/?gad_source=1).

We disagree with the evidence presented in the Resolution (and the existing CUP) regarding that there are no detrimental affects to public safety and welfare. We maintain that approval of MOD1 will be detrimental to the transportation safety and welfare of the people that drive, hike, bike, and cross Fickle Hill Rd in that portion of Fickle Hill Rd from its origin at Bayside Rd in Arcata up the hill approximately 2.2 miles to the Ridgeview Events driveway.

We only offer three conditions regarding transportation safety and welfare:

1. The County needs to perform a road traffic study to determine the amount of traffic added by the venue, the appropriate speed limits to be traveled on different sections of the road, and where additional warning signs are necessary to promote the safety of the road so that the County and neighborhood have a better understanding of traffic usage and patterns of use during different times of the day and days of the week.
2. The County needs to fix all the existing road hazards and make the road safer to drive.

3. The County needs to monitor and report the situation regarding under-the-influence driver incidents including accidents and arrests and a seasonal limit on venue related under-the-influence incidents needs to set. If the limit is exceeded then, at a minimum, the venue will be shut down for the rest of the season.

We do not believe that we could include a condition that makes the venue a “no alcohol” venue, as we believe that guests attending wedding receptions and other celebratory events will do their utmost to find a way to get alcohol into the venue. Prohibition of alcohol is not the answer, and there are not enough cabs, Ubers, and Lyfts to shuttle all the guests up and down the hill. Maybe all the guests could be driven to the venue in several large tour buses. This could be a fourth condition, as the buses would be comparable to the log trucks that already travel the road, bus drivers would be sober professional drivers, and only 3-4 large buses would be needed to shuttle the guests and staff up and down the hill. There may be other policies and conditions that may help protect the safety and welfare of everyone who travels Fickle Hill Rd. Most importantly, the potential for under-the influence drivers departing the venue and traveling on Fickle Hill Rd should be viewed as an extremely serious situation and mitigated so that the public safety and welfare of all using Fickle Hill Rd are not compromised by the events at Ridgefield Events.

We do believe that if the CUP is maintained “as is” with respect to the use of alcohol, or if MOD1 is approved, that it is not a matter of “if” a tragic under-the-influence accident will happen, but rather how long will it be before a tragic accident of this nature occurs. Approving MOD1 increases the odds of sooner rather than later. We certainly hope it does not happen during the remaining 3 season duration of the CUP. In all likelihood, when such a tragic accident occurs and Ridgefield Events is found liable for the alcohol related consequences, their liability issues will put them out of business. We maintain, why wait for the accident to occur? We ask that the Planning Commission respect the serious transportation safety issues currently present on Fickle Hill Rd and take action now to ameliorate these safety issues.

Material Injury to Properties or Improvements – Financial Damage

We maintain that there are primarily two ways in which the operations at Ridgefield Events are already and may be materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity of the subject parcel. One way is based on the Noise Pollution that we have already experienced. The second way concerns the potential overuse of water. Both of these concerns have a negative or detrimental impact on the property values and potentially the costs of living in the vicinity of Ridgefield Events.

Loss of Property Value – Noise Pollution

The Noise Pollution from the Ridgefield Events venue that we have already described in this document, about which we have now formally complained, now represents a “known defect” of our two properties. Noise Pollution must now be listed on any California real Estate documents or

contracts regarding both the residential property we live on and the rental property we own at 2340 Fickle Hill Rd.

In the case of our residential parcel, having to list Noise Pollution as a “known defect” negatively affects our properties in two ways. At such time as we enter into a real estate contract to list and sell this parcel and disclose Noise Pollution as a “known defect” there are some potential buyers who may not even wish to see the property, thereby limiting the number of potential buyers for our property and in affect limiting the demand for our property; there will likely be fewer potential showings of and competitive bids for our property. There are other potential buyers who upon disclosure of the Noise Pollution defect will lower the price they are willing to offer for the property.

In the case of our rental parcel, having to list Noise Pollution as a “known defect” negatively impacts the value of the parcel in ways similar to our residential property, if we chose to try and sell the property. But it also impacts the value in an additional way. The Noise Pollution defect may limit the pool of potential renters who want to see and rent the property and how much they want to pay to rent the property. All potential tenants must now be notified of the Noise Pollution defect so they are aware of it before deciding to lease the property. Upon finding out there is a Noise Pollution defect they may choose not to see the property, thereby reducing the pool of potential renters and the potential demand for the property. Lower demand may result in our having to lower the rent in order to attract renters who are willing to tolerate the Noise Pollution. The Noise Pollution defect may, by itself, force us to lower the rent in order to find renters who are willing to tolerate the noise.

The Noise Pollution defect that now exists because we complained about the noise from the Ridgefield Events venue has likely already caused material damage to the value of our property.

Water Usage and Potential Damage to the Water Table

Residents in the Fickle Hill neighborhood do NOT have City water piped in, but rather acquire their water from wells, springs, catchment basins, and other means. It is unclear in the Resolution and supporting documents exactly what is/are the sources of water and potable water used by Ridgefield Events to support their events. While the venue has distribution shares of the water provided to parcels served by Crestview Estates Water District, the distribution of water to the members of the District does not affect our parcels as both of the parcels that we own have County approved wells. However, what may impact our two parcels is the total amount of water usage from water sources in the vicinity of the Ridgeview Events parcel to support the venues operations. As previously mentioned, it is unclear what the venue’s source(s) of water is that they use to support their operations.

This is important to know because if Ridgefield Events is using water that comes from the local water table it is entirely possible that the current level of usage associated with 30 events and up to 120 guests plus employees far exceeds their prior level of usage when the venue was just a residential

property. In order to know how the usage has changed current venue water needs should be determined so that the venue's current demands for water are known relative to the parcels prior levels of use. Increasing the number of events to 40 per season and the maximum number of guests per event to 175 increases the total maximum number of guests allowed by nearly 100%. Therefore the venue's operations under MOD1 will likely require twice the amount of water as they are presently consuming. The number of staff necessary to serve the venue's guests should also be included in water consumption estimates to develop a more accurate estimate of the venue's water consumption.

It appears that all of the current and potential water usage associated with the venue is simply assumed to be okay and not detrimental to the Fickle Hill water table. If they are drawing water from the local water table then this level of usage needs to be studied to determine if it is appropriate for a commercial venue like Ridgefield Events to use more than their share of water and deplete the water table we all use to supply our homes with water.

Before expanding operations we think we need to know the average water consumption/usage by each guest and employee who visit or work at the venue during an event. How much additional use will occur with overnight stays? Do these levels of usage impact the other users of the Crestwood Estates Water District? Is it possible that all the additional use will lower the water table, which typically goes down each year during the summer months and early fall? We'll only know the true impact of the venue's water usage by estimating its usage and monitoring nearby wells and springs to see if there are any changes to amounts of water produced from those nearby wells and springs.

The County also needs to determine how they are going to help this neighborhood if/when we find that the venue's water usage does have a negative impact after the County approved the CUP and possibly the MOD1. Will the venue immediately be shut down? Will the County truck potable water to our houses?

We experienced low potable water production of as little production as 100 gallons/day from a County approved well with a family of 5 (two teen-agers) until we drilled a new well in 2009. Showers were 30 seconds long, at most. Toilets were flushed using water gathered in the showers in 5 gallon buckets as the shower water ran. Many parcels on Fickle Hill have water problems and likely lower values due to those problems. We never want that experience again.

There is no telling how long it may take for an overused lowered water table to recover. There is no doubt that water problems will negatively impact property values and most likely make it more expensive to live on Fickle Hill. We are totally against the expansion of Ridgefield Events operations until answers regarding the venue's water sources and levels of usage are better known and evaluated.

Finding 3 of MOD1 - Principal Land Use

The MOD1 Resolution states under Finding 3 “The proposed development is in is in conformance with all applicable policies and standards in the Humboldt County General Plan 2017.” Under section a) of this finding the Resolution further states “The rental of space for weddings and similar special events is a use that is considered supplemental and temporary .”

We strongly disagree with this finding, as we believe the principal use of the subject parcel has been altered so that it is now as a Commercial Property that hosts weddings and other events. The Ridgefield Events weddings and similar special events should **NOT** be considered “**supplemental and temporary**” to its use as timberland. Rather, the principal use of the property has been changed by Ridgefield Events activities to be a commercial wedding/events venue, regardless of the seasonality of the use. We base this change in principal land use on four criteria which are:

1. The first criterion concerns the financial value of the property as timberland managed under 1-NTMP-22-00007-HUM as compared to the financial value of the property as a wedding/events venue. Under this NTMP there will be no intensive forest management activities implemented to promote the growth of trees after the area has been harvested; such forest management efforts have been and will be harvesting trees on an approximately 15-year period basis and then letting the trees grow for another 15 years before implementing another selection harvest. The typical selection harvest will be approximately 25% of the growing stock and according to the California Forest Practices Act, the harvest cannot result in residual growing stock levels (basal area per acre) of less than 75 sq ft/acre. Growing trees under this NTMP is a very passive, low maintenance, non-time consuming effort.

This forest management strategy limits the potential revenue that can be generated by the property as timberland. As a result the land owners will experience very limited management expenses associated with this timberland, except for the annual County Tax bill based on the very, very, low assessed values of TPZ timberland (maximum assessment of \$234/acre for Site I TPZ land). The Resolution basically confirms the anticipated low levels of activity associated with the property’s use as timberland when it states “timber operations would be minimal as the land is adjacent to the Arcata Community Forest and is used for recreational purposes.”

Given that the next income generating harvest of the timberland on this parcel will be in approximately 15 years, far greater monetary value will be derived from the property as a wedding/event venue than it will as timberland. It is Ken’s professional opinion, as a California Registered Professional Forester (#1845) who has performed financial analyses of timberland management regimes during his career, that the resulting present net worth (PNW) of the discounted annual net revenue stream of the property managed as a wedding/event venue will be far greater than PNW of the discounted annual net revenue of the property managed as timberland under the existing NTMP.

We maintain that the differences in PNW of the two management alternatives result in the property having a higher value as a wedding/event venue, if put on the market and sold, than it would simply be as a residential property situated on TPZ timberland. It is important to remember that TPZ is a statewide land classification system used by county assessors to develop land assessment values and is NOT a Land Use designation.

2. The second criterion concerns the actual use of the property in terms of the person-hours invested in the property by the land owners. We believe the land owners no longer live on the property and have moved down the hill into Arcata. As a result, their time at the property and the time spent by Ridgefield Events' staff on the property preparing for and managing the events should be considered when determining the principal land use of the parcel. The timberlands require very little human management of the tree growth that is occurring.

We believe that the venue requires many, many person-hours of effort to stage the different events of just one 6-month season. At the present level of usage in terms of 30 events and a maximum of 120 guests the vast majority of time the owners and employees spend on the property and managing the property is related to the wedding/event venue. We estimate there are likely thousands of person-hours of employment associated with staging 30 events, as if there were less total hours each event would only require no more than 33.3 person-hours ($1000 \text{ hours} / 30 \text{ events} = 33.3 \text{ hours/event}$). Not actually knowing how many employees there are and actual payroll hours recorded and paid for we can only surmise that planning, management, and implementation of the venue's events has a much, much greater time investment than growing trees. In addition, we maintain that nearly all of the guests are primarily visiting the venue for the venue's events and not to walk in the woods and see the trees grow.

MOD1, if implemented, would increase the number of events to 40 and the number of guests by nearly 100%. Adding overnight guests would further increase the owners and staff time requirements at the venue. Owner and staff hours, along with guest hours at the venue would likely double accentuating the fact that the both the current and modified land use is as a commercial wedding/events venue.

3. The third criterion concerns the financial economies generated by the different land uses. We believe the venue is creating many jobs and significant business, payroll, and tax expenditures, as well as income for the owners; none of these venue related jobs, expenditures, or income are associated with growing timber. The next time there will be some of these financial economies based on the timberland will be when the timber is harvested during a period of about 3 months in approximately 15 years.

While we have no financial figures regarding the venue we can surmise from running an Arcata business for 36 years that even though the venue is seasonal for half the year, the revenue, jobs,

payroll, taxes and associated dollars spent in the community far exceed the jobs and economic values generated from timber growth. Ken has frequented seasonal hunting/vacation lodges while working in Alaska that are only open for six months a year, but whose owners then live in Hawaii during the offseason off their proceeds from their six months operating season. The seasonality of the venue does not necessarily make the venue a supplemental or temporary use of the property.

4. The fourth criterion concerns the status of the residence on the property. The owners have apparently moved down the hill into Arcata. We have no idea about the status of the residence which appears to be planned for use under MOD1 as an overnight lodging facility for paying guests. Such use of the residence only further demonstrates that the subject parcel can no longer be considered a residential owner occupied property, as is asserted in the CUP Resolution.

These four criteria that include all of the activities, financial values, and financial economies of the non-owner occupied Ridgefield Events venue dwarf those of the passively growing timberland and thereby support our view that **the timberland use is supplemental to the commercial use of the subject parcel by Ridgefield Events and that the principal Land Use of the parcel is of a commercial nature**. If we can agree that the commercial venue should be recognized as the principal use of the property then maybe the original CUP needs to be updated to reflect this change and further reviewed to determine if the original CUP is still in conformance with the County Land Use and Development rules and policies.

Summary

The Davies left the Fickle Hill neighborhood when they decided to move into Arcata and apparently change the primary land use their property to be a wedding/event venue. Contrary to the Findings in the MOD1 Resolution we believe that the use of the subject parcel as a wedding venue does have a detrimental impact on public health, safety, and welfare and has been and will be materially injurious to our property and improvements. In addition, we do NOT believe that their efforts are “supplemental and temporary” as compared to growing timber, but rather that they have changed the Land Use of the property with respect to the County Land Use and Development ordinances and policies, which should prevent the operation of such a venue in our rural residential neighborhood.

We members of the neighborhood live here because of all the positive qualities we experienced in this neighborhood prior to the advent of Ridgefield Events. It would not be easy for us to leave the neighborhood, like they did. Are we supposed to tolerate the many detrimental impacts on/to our dream property, or depart because our experiences here have been so compromised that we cannot stand to live here any longer? If we leave it will only be because we can no longer tolerate the detrimental impacts we have been experiencing since the advent of Ridgefield Events in 2024.

We implore the County Planning Commission to NOT approve the modification resolution MOD1, and in fact to revisit the CUP and determine if the original conditions, findings, and evidence under which it was granted are still in fact in place and valid. If not, then maybe the CUP should be modified or revoked due to Ridgefield Events failure to adhere to the original CPU. At a minimum many new and more restrictive conditions should be placed on the original CUP and MOD1, if Ridgefield Events is to be allowed to operate in future years.

Footnoted Items:

¹ Email to Scott Davies 8/23/25:

RE: Noise Complaint

Hi Scott,

I have been able to tolerate the music that we can sometimes easily hear when outside the house, but I have not wanted to be someone who calls to complain and makes someone turn down the volume at their wedding reception, but last weekend it was different and I need to let you know.

Last weekend I was in the garden and the volume was loud, but it was the DJ or MC that I could actually hear and understand all of his announcements and instructions, such as "let's have all of you single females, and I mean all of you, out on the dance floor to try and catch the bridal bouquet!" I finally went inside as the tranquility of working in the garden had been ruined as I was left with the feeling that I was eavesdropping at someone else's wedding reception that I did not want to attend.

I have tolerated the music I sometimes hear (loud enough to sing along if I wanted to), as I often know the songs, even though I have not chosen to listen to them, but after the DJ/MC episode I figured I needed to let you know.

I have no idea how you monitor the sound or control the DJs/MCs but I thought I'd let you know this summer there have been several occasions when our outside time has been compromised by the noise of a reception.

I'm sorry but I do need to voice my complaint as the noise from your events has not worked out the way that I thought it

Ken Stumpf

RECEIVED

By mkein2 at 9:13 am, Sep 02, 2025

Subject: Comments for Public hearing 9-4-2025 on Conditional Use Permit Modification: PLN-2025-18885-MOD01
Date: Monday, September 1, 2025 6:45:02 PM
Attachments: [CUP Modification Written letter 8-2025.pdf](#)

Caution: This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

Humboldt County Planning Commission

3015 H Street

Eureka, CA 95501

Re: Comments on Conditional Use Permit Modification: **PLN-2025-18885-MOD01** APN 500-011-007

This letter is regarding the Conditional Use Permit Modification Application to increase the size and number of events at the Ridgefield Weddings and Events Facility at 2242 Fickle Hill Road. **I am requesting that the modifications be denied** for the reasons noted below.

We purchased our property at 2066 Fickle Hill Road in 1983, and built our own house as owner/builders, occupying the house in 1985, and we have lived here since. Our property is located 600' to the west of the Ridgefield property.

I believe that a venue of this sort has been, and will continue to be, completely inappropriate and incompatible in a rural residential neighborhood. Enlarging events will only increase the issues with neighbors. Ridgefield's most immediate neighbor is approximately 300' away from the proposed venue and there are multiple homes within 300' – 1000' that have been and, will continue to be, affected by their events.

Since Ridgefield started having events, there have been a number of events where the music and DJ, as well as shouting people, are clearly audible throughout the neighborhood. The most recent was in the last few weeks, where music was quite audible and the DJ could be clearly heard encouraging people to get up and dance. We have no way of going to the Ridgefield property to see if they are complying with the 80dba sound requirements that were laid out at the 2024 CUP Public Hearing. Either Ridgefield is not complying, or the sound levels need to be modified downward to less affect neighbors. To date, we have not made any complaints to the County as we are not sure how to do this. I could not find a clearly defined process on the County website, and I recently talked to a planner and his description of the process was vague.

We purchased our property to live in a rural area so we would not have to listen to loud neighbors and could enjoy sitting out on our deck in the afternoon and evening, enjoying the peace and quiet of the Redwood Forest. In a number of instances, this has not been possible due to the noise from Ridgefield. The applicants are proposing to increase both the size (to 175 people) and number (up to 40 per year) of their events. Additionally, they want to turn the house located on site into a "hotel" for up to 14 people to stay in. This brings up additional questions of nighttime noise and the impact to the community water table and also increased septic use affecting that water supply for nearby properties. The 2024 CUP stated events were

to be over by 9:30 p.m. If there are people staying overnight onsite, it is likely that the “party” will continue on into the night.

Other possible problems I see are the potential traffic increase on Fickle Hill Road which is a narrow two lane road and is deteriorating in many areas. The large, short term increase in traffic, possibly with alcohol involved, will pose a hazard for cars, and particularly bicycles and pedestrians. Also, there is an increase in fire hazard from cars parking in the grassy field and also from people wandering away from the event to the wooded portion of the site to smoke.

All of the above issues will have a negative effect on nearby property values. Who wants to buy a house where they will have to put up with the effects of a nearby event on a regular basis? Known neighborhood noise issues are required to be disclosed on real estate sale forms.

Section 6 of Resolution Number: 24-017, Approving the Condition Use Permit for the Ridgefield venue states: “*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*”. We believe that a number of the issues that have been raised are not in conformance with this section and raise safety issues and are injurious to our property.

This portion of Fickle Hill is made up primarily of residential homes. Increasing the size of events at a venue, already conducting large, noisy events, will only make it worse if these modifications are approved. **Please deny the requested modifications, or put stricter conditions on it that will eliminate the impacts on neighborhood homes, especially noise, from their events.**

Approved or not, Ridgefield should be required to conduct sound motoring any time there is amplified sound and report the results to County Planning to mitigate the current noise issue.

If the Commission decides, against the requests of neighbors, to approve the application, I request that the following additional conditions be added:

1. No loud noise or amplified sound after 9:30 p.m. All group activities must be moved indoors or off site at this time.
2. The County will require Ridgefield to do sound monitoring (80dba or less at the property line limit per the General Plan) as outlined in the original use hearing and the County will review sound levels after each outdoor event and take enforcement action as needed.
3. If there are two or more complaints on two separate events, or five or more on a single event, the County will suspend the entire Conditional Use Permit and schedule a new Public Hearing on the Conditional Use Permit.

County Planning only notified property owners within 300’ of the Ridgefield property that this application had been submitted. We only became aware of this application by word of mouth less than a week before the scheduled Public Hearing. Several residents made requests to Planning Director Ford to postpone the meeting and do a wider spread of noticing, (1000’) all of which were denied.

The neighborhood has not been adequately notified nor given adequate time to prepare which

the holiday weekend has further complicated. The hearing should be postponed, or if it is held, any decision be continued to a later meeting. In the interim, additional notifications will be made further out in the neighborhood (1000'). Additional input should be allowed and a decision made at this later meeting.

Thank you,

Dave and Donna White

2066 Fickle Hill Road

Arcata, CA 95521