

JUL 10 2023

Planning & Building Services

Dear Zoning Administrator and Planning Commission,

I am writing to you to express my concerns regarding Ms. Mendoza-Lopez's application to hold large events under the name "Gather Events" at 4800 Burke Hill Drive in Ukiah and strongly urge reconsideration of their approval. The inaccurate information outlined in her application shows a lack of integrity and bad faith in her proposed business intentions.

I am a direct and lifelong neighbor with Gather Events (4950 Burke Hill Dr), sharing a property line which encompasses the entire South side of the Mendoza-Lopez property, which is also the largest shared property line they have. My parents own several property parcels (4848, 4840, and vacant lot on Burke Hill Rd) adjacent to me and behind the Mendoza-Lopez property, and also share a property line to the West with her. Both my parents and sister have homes on these parcels (4848 and 4840 Burke Hill Dr). We are now four generation residents, starting with my parents.

The history of ownership of 4800 Burke Hill Drive included Dr. John and Colleen Kelley, who owned the property 18 years. The Kelley's ran a private boarding facility. I grew up riding with Colleen and was like a daughter to them. They never had any events or opened the property up for anyone besides boarders. They sold the property to Brianna Jenney, who then owned the property 22 years until selling in late 2021 to Mendoza-Lopez. Brianna also ran a horse boarding business, and hosted local barrel races twice monthly on Thursday nights evenings. She would have anywhere from 40-65 barrel racers at one event. A good portion of these racers were boarders, and were primarily for kids, so the impact of visiting racers was a much smaller number. These events would always end before dark and were quiet - no loud music or parties ever took place.

I am requesting these permits be denied for a few reasons. First, we are a residential area not commercial. Having these events will drive our property values down, as families with animals are not going to want to buy property next to a large venue located on a small parcel. Besides myself, the other two properties that share a fence line also have livestock (horses and other animals), as well as myself and my parents. In total, at least 5 of the 6 neighboring properties are horse owners and small families.

Second, this is (or was) a very peaceful neighborhood without any problems prior to them buying the property. They are requesting events for up to 400 people on just a few acres, of which half is a horse boarding facility they also run, and horses are there 24/7. The County has allowed 40 parking spaces, so even with 5 people to a car, that is 200 people at maximum the approved cars to park could accommodate legally. Burke Hill Drive is a small road with little to no shoulders, and cannot handle the traffic that would come from these events. More residents walk on Burke Hill Drive than people drive.

Third, there are noise concerns from these events. On June 15, 2023 at approximately 1000am, Mendoza-Lopez's workers at 4800 Burke Hill Dr were playing the music so loud it was shaking my windows. I contacted the Sheriff's Office to file a noise complaint. This was not an isolated incident, it's just the most recent. I am a first responder and 12-hour work shifts (or more), which vary during day time and graveyard hours. I am either up at 0430am for a day shift or needing to sleep during afternoons for graveyard shifts, and work every weekend. I also have dogs and horses who are sensitive to loud noises, and these events will cause them undue stress and impact their well-being.

Fourth, Mendoza-Lopez property is located in a natural flood zone area. The arena and fields area muddy/flooded/ covered in water half the year.

Mendoza-Lopez also did not list how many employees will work with 400 guests, didn't list the snack shack, no garage at top with the house, left out the 2nd horse barn.

How can they have night events with no lights?

Do they have proper permits and insurance for their horse boarding business, in operation since December 2021?

In her letter (page 19 of the application), she writes it was a horse boarding for 20 yrs J Arena, then 20 years as Redwood Stables and had "developed an environment proper for horse loving community. Now, I will continue the legacy at the same locations doing business as Gather Events." How is removing horses and turning into wedding events "continuing the legacy" and keeping "an environment proper for horse loving community" alive and well?

Lastly, and most importantly, there are safety concerns with these events. Mendoza-Lopez has already hosted a few events in the past year and I've had several people come onto not just my property, past my gate and "no trespassing signs", but continue all the way up my long driveway and up to my home, looking for the Mendoza-Lopez event. Furthermore, Mendoza-Lopez have not taken care of their property (falling down fenceposts, metal paneling, and barbed wire fencing). They have had workers push their rotten fence onto my property, which blocked drainage ditches and creating flooding during this past winter on more than on occasion, even after a court case demanded they keep their fence (falling down or not) on their side. We also have trees overgrowing into my driveway, which I am not allowed to trim (they are) per the settlement. Due to their poor fencing, the boarders' horses are often pushing into the fence and reaching onto my property, and I am concerned for the animals' safety, as getting caught up in barbed wire and other fence material would be life-threatening for them.

Mendoza-Lopez has also been facilitating extensive construction without permits, including digging into the hill their home sits on several sides for new retaining walls and walkways leading back down the hill. They redesigned a barn into a covered event space, including new wiring and lighting, which they've held several events in. Once the County came out and demanded she stop work, the following week Mendoza-Lopez ignored the orders and continued construction anyways. The County employee (Cody Dow) came back out and red tagged the property and was very clear they are not to work on the property until it was cleared.

Within 3 months of buying 4800 Burke Hill Dr, Mendoza-Lopez trespassed onto my property, which includes a private driveway to my residence, and started doing major damage to my property by hiring workers to dig up parts of my road. That damage has since caused drainage issues, exacerbated by extreme rain storms this winter season.

I have had to undergo legal action and was forced to hire and pay for expensive legal representation to retain my property rights, as Mendoza-Lopez claimed to own the road portion of my property, which is also the only access I have to Burke Hill Drive. Without it, I would be landlocked. Their response (via lawyers) was that I could use a neighbor's property to access my home and that according to the plans they had, I also owned a portion of my neighbor's land and home, which was proved to be inaccurate. This legal matter took about 10 months to resolve, through settlement, and cost me over \$50,000,

which was an extreme cost for me to bear. Not only did we each have a survey confirm the property lines, they fought me to get a third, aiming to get the answer they wanted rather than the facts of the matter. Delays such as these continued to drain me financially as my lawyer was also involved, and did not provide any services for free. Mendoza-Lopez and her family have bullied and harassed me. Ms. Mendoza-Lopez's partner has also harassed me while I sought an estimate for fence and road repairs due to damage Mendoza-Lopez had caused.

Even after initiating legal action to retain my property, Mendoza-Lopez purchased and attached "no trespassing" and "keep out" signs to my road gate, installed a chain and her own lock. After calling the Sheriff's Office for assistance, and also the County surveyor with records to prove the property was in fact mine, Mendoza-Lopez's partner, Tito, refused to comply with the Deputy's order to remove the lock. My father ended up having to use bolt cutters/saw after Deputy Chara authorized this action so that I could enter. Deputy Chara stated that Tito was "uncooperative and hostile." This whole situation caused me to lose time from work, for my son to miss work as he was trapped inside the property, my boarder was unable to get access to her horses (one of which was having a medical emergency at the time), and caused extreme stress for all, including my father (not in the best health) to come out and deal with this.

I'd also like to note that Mendoza-Lopez (and her partner) have made comments to several community members that they will force me and my family out of our homes. They've since purchased a 3-acre lot opposite the easement road to the north, and have approached my neighbors (to the east of me) to buy their home and acreage. It does not seem that they will be hosting these events infrequently, especially as they try to expand their land and building ownership of neighboring parcels.

Rebuttal to Mendoza-Lopez's permit application:

#1 This property has never been an event center. This property was a private horse boarding facility. You cannot compare a loud wedding and corporate events venue to private horse property.

#3 If this is passed, they should be required to hire security and ensure guests don't drive onto other properties, nor park on Burke Hill Drive, the freeway on/off ramp shoulders, or the easement road to the north.

#5 Property is all dead grass which would cause a big fire hazard

#6 They have burned the trash from prior events

#7 They have parked on Burke Hill Dr causing a hazard for emergency vehicle and other cars using Burke Hill Dr

#8 They have done extensive work (without permits). They have made new roads on the property.

#12 This is a residence area surrounded by several houses.

#15 They've performed dredging on the property

#20 Extensive construction has been done and is still continuing, including excavation work into hill sides, large retaining walls, new cement patios and water features, electrical, fencing, and other projects.

#21 They started several construction projects without permits. The county came out twice and red tagged them. They had to completely stop all projects until county approved them.

#24 They have removed a cattle shed at the west end of the property. The cattle shed was connected to the fence causing the fence to fall down between our property lines (exhibit B). This will show no fence between Gather Events and my house. They have been ordered by the court to replace the fence (which they have not done yet). Instead, the fence that is rotting has been pushed to my side, and is a safety hazard for the animals on my property, as well as on theirs. Due to lawsuit, I am not allowed to remove and at least keep my own animals safe.

#28. J Arena was a private boarding facility. Ms. Mendoza-Lopez's statement about requesting "grandfathered event permits" is false. I am also curious as to their "other ranch"; no horses have been moved yet from their property, instead horses reside their 24/7 as paid boarders.

#29 East is freeway, North has 4 houses in view, West has 8-9 houses in view, South has 4 houses in view. 4800 Burke hill Dr is not surrounded by "hill and vineyards" but surrounded by families and their occupied residences.

Mrs. Mendoza has advised that the four neighbors in the area are accustomed to loud events. This is false as more than 12 close neighbors never had loud music and J Arena kept their to a minimum, and never went past dark. The trees planted in question are no help at all. In fact the trees are dead (exhibit D for trees). Lastly, Highway 101 does not provide a noise barrier for events and loud music. If it did, we could not hear Rivino Winery music on Fridays when they host their events, and that's over a mile away on the opposite side of the highway.

Mrs. Mendoza also stated she has been in the wedding industry past 25 years and licensed event coordinator for the past 15 years. Ms. Mendoza-Lopez is in her early thirties, so the numbers stated do not add up. I don't know of any kindergartner's being licensed event coordinators, and would like there would be several labor violations should a person that young be employed.

Had written drawing is not accurate. This property is not as big as Ms. Mendoza-Lopez drew. The house sits on a big hill, of which they've done a lot of major construction to. There is little flat flat land for large events, and what is there is mostly used for their horse boarding business.

Mrs. Mendoza advised two entrances: one for entry and one for exit but there is only one entrance to property, since she was denied access to my driveway (which she fought for ownership of and lost).

Rivino winery is about 1 mile from our property, and their events, including any music, are done by 900pm. They do not have any close neighbors, just their own land (vineyard), and Highway 101. They also have a private driveway and parking lot for their guest use.

Nelson Ranch is close to 3 miles from Burke Hill Drive and they have a strict order that events stops at 2200hrs.

Due to all of the above, I respectfully request you to reconsider the approval for this application. There are repeated and blatant lies, misrepresentations, and demonstration of not complying with lawful orders of both the County and the Sheriff's Office. Per "Certification and Site View Authorization", of which Mendoza-Lopez signed, any misstatements "... shall be grounds for either refusing to accept this application, for denying the permit ...", and I've listed many examples of how Mendoza-Lopez made conscious misstatements for the purpose of obtaining approval. Mendoza-Lopez has shown she operates with bad faith and is not someone that can uphold their agreements. As such, I fear if this application is approved, there will be significant negative impact to my community, as well as increased calls for service to Mendocino County Sheriff's Office and California Highway Patrol due to trespassing, noise complaints, property damage, illegal parking, and potentially increase drunk drivers.

Thank you,

Lorie Faught

