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By James Feenan at 4:00 pm, Aug 12, 2024

From: [Anna Lea Garza](#)
To: [pbscommissions](#)
Subject: Transient Habitation & Low Intensity Camping
Date: Monday, August 12, 2024 1:02:01 PM
Importance: High

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TO: Mendocino County Planning Commission,
Planning & Building Services

CC: Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

RE: Section 20.024.135(D) **Transient Habitation – Low Intensity Camping**

This letter is to share my concerns regarding a new commercial use type before you, *Transient Habitation - Low Intensity Camping*. I am writing to request that the Planning Commission pull this at your August 15 meeting from the Zoning Code, General Plan update you are considering. Please hold back Transient Habitation for further, much more in-depth consideration, consultation and planning.

I see many issues and problems with this Commercial Use type. The code for this needs broader input, particularly from our fire agencies. The environmental and safety impacts are considerable, including:

<!--[endif]-->size and acreage of property. Larger acreage, spaces with reasonable distances from adjacent neighbors may be able to mitigate noise and impacts. But is it feasible or reasonable to allow these camp-sites on small acreage, residential areas such as RR2, RR5? Does this make population usage on the land too dense? Will a 10 ft. setback really dispel noise and disturbance to properties adjacent to the camp-site?

lights, traffic, road maintenance, smells, pets, sensitive habitats are concerns

ground water - concerns may vary but in many rural residential areas of the county, wells do go dry in summer. How should this be addressed so as to not be unfair to neighboring residents?

community well-being, safety issues

septic, sewage disposal, facilities for guest hygiene

ability to maintain fire insurance coverage may become an issue for property owners adjacent to hip camps. This issue is already critical in California. Adding campgrounds next door may increase insurance rates or make it harder to get & maintain insurance

property values and ability to re-fi or sell properties could become problematic for home owners next door to camp sites.

I'd like to list these recommendations for your consideration:

* definitely charge a transient occupancy tax to each group of camping guests. This TOT should at least be partially allocated to the public services likely to be utilized by visitors, specifically Fire and Emergency responders. This tax can be passed on to the guest through the Hip Camp registration

require a business license for all types of hip camp sites as well as the use permit. This encourages property owners to think like a business, hopefully make a business plan, be successful

site maps for permitted camp site should be filed with local Fire Districts as well as with the County; reflective address signs should be posted; fire safety plans should be required as part of the permitting process and on file with the respective local Fire District

require each applicant for this business license to have a home/fire inspection. Property owners would pay the fee for inspection. This is done for new builds in the County. Owners must pass inspection or remediate findings before permits are issued

penalties/fines should be charged for not following safety code

NO open flames or camp fires should be allowed and there should be fines for doing so. Along with providing fire extinguishers, fire districts can recommend how to orient guests to using them - many people will not know how. Fire travels too fast to not have some orientation to use of a fire extinguisher. Also consult Fire Districts regarding use of camp stoves

with each application for Low Intensity Camping permit, County Planning & Building should notify adjacent property owners of the intent to operate a commercial camp site next to them prior to issuance of any business license or permit. I wouldn't leave this with Hip Camp operators; notification needs to be

official and certain. What recourse is there if neighbors object to having a camp site next door?

Finally, I question how lucrative hip camps are for the county economy. According to the Hip Camp site, campground owners in Mendocino make an average of \$7,500 supplemental income annually. How much does this translate to transient occupancy tax per campground, or countywide? It's probably minimal. So, all this trouble to create a NEW type of use permit in the county for just hip camps. It would be efficient and fair to include a review of Airbnb, VRBO, and tiny homes rentals as well. Are these charged a TOT or required to have use permits? My guess is home vacation rentals is the larger business activity in Mendocino and not charging a tax represents a loss of revenue to the County.

Most important for community safety, please include the fire chiefs and Fire Districts in your planning discussions. We will better policy and rules if the people who do the work of community safety are included in the planning.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Anna Garza, Fort Bragg resident