

**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

Resolution conditionally approving the Ridgefield Events Conditional Use Permit.

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

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

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

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

1. FINDING:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FINDINGS FOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

4. FINDING:

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

EVIDENCE:

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

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

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

5. FINDING:

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

proposed development is consistent with the purposes of the TPZ.

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

6. FINDING:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DECISION

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

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

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

The motion was made by COMMISSIONER Thomas Mulder and second by COMMISSIONER Peggy O'Neill and the following vote:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS: Iver Skavdal, Thomas Mulder, Noah Levy, Jerome Qiriaz, Peggy O'Neill, Sarah West, Lorna McFarlane

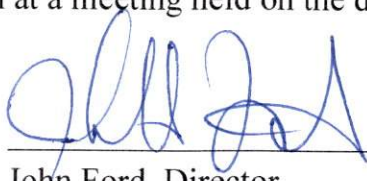
NOES: COMMISSIONERS:

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS:

ABSTAIN: COMMISSIONERS:

DECISION: Motion carried 7/0

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Ford', is written over a horizontal line.

John Ford, Director
Planning and Building Department

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL (PLN-2024-18885)

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

A. General Conditions

1. This permit is valid for five years from the date of this approval. Prior to expiration of the permit, the applicant must apply for a permit renewal if continued operation is desired. If an application for a renewal is not applied for and approved, the permit is deemed expired.
2. The project shall be conducted in accordance with the Project site plan and operations plan.
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.
4. Caterers shall have access to potable water at events and access to approved handwashing and toilet facilities.
5. The conditions contained in the Department of Public Works memo dated January 29, 2024, (included within Attachment 3), are included as conditions of approval. Prior to performing any work on public improvements, contact the Land Use Division of the Department of Public Works.
6. Water for handwashing, dishwashing, and/or drinking must follow potability requirements in accordance with the California Drinking Water Act.
7. The applicant is required to pay for permit processing on a time and material basis as set forth in the schedule of fees and charges as adopted by ordinance of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors. The Department will provide a bill to the applicant after the decision. Any and all outstanding Planning fees to cover the processing of the application to decision by the Hearing Officer shall be paid to the Humboldt County Planning Division, 3015 "H" Street, Eureka.

B. Ongoing Requirements/Development Restrictions Which Must be Satisfied for the Life of the Project:

1. All parking must be located on the project site. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that all parking is contained on site.
2. No permanent signs advertising the site or event are authorized by this permit. Temporary signs to direct guests to the venue shall not exceed 2 feet by 2 feet in size

and shall be placed and removed within 1 day of the event. The location of any off-site signs shall be subject to the prior approval of the Planning Director under Section 31-87.3.2.5 of the Humboldt County Zoning Regulations.

3. All amplified music and speakers shall be directed inward from the nearest property lines.
4. The applicant shall provide adequate trash receptacles and shall be responsible for cleanup and proper disposal of any litter created by each event. Containers for disposal of recyclable or compostable items shall be provided.
5. Any exterior lighting associated with the event shall be shielded and directed so as not to extend beyond the boundaries of the parcel.
6. Should the Humboldt County Planning Division verify violation of the terms and conditions of this permit, and verify subsequent violation of the same provision, this will be treated as a continuation of that violation.
7. Events with amplified music shall not exceed 80 decibels along the western property line. In the event that two or more noise complaints are received by the County in any 12-month period, any future events with amplified music must have a noise monitor onsite on the western property boundary and noise cannot exceed 80 decibels at the nearest property line.

Operations Plan for Ridgefield Events



1 Introduction

While considering development plans for our 77 acre property, we weighed the potential for traditional development (multiple housing production) against the opportunity to protect this property from development and do something more beneficial with this rare block of largely undeveloped timber land 1 mile from the City of Arcata. As such, we decided to gift (with no compensation) all of our timber lands to the City of Arcata as a conservation easement (CE) to expand the habitat of the community forest, which we border. We are in the final stages of this multi-year effort and expect the CE to be finalized by the end of 2023.

We have envisioned Ridgefield Events as a complement to the CE. 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.

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.

3 Restroom facilities

Ridgefield has established relationships with 2 local companies who provide trailered restrooms for our events. These restrooms are then taken offsite (along with the waste) after the event.

4 Parking

We have onsite parking for 150 cars. We will also collaborate with local hotels and private shuttle vendors to minimize traffic and parking impacts during our events. One example: the *Blue Lake Casino and Hotel* will not only house guests, but will also deliver them to our location with their shuttle bus, since we are so close to Arcata. We will encourage guests to leave their cars behind overnight if they need to carpool home for a safe ride.

We have lit signage at the end of our driveway to aid guests in finding our location, and will personally manage parking for events to ensure that guests are parked safely. Traffic is diverted by further signage upon approaching the event area so that guests know where to park when they arrive.



5 Alcohol

Our venue contract addresses safety concerns regarding alcohol consumption. Ridgefield Events will not allow off-site alcohol to be brought to our event venue. All alcohol must be served by a licensed/experienced bartending staff to ensure safe consumption. We view this as a liability and safety issue and take alcohol consumption very seriously.

6 Food

All food preparation will be conducted offsite by our catering partners and will be brought to Ridgefield ready to serve. We will work with licensed catering partners.

7 Noise

Our venue contract also stipulates that any amplified music associated with an event at Ridgefield will be turned off by 9:30pm so as to minimize any impacts on our surrounding neighborhood. We have hosted a number of large events for friends and family in the past, and have never had a single complaint from neighbors due to the fact that we are privately located and make sure any loud sounds (music etc.) stop by 9:30pm.

8 Garbage/recycling

We have garbage cans and recycling cans on site, and will take all garbage and recycling to the HWMA facility for proper disposal and recycling. We will use washable items whenever possible to reduce waste, and will focus on composting any food waste as well. We have ample water on site from the combined sources of a community water system located on our property as well as a well. The volume of water necessary to wash the utensils for an event is less than 20 gallons and therefor does not impact our septic system. We are also exploring providing compostable dishware to minimize water usage.

9 Access

As part of the sustainable logging operation conducted with the City's forestry team, our driveway access has been widened, had a fresh 6" of gravel over 1000' including 3 separate rolling dips to shed water and minimize erosion. We have had logging trucks and very large pieces of heavy equipment in and out our driveway with no access issues. As the maps make clear, we have unimpeded fire truck turn around space, as well as 30,000 gallons of water. Lastly, being located less than a mile from the city boundary, we are on the very lower part of Fickle Hill Rd where the road is wider and we are close to first responders.

OFFICIAL RECORDS: HUMBOLDT COUNTY RECORDS
 HUMBOLDT COUNTY OFFICIAL RECORDS
 PACIFIC MAIL: HUMBOLDT COUNTY RECORDS
 SURVEYS: HUMBOLDT COUNTY RECORDS
 RECORDED BEARING AND DISTANCE PER REFERENCE 1
 MEASURED BEARING AND DISTANCE
 FOUND RECORD MONUMENT AS SHOWN HEREON
 BOUNDARY LINE OF LANDS OF DAVIES
 UNITS TO BE ADDED BY LOT LINE ADJUSTMENT
 UNITS TO BE REMOVED BY LOT LINE ADJUSTMENT
 COUNTY PLANS RESECTIONARY BOUNDARY
 EDGE OF TRAVELLED HWY GRAVEL ROAD
 FENCE
 OVERHEAD METER
 OVERHEAD ELECTRIC TELEPHONE & CABLE LINE
 UNDERGROUND ELECTRIC LINE
 UTILITY POOL
 WATER LINE
 ON
 PM
 PM
 (N74°53'W 86°30' R)
 (N74°53'W 86°30' R)



PROJECT NOTES

- 1) This map represents a proposed Conditional Permit issued on this map to host private events on APM 500-011-007, owned by the Stenberg Gables Trust.
- 2) This mapping is based on field surveys performed by Stenberg Gables Trust in 2019 and 2023.
- 3) All measurements are in feet and decimals thereof.
- 4) The existing easements are based on a Preliminary Title Report generated by Humboldt Land Title Co., Order No. FTS-PT02200035, dated January 14, 2022. See Easement Notes herein for easements not mapped.
- 5) Boundary lines shown herein are based on the Notice of Survey for the property, recorded in the County of Santa Clara and the record of surveys filed by PWS and recorded in Book 76 of Surveys, Page 117.
- 6) The property is Flood Zone X, area of minimal flood hazard, as shown in Flood Community Panel 06023 C 0809 T, dated November 4, 2016.
- 7) Aerial imagery on this sheet is from Google Earth is as shown on the map. Imagery was taken on the date at the time the image was taken on July 7, 2022. Aerial imagery shown on Sheet 1 is from the fall of 2020.
- 8) Contours are taken from the USGS quad sheet and are 40-foot contour interval.
- 9) This properties are served by the following utilities:

Water:	Crestrive Estates Water Company
On Site Sewer:	On Site
Electric:	On Site
Gas and Electric:	On Site

LEGEND

- [illegible]

APN 500-011-007
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT
PLOT PLAN

Scott Davies
N 1/2 NW 1/4 SECTION 5 35, T6N, R1E,
HUMBOLDT MERIDIAN
THE UNINCORPORATED AREA OF ARCATA,
HUMBOLDT COUNTY, STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Date: September 2023

SCALE: 1" = 40'

SHEET 2 OF 2

POINTS WEST SURVEYING CO.
5201 Carlson Park Dr., Suite 3 • Arcata, CA 95521
707•840•9510 • Phone 707•840•9542 • Fax



County Planning staff and Planning Commissioners,

I am writing to provide additional overview of my business plan and to address concerns raised by a few of my neighbors regarding my application for a Conditional Use Permit for Ridgefield Events.

I have owned my property and made it my home for the last 20 years. I have raised my 4 children here and nursed my wife as she succumbed to cancer here. Her ashes are spread here, and I hold this property very close in my heart. As a result, I made the decision a few years ago to gift the City of Arcata (with no compensation) a conservation easement over my 75 acres of timber land to honor her memory, to protect it from development, and to expand the habitat of the Arcata Community Forest which borders my property. I finalized this gift to the city last November and am excited to have ensured that this property will remain protected from development in perpetuity.

The gift of the conservation easement to the city of Arcata and the operation of Ridgefield as an events venue are two halves of a sustainable business strategy. The conservation easement protects this land from development and augments the habitat of the Arcata Community Forest, while Ridgefield builds on that protection by inviting people to celebrate the redwood forest with zero waste events and very low environmental impact. Unlike the traditional development model (housing construction) that I elected to forego, this is a sustainable business model and will bring much needed tourism dollars to our region. Given the changes in State Housing Law, I could have pursued property development on my 78 acres that would mean an additional 12 homes and ADU's on my property. With the conservation easement, that will never happen, but I think it's important to see concerns about noise from occasional events against the backdrop of the alternative development model and its noise and traffic impacts. I have thought carefully about how to minimize any impacts to the environment and my neighbors.

I appreciate the support of neighbors who are in favor of my project and am also grateful for the concerns that were raised by other neighbors, and the opportunity to address their concerns. I would like to point out that there are approximately 40 households within the noticed area. Of those 40 households, only 2 were opposed, 2 expressed concerns, and 4 were in favor of the proposal. Additionally, because of the size of my parcel, the noticing requirements (450 feet from property boundary) included neighbors up to ¼ mile (1,320 feet) from my event area. Both of the neighbors who are opposed to my application are more than 1,000 feet from my event area, and there are more than 20 neighbors who actually live *closer* to my event space and were either unconcerned (didn't write in) or wrote to support my project. One neighbor, Dave White, stated that his residence was "approximately 400' west of the proposed venue" and that our nearest neighbor was "200' away". With all due respect to Mr. White and his concerns, these figures are not even remotely accurate. Our nearest neighbor (who wrote to support our project), is more than 400' away and Mr. White's residence is more than 1000' west of our venue. These distances are easy for anyone to see on google earth.

Here are my responses to the concerns that were raised:

“What about fire danger?” Two years ago, in preparation for gifting the conservation easement to Arcata, I worked with the City’s foresters (BBW Foresters) to conduct a fire hazard fuel reduction operation which was overseen by Calfire. The purpose of this operation was to reduce fuel loads in the forest, improve forest health, and make our forested lands less susceptible to fire. The work included thinning the forest and mulching the forest floor to reduce fuel loads in areas around structures on our property. Then, last summer, we conducted a habitat restoration logging operation across the rest of our forest lands which improved forest health, restored habitat, and further reduced fire risks in our forests. This work, in conjunction with the many acres of meadow that I keep carefully mowed, means that my property actually serves as a fire break for my entire neighborhood. Additionally, if there were to be a fire, I have 20,000 gallons of water stored on my property. This water was utilized just this past year to extinguish a fire further up Fickle Hill by the Arcata Fire Department, with whom we have a water sharing agreement. Instead of being a fire risk, my property is a net benefit to local fire safety.

“What about water usage and septic?” By design, events at Ridgefield will have almost no measurable impact on my onsite water capacity or septic system. First, we have rental agreements with two local companies (*Queen of Thrones* and *6 Rivers Portable Toilets*) that deliver trailered restrooms to our events. These 4-stall trailers come self-contained with their own water and power supply and require no additional water from Ridgefield for flushing or hand washing. Additionally, the trailers are then removed after events and all septic waste is disposed of offsite. As such, there is no impact on our water or septic system for restroom needs associated with our events.

Catering is done offsite, along with whatever water needs are associated with the cooking and food preparation. Our rental partners (*Party Place* and *North Coast Events and Rentals*) deliver plates, cups, and silverware to our events and then remove them afterwards for offsite washing. As such, food preparation and dish cleaning are both accomplished offsite with no impact to our onsite water supply.

Lastly, the Crestview Water Company is located on our property and serves 8 households on Fickle Hill. The members of the Crestview Water Company all support my project because they recognize the increase both to their property values and the quality of their water supply since I donated my property (including the water system) into the conservation easement. Put another way, the neighbors with the most to lose are all in support of my project.

“What about website information?” I appreciate the careful reading of my website by my neighbors that discovered the discrepancies between my website and my operations plan. The website information has been corrected to reflect our operations plan. Specifically, we have a hard-stop for our events at 9:30pm (earlier than the noise ordinance in Arcata which is 10pm) and while we have the parking capacity for larger events, we are not targeting them. We are focusing on smaller events as they are easier for us to manage and have less impact on our venue and our neighbors.

“What about impacts on property values?” The fact that we have protected our property from development, have invested in making it as fire safe as possible, have both a commercial water system and a private well with ample water storage and an access agreement with the Arcata Fire protection district are all factors that bolster and support property values, not diminish them.

“What about noise and road impacts?” Ridgefield exists in a neighborhood that already hosts significant industrial activity, namely logging, throughout the same season that Ridgefield would operate. The noise and road impacts from logging operations (Arcata community forest, Green Diamond, and McAdam timber properties), dwarf any such impacts from our small venue. The noise impacts from logging begin at 5am and run for 12-14 hours daily when logging operations are being conducted, 6 days a week. The road impacts from hundreds of logging trucks are also very significant. All of us as neighbors are accustomed to this activity, and the impacts it has on our noise and driving experiences. I am not suggesting that Ridgefield will have no road or sound impacts, rather, I am pointing out that these impacts are small and will occur in an existing noise-scape that dwarfs Ridgefield’s impact.

Our contract clearly states that all loud music will be turned off by 9:30pm at latest. Many events end earlier or will not have music at all. In response to neighbor’s concerns, I am investigating upgrades to our sound system with directional sound baffling that will further minimize noise impacts, and I will make sure that amplified music is projected away from neighbor’s homes.

I have addressed road concerns by utilizing the shuttle services available from local hotels, cab companies, and private shuttle services. These 20 person vans safely deliver guests to our venue. Additionally, I always encourage guests to leave their vehicles at Ridgefield if they need to catch a safe ride and return to collect their vehicles the next day. Because most of our events are smaller in size, the traffic impacts will be negligible.

Our track record speaks for itself – in the past 17 years of holding weddings and gatherings for friends and family, we have not had a single noise complaint or traffic issue. Ridgefield will continue to be an unobtrusive neighbor, and a positive business in our community.

In conclusion, many neighbors, along with Arcata City manager Karen Diemer, Arcata Chamber Director & Mayor Meredith Mathews, all support our project. We have hosted events privately for almost 2 decades without any problems and are committed to continuing to be a quality event venue, focused on zero waste and sustainability, that is also a good neighbor in our community.

Thank you for your consideration and time,

Scott Davies