

H-3
Appellant
Presentation

Appeal of PLN-2025-18885-MOD01 25-1260

Title: An Appeal of the Planning Commission's Approval of a Conditional Use Permit Modification to an Event Venue (PLN-2024-18885) to Allow up to 14 Guests to Stay Overnight in the Existing Residence for up to Three Days and to Increase the Maximum Number of Events from 30 to 40 Events Per Year with the Maximum Number of Guests Increased from 120 up to 150 per Event

By

Kenneth Stumpf

2300 and 2340 Fickle Hill Rd

Arcata, CA 95521

Representing

A Group of Concerned Fickle Hill Rd Neighbors

Point of Clarification Regarding the Appeal

- We observed that the Public Notice dated October 14, 2025 had an apparent typo listing a maximum of 40 events rather than 30 events.
- The listed agenda Item 25-1260 appeared to have the same typo listing a maximum of 40 events rather than 30 events.
- The Proposed Board of Supervisors Resolution contains the same typo of listing a maximum of 40 events rather than 30 events.
- Attachment 2A -PC Resolution 25-049 Ridgefield Events_18885MOD01 is the source of the typo; this document is the Resolution of the Planning Commission signed by John Ford, thereby apparently legitimizing the typo.
- The document is NOT a "true and correct record of the action taken on the above-titled matter by said Planning Commission ..." as the Planning Commission did NOT approve 40 events as described in the aforementioned Resolution, but rather held the number of events at 30 (see Mulder motion at 2:33:40 of the meeting video).
- I believe this needs to be fixed before proceeding any further ??????

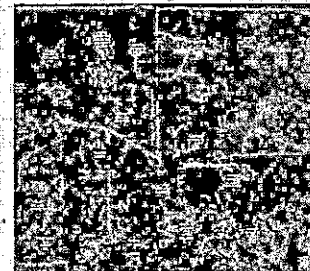
Introduction

- Seven Concerned Neighbors of Ridgefield Events that Oppose the Modification(MOD)
 - David and Donna White, owners of 2066 Fickle Hill Rd
 - John Bergenske, owner of 2145 Fickle Hill Road and 26 and 56 Wagon Jack Lane
 - Michelle Gross and Andrew Bezella, owners of 2236 Fickle Hill Rd
 - Kenneth and Margaret Stumpf owners of 2300 and 2340 Fickle Hill Rd
 - Lorien and Tony Sanchez, owners of 2246 Fickle Hill Rd
 - Ethan Heifetz and Lesley Hull, owners of 2450 and 2476 Fickle Hill Rd , and
 - Phylis Geller, owner of 33, 124, and 178 Inga Rd

_____ expressed opposition to original Conditional Use Permit (CUP)

Ridgefield Events

- 2242 Fickle Hill Rd, Arcata
- Conditional Use Permit PLN-2024-18885 (CUP) was approved by the Humboldt County Planning Commission on April 4, 2024.
- This CUP allows hosting of Weddings and Special Events
 - Wedding/reception
 - Rehearsal Dinner
 - Brunch
 - Fund Raisers
 - General Meetings and Receptions – e.g Rotary Club



Ridgefield Events Vicinity Map



Why Did We Appeal ?

- The Planning Commission negotiated a "new" modification with the Applicant at the Public Hearing
 - We believe that the Planning Commission did not take into account some of the most important definitions contained in the CUP and commitments in support of the CUP made in Ridgefield Events' Operations Plan
 - We wanted a chance to review, evaluate, and respond to the "new" Modification, something we were not allowed to do at the hearing
 - We are concerned about the future commercialization of our neighborhood and the potential associated detrimental impacts of the venue operations
 - We fear that there is an apparent pattern of permanent venue expansion through the incremental permitting process without there ever being consideration for the 'planned future venue' as a whole

We don't want a Commercial Resort in our neighborhood

The Original Ridgefield Events Plan - 2024

When CUP was discussed at the Public Hearing back on April 4, 2024, there was both support and dissension from the immediate neighborhood

Permit Allows:
Weddings and
Special Events

Project Description: A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to authorize a seasonal special event venue (primarily weddings) between April to October, with a maximum of 120 guests per event and a maximum of 30 events per year. Events are expected to occur for elopements from Monday through Thursday (typically between 2-20 guests max) and weddings on Friday through Sunday (typically between 30-120 guests).

The Ridgefield Events Operating Plan - 2024

- Definitions Were Further Defined in The Ridgefield Events Operations Plan that was Approved by the Planning Department

Permit Allows:
Weddings and
Special Events

Size of an Event:
Small Event 2-20
Large Event 30-120

Operations Plan for Ridgefield Events



2' Hosting

Events at Ridgefield will be centered in the terrace area in front of our home. Guests will typically hold their ceremony and reception in this area. Tables and chairs, catering and music, flowers and desserts, will all be centered in this area. Hours of operations will be 9:30am to 9:30pm, with guests on site generally from 1pm to 9:30pm (maximum). 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 focus will be on doing "elopements" from Monday through Thursday (typically between 2-20 guests max) and weddings on Friday through Sunday (typically between 30-120 guests). 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 Ridgefield Events Operating Plan - 2024

- Definitions Were Further Defined in The Ridgefield Events Operations Plan that was Approved by the Planning Department

Number of Events:
30 Events Per Season

Operations Plan for Ridgefield Events



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Majority of 30 Events
will be Small Events:
2-20 guests
Minimum 16 Small
Lower Impact Events

The Ridgefield Events Operating Plan - 2024

- Definitions and Commitments that Were Further Defined in The Ridgefield Events Operations Plan that was Approved by the Planning Department

Operations Plan for Ridgefield Events



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Staff:
Husband and Wife
NO Employees

Summary of Original CUP/Operating Plan Definitions and Commitments

- 30 Weddings/Special Events per season (mid-April through mid-October)
 - Small Events (e.g. Elopements) involving 2-20 guests
 - Large Events (e.g. Weddings) involving 30-120 guests
 - Majority (51%) to be Small 2-20 guest low impact events (≥ 16 Small Events)
- Staffed by Husband and Wife – No employees

This Original 2024 CUP Application Received Some Neighborhood Support as Some Neighbors Wanted to Give Their Plan a Chance

- Map of Parcels – 2024 Support
 - Green - Approve
 - Yellow – give a chance
 - Red – Disapprove
 - Blank - Abstain



The Recent 2025 CUP Modification Did Not Receive the Support of the Neighborhood

- Map of Parcels – 2025 Support
 - Green - Approve
 - Yellow – give a chance
 - Red – Disapprove
 - Blank – Abstain
- Iver Skavdal during the PC Hearing expressed his frustration over this change in support and wondered why?



What Happened ?

- Ridgefield Events deviated from their plans
 - Few Small Events and Many More Large Events
 - At Public Hearing Ridgefield Events reported attendance data showing 11 Large Events versus 1 Small Event through August (87.5% of the events, or the majority of events, had been Large Events).
 - Large Events were characterized by:
 - Loud Amplified Music, DJs/MCs, and Crowd Noise were heard through out different parts of the neighborhood (¼ mile away) that disrupted the usual serenity and tranquility of the neighborhood
 - Lots more traffic, but no traffic study
 - Other potential detrimental impacts that have NOT been studied
 - Potential detrimental impacts on water supply, water usage/supply, fire danger, under-the-influence drivers, and loss of property value

Ridgefield Events Applied for Modification of CUP

- On June 12, 2025 applied for a modification of CUP to enable overnight stays for up to 14 guests associated with an event and worked with Planning Department to develop Resolution.
 - Public Notice of Planning Commission Hearing for August 21, 2025 was mailed August 7, 2025.
- Public Hearing delayed until September 4, 2025. CUP Modification now also included increase in number of guests from 120 to 175 and an increase in the number of events from 30 to 40.
 - Public Notice of Planning Commission Hearing for September 4, 2025 was mailed August 21, 2025.

The Planning Commission Public Hearing

- Written comments were 18-1 against the Modification
- Oral presentations, with the exception of the applicant, were all against the Modification.
 - 4 presenters had been against the original CUP
 - 3 presenters who had originally been willing to give the CUP a chance were now against the Modification
- The Neighborhood Noise Pollution Issue was the only concern the Planning Commissioners acknowledged and attempted to address
 - The Planning Commission did not address concerns about potential detrimental effects of increased traffic, under-the-influence drivers, water usage/supply, and fire danger, as well as potential degradation of water quality and loss of property value.

The Public Hearing Outcome

- The Planning Commissioners then negotiated with the Applicant and developed a significantly different resolution than what had been asked for in the original Modification
 - Complainants had absolutely no input in these negotiations
 - No opportunity to contribute to the discussion of the modified resolution
 - No opportunity to ask questions regarding the modified resolution
 - No opportunity to evaluate and review the modified resolution
 - No opportunity to critique the modified resolution
- The Resultant Modification was to hold the Events constant at 30, increase to 150 guests maximum, and allow up to 14 overnight guests
- The Planning Commissioners moved, seconded, and unanimously approved their newly negotiated resolution by a 4-0 vote.

What Was Wrong With This ?

- The complainants were completely left out of the process of developing a new modification that was negotiated solely with the applicant
- The Planning Commission appeared to believe they had mitigated the Noise Pollution Issue by
 - Holding the number of events constant at 30
 - Lowering the requested maximum number of guests from 175 to 150.
- The Planning Commissioners apparently forgot to apply the definition of an Event as stated in the CUP
- As a result, they did not mitigate the Noise Pollution Issue, as they inadvertently redefined the definition of an Event which basically allowed that there could be at least one Large Amplified Event every weekend of the 6-month (26-week) season!

Redefinition of an Event

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original CUP with 30 Events in 26 Weeks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-20 guests = 1 Event • 30-120 guests = 1 Event • "Majority were to be Small Events" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PC Modification with 30 Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-20 guests = 1 Event • 30-150 guests = 1 Event • Created a Weekend Package – 1 Event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bundled 3 Original Events into new "Event" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday Event (Rehearsal Dinner) – 1 CUP Event ? • Saturday Wedding – Amplified – 1 CUP Event • Sunday Event (Brunch) – 1 CUP Event ? • Friday or Sunday events become an Event if 1 Non-overnight guest attends • Set NO guest limit other than the proposed 150 guest maximum for any of these three events |
|--|--|

Every Event can be a LARGE EVENT

The Planning Commission's Stated Intent was to Not Increase the Number of Events

But it turns out that was the result!

The new Modification now allowed 3 original CUP Events to be bundled and called 1 Event, even though they now were spread over 3 days, likely resulting in actually increasing the number of original CUP Events by as many as 44 to 52 additional events

They apparently forgot the definitions stated in the CUP and they did not realize that all the bundled rehearsal dinners and brunches were previously defined as separate events under the CUP!

Redefinition of an Event - Every Event Can be a LARGE EVENT

• Original CUP with 30 Events in 26 Weeks

• Individual Events

- 2-20 guests = 1 Event
- 30-120 guests = 1 Event

• Majority to be Small Events

• CUP Modification Event - Option 1 -

30 Large and Small Events in 26 Weeks

- 26 Weekend Events X 3 Original Events per Weekend = 78 Original CUP Events
- 4 Mid-week Events X 1 Small Event = 4 Original CUP Events

- $78 + 4 = 82$ Original CUP Events

Applicant was granted 52 Additional Original Events whereas the Applicant only asked for an increase of 10 Original Events in his Modification!

Redefinition of an Event - Every Event Can be a LARGE EVENT

- Original CUP with 30 Events in 26 Weeks
 - Individual Events
 - 2-20 guests = 1 Event
 - 30-120 guests = 1 Event
- Majority to be Small Events
- CUP Modification Event - Option 2 -
30 Large Events in 26 Weeks
 - 22 Weekend Events X 3 Original Events per Weekend = 66 Original CUP Events
 - 4 Weekends X 2 Large Events = 8 Original CUP Events
 - 66 + 8 = 74 Original CUP Events

Applicant was granted 44 Additional Original Events whereas the Applicant only asked for the increase of 10 Original Events!

The Planning Commission Inadvertently Redefined the Original Event

- The Planning Commission granted 3 Original Events for the Price of 1
- No limit on guests other than 150 guest maximum
 - For Option 1 - Use the 2025 Average Attendance of 74 guests for Large Events
 - Assume half of that attendance for Friday and Sunday special events and 15 guests for the 4 Small Events

Attendance increases from 2,200 guests under the CUP to 3,908 guests under the Modification, an increase of 75% over the CUP for 30 Events
 - For Option 2 - Use the 2025 Average Attendance of 74 guests for Large Events
 - Assume half of that attendance for Friday and Sunday special events

Attendance increases from 2,200 guests under the CUP to 3,848 guests under the Modification, and increase of 74% over the CUP for 30 Events

As a Result ...

- Supposedly held number of Events constant but instead dramatically increased the number of guests using the venue and days of use
 - An approximate 75% increase in the number of guests from 2,200 to 3,900.
 - A maximum of 30 days of events was inadvertently transformed into as many as 74 to 82 days of events!
- No one ever had a chance to evaluate any of the potential detrimental effects of such increases in usage or guests
- We do NOT believe that the Planning Commission understood the implications of their "new" Modification when they redefined an "Event"
 - No one ever had a chance to review, question, critique, or provide written or oral comments regarding the "new" Modification which would likely have identified these potential dramatic changes in usage and number of guests

This is one major reason to overturn
the Approval of the Modification!

Another Deviation From the Original Plan

- Overnight stays for 2-14 guests associated with an event
- Allowing overnight guests completely changes the nature of the Ridge Field Events venue
 - 24-hour staffing
 - 24-hour traffic with possibility of multiple trips per guest/couple/family
 - Permanent signage and lighting?

Ridgefield Events morphs into

Ridgefield Destination Wedding Resort

Ridgefield Events Morphs into Ridgefield Destination Wedding Resort ?

- We are concerned about future Modifications to the CUP
 - Additional housing units to accommodate more and more guests ?
 - Restaurant ?
 - Bar ?
 - Spa and/or Fitness Center?
 - Permanent shuttle service ?
 - Laundromat ?
 - Swimming pool ?
 - Outdoor amphitheater ?

These are the types of concerns the neighborhood now has, as we have watched Ridgefield Events drift, in somewhat small incremental steps, further and further away from the Operations Plan as described in the Conditional Use Permit

Our Future ?

Our Fickle Hill neighborhood does not want to wake up one morning and find that we now live in a commercialized Fickle Hill Town Center with other new businesses located nearby to accommodate the large-scale resort that has gradually developed over time

- More B&Bs ?
- Small local general store ?
- Food trucks ?
- Bike rentals ?
- Bus stop ?

We do not want the neighborhood commercialized

Another Reason to Rescind Approval

- The neighborhood Noise Pollution Issue that was the only concern the Planning Commissioners acknowledged needs to be studied
- No one has studied the neighborhoods' concerns about the increased potential detrimental effects of the "new" Modification:
 - increased traffic
 - Increased under-the-influence drivers
 - degradation of water supply and/or quality
 - increased fire danger
 - loss of property value

We urge NO increases in usage, guests, or overnight stays until we know more about the potential impacts of these proposed changes

The Significance of Potential Impacts ?

- At the September 9, 2025 the Henderson Appeal was heard by the Board of Supervisors
 - The Planning Department recommended NOT allowing the proposed lot split
 - Parcel was within the Jacoby Creek Community Plan, but would never connect to City of Arcata Services
 - Parcel was 0.4 acres less than 5-acre minimum required to split, but a variance was possible
 - The addition of another Septic System and Well might have a detrimental impact on the neighboring parcels
- The Board of Supervisions tabled the appeal until such time as the Planning Department could determine whether or not the parcel split would have detrimental impacts on the neighboring parcels

Should we not be entitled to the same concern for our neighboring properties ?

Ridgefield Events Continues to Deviate From Their Original Plans

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL (PLN-2024-18885)

APPROVAL OF THE CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT IS CONDITIONED ON THE FOLLOWING TERMS AND REQUIREMENTS:

A. General Conditions

3. The operator(s) shall provide an adequate number of portable toilets for each event at a minimum of one portable toilet per fifty (50) attendees. All portable toilets shall be equipped with hand washing stations.

- After the initial 2024 event season Ridgefield Events voluntarily implemented two major permanent and costly improvements
 - Building Department permitted (December, 2024) a 300 ft² ADA Bathroom
 - Division of Environmental Health permitted (March, 2025) a massive 150-person Non-Standard onsite septic system

RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Resolution Number: 24-017

Record Number: PLN-2024-18885

Assessor's Parcel Number: 500-011-007

2. FINDING:

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

EVIDENCE:

- a) The Class 1 exemption applies to the operation, permitting, repair, maintenance or minor alteration of existing public and private structures or topographical features involving negligible or no expansion of the former use. The subject site is developed and no new construction is proposed. Existing grassy areas onsite will be utilized as parking areas during events and one existing driveway encroachment along the private driveway from the intersection of Fickle Hill Road will be paved to comply with requirements set by the Land Use Division of Public Works.
- b) The Class 4 exemption applies to minor or temporary use of land having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment. The project proposes use of the property for a total of up to 30 events per year during a 6-month period (middle of April through middle of October). It is reasonable to view the use as "temporary" given the frequency and limited duration of the activity seeking a permit.

Further Deviations From the Original Plan

RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Resolution Number: 24-017

Record Number: PLN-2024-18885

Assessor's Parcel Number: 500-011-007

- 4. FINDING:** The proposed development is in is in conformance with all applicable policies and standards in the Humboldt County General Plan 2017.
- EVIDENCE:** b) The proposed project will have no net effect on housing densities. The parcel was not included in the 2019 County Housing Inventory. The purpose of the proposed project is for a special events venue and will not affect the existing residential use of the property. The project is consistent with the County's Housing Element.

Scott Davies vacated the Fickle Hill venue and moved into the City of Arcata. The house is now a commercial facility rather than a residential property.

Further Deviations From the Original Plan

- Ridgefield Events Permanent Changes to the CUP and Operations Plan:
 - The construction of the 300 ft² ADA Bathroom(s)
 - The construction of the massive non-standard 150-person septic system
 - Scott Davies moving from the 2242 Fickle Hill Rd address to a location within the City of Arcata
- Such changes are often viewed as 'Beneficial' by the Planning Department, but were they viewed relative to the "Temporary" nature of the CUP and their potential detrimental impact on the neighborhood?

The Neighborhood Was Never Notified of These Changes

- Scott Davies "Good Neighbor" Letter March 19, 2025 communicated Ridgefield Events' plan to modify the CUP to allow overnight guests.
- This would have been the perfect opportunity to also let the neighborhood know about the other changes in his plans that included:
 - The construction of the ADA Bathrooms
 - The construction of the massive 150-person non-standard septic system
 - His plans to move from the venue down into the City of Arcata
- His failure to be transparent and communicate the changes that were happening with the venue has caused many neighbors to lose trust and question his long-term plans and intentions for the venue

Lack of Compliance to CUP

- CUP Complaints have now been filed:
 - Planned 2025 attendance levels in excess of 120 maximum guests
 - 3 Events of 12 listed in the 2025 Attendance Report listed 125 guests
 - Permanent signage
 - During 2024 and 2025
 - Events staged outside of the mid-April to mid-October season
 - Two events this past weekend October 24-25
 - Noise
 - A concern expressed in 2024 Public Hearing Comments and a growing concern based on the 2025 season
 - Website Advertising
 - Higher guest limits than approved in CUP

Neighborhood Concerns

- We are concerned about the possibility that the venue will continue to request modifications that result in the increasing expansion of Events, guests, and overnight stays that have not yet been fully identified (what are the venue's long-term plans).
- We are primarily asking that no increases regarding the venue be approved until we know more about the present situation.
- We are requesting 3rd-party oversight to see that the conditions and requirements of the CUP are met.
- We are requesting that no further permanent improvements related to the venue's operation be permitted until we know more about long-term plans and their potential detrimental impacts

Property Rights of Residents versus Those Granted by a CUP/MOD ?

- The Ridgefield Events venue required a CUP in order to operate in this neighborhood, as this venue is not a normal use of this parcel
- The venue now requires this Modification to change its operations
- How do the property-rights of a non-owner occupied business being conveyed through the CUP and this Modification outweigh the property rights of the many neighborhood property owners and residents when such a large majority of the neighborhood so overwhelmingly opposes this Modification?