

From: [Amy Gonzalez](#)
To: [Johnson, Cliff](#)
Cc: [Vasterling, Alice](#); [Johnston, Kathleen](#); [Ford, John](#); [Estlow, Trevor](#)
Subject: Re: Humboldt Retreats Use Permits PLN-2026-19508 and 19512
Date: Wednesday, May 27, 2026 1:15:30 PM

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Thank you for the transparency regarding staff's anticipated recommendation and for providing advance notice prior to publication of the staff reports. I would like to respond below, and let you know that I am prepared to be at the hearing on the 4th our defense/persepective. Please see the highlighted response below.

That said, I do feel compelled to express concern regarding both the process and the reasoning being applied to these two applications.

The homeowners involved invested substantial time, effort, and financial resources into pursuing these permits without any meaningful indication early in the process that the applications were unlikely to receive support. Had there been clearer communication regarding the level of concern or likelihood of denial, these applicants could have avoided spending thousands of dollars on a process that now appears to have had very little realistic path toward approval from the outset.

I also respectfully question the characterization of Samoa as a meaningful source of "affordable housing" in the context being presented. Current home values in Samoa are generally in the mid-to-high \$300,000 range and, even with significant down payments, monthly ownership costs can easily exceed approximately \$2,200–\$2,500 per month once mortgage, taxes, insurance, utilities, and maintenance are factored in. At the same time, Humboldt County median household income figures do not realistically support the idea that these homes represent attainable affordable housing opportunities for many local residents.

In practical terms, the level of rent necessary for homeowners to consistently cover these ownership costs would still place the properties outside what most would consider affordable long-term housing. There simply does not appear to be a realistic long-term or mid-term rental model that adequately supports these homeowners financially while also advancing the affordable housing goals being cited as justification for denial.

Additionally, Samoa continues to face significant infrastructure and livability challenges that should be central to this conversation. Energy surcharge costs in Samoa are extraordinarily high, with many residents routinely facing utility bills ranging from the mid-\$300s to as high as \$700 per month. There are also ongoing concerns involving aging infrastructure, including recurring water line failures, water quality concerns, deteriorating roads, abandoned homes attracting rodents and pests, and continued construction and maintenance issues throughout the community.

These are substantial affordability and quality-of-life considerations for any prospective long-term resident. Many current homeowners purchased in Samoa years ago under very different market conditions and could not reasonably have anticipated the growing infrastructure burdens and ongoing expenses now associated with the area.

At the same time, one of the primary reasons visitors continue to choose Samoa despite these

ongoing issues is because of its walkable beaches, ocean access, and coastal views. Visitors are often more willing to tolerate inconveniences that many permanent residents or prospective homebuyers may not be willing to overlook. Given the current realities on the ground, it is difficult to characterize Samoa as an obvious or ideal affordable housing solution without first addressing the substantial infrastructure and livability concerns that continue to impact the community.

These homeowners are not absentee investors attempting to create large-scale commercial STR operations. They have invested significantly into renovating and maintaining their homes, preserving respectful properties, and contributing positively to the surrounding neighborhood. Their intention has always been to maintain meaningful personal involvement in the community while utilizing the homes themselves for a portion of the year.

These homes were purchased with the understanding that limited short-term rental activity could help offset the substantial costs of ownership during periods when the owners are not personally occupying the properties. This represents a small-business use model that supports tourism — one of Humboldt County’s strongest remaining economic drivers — while still maintaining owner presence and accountability within the neighborhood.

I want to be clear that I am not advocating for unrestricted short-term rental proliferation or a “free-for-all” permitting approach. However, it does feel inequitable to characterize these specific applications as materially harmful to affordable housing when the broader economic realities do not appear to support that conclusion.

These applicants are attempting to responsibly maintain and improve their homes, contribute to the local economy, and participate in Humboldt County’s tourism industry in a limited and accountable manner. I respectfully ask that the Planning Commission and Board carefully consider the broader economic realities and the individual circumstances of these homeowners before reaching a final determination. That said, I strongly recommend that you also consider submitting your own personal letter or statement to the Planning Commission and/or preparing to attend the June 4th hearing if possible. Personal testimony from homeowners can sometimes carry substantial weight, especially when explaining your direct connection to the property, your intentions for responsible use, the investments you’ve made into maintaining the home, and the practical realities of ownership in Samoa.

Amy Gonzalez

On Mon, May 4, 2026 at 3:37 PM Johnson, Cliff <CJohnson@co.humboldt.ca.us> wrote:

Hello Amy,

I am reaching out to you about the two permit applications for short-term rentals in Samoa referenced above. We have some significant concerns about what is happening with Samoa and on the likelihood of the Planning Commission approving these and I wanted to make sure that you were fully aware of these concerns. Most likely we will be recommending that these applications be denied and we do not want you to be caught by surprise when our notices and staff reports are published.

We currently have 7 applications for Short Term Rentals requesting a permit in Samoa and we are planning on hearing all of these on the June 4th Planning Commission meeting.

Of the 7 applications 5 of those appear to be for rentals that are considered existing under the ordinance (existing means they have evidence of being in operation before October 26, 2023). The ordinance was designed to give priority to those short-term rentals that were in existence before October 26, 2023 that applied soon after certification of the ordinance.

The 2 applications that do not appear to be existing as of October 26, 2023 are the two I am referencing above in the subject line, for which you are listed as the agent.

The Samoa community has historically been considered one of the more affordable communities for the greater Eureka area. Our concern is that even approval of the 5 existing applications sets up a situation where a significant portion of Samoa is utilized for short-term rentals, and the additional two would increase that number and further move the community into a neighborhood that is heavily weighted to short-term rentals and be detrimental to the County's goal of maintaining and supporting affordable housing.

The Board of Supervisors was concerned about this sort of thing happening and adopted neighborhood concentration standards to protect against this. In this case these would exceed the restriction of no more than ten percent on an access road and the limitation on having no more than one STR in a 600-foot radius. While exceptions can be granted by the Planning Commission, they will need to strongly consider the impact on housing and the character of the community in order to approve your requested permits.

Please let us know if you have any questions or need clarification.

Cliff Johnson, Planning Manager
County of Humboldt Planning and Building Department
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Effective July 1, 2024, the Humboldt County Planning and Building Department will reduce the in-person counter service hours. The new hours of operation will be from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, with the counter closed on Fridays.

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