



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES
860 NORTH BUSH STREET • UKIAH • CALIFORNIA • 95482
120 WEST FIR STREET • FORT BRAGG • CALIFORNIA • 95437

JULIA KROG, DIRECTOR
PHONE: 707-234-6650
FAX: 707-463-5709
FB PHONE: 707-964-5379
FB FAX: 707-961-2427
pbs@mendocinocounty.gov
www.mendocinocounty.gov/pbs

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 7, 2024
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Julia Krog, Director
SUBJECT: **Discussion and Possible Direction to Staff Regarding Establishing a New Use Type of Transient Habitation: Low Intensity Camping**

The agenda item for the November 7, 2024 Planning Commission meeting is to discuss and seek possible direction from the Planning Commission on establishing a new use type of Transient Habitation: Low Intensity Camping, which would allow a limited number of short-term commercial campsites on properties within the Inland areas of the County.

Planning and Building Services is first seeking preliminary direction from the Planning Commission (“Commission”) regarding establishing this new use type and then will seek preliminary direction from the Board of Supervisors (“Board”) before proceeding with any stakeholder meetings. This process will allow for any stakeholder meetings to be more effective in receiving feedback on the direction received from the Commission and Board. After stakeholder meetings, Planning and Building Services will begin drafting an ordinance, which will then be reviewed by the Commission, who will provide a report and recommendation to the Board. The Board will take final action on any proposed ordinance regulating this new use type.

This use type was contemplated during the review of the Inland Zoning Code Update earlier this year, but regulations for the use type were not adopted as part of the Inland Zoning Code Update. The Commission’s reasons for recommending against adopting Low Intensity Camping provisions at that time were as follows:

- a. Additional time is needed to hear comments from emergency service providers, especially fire districts, and resource agencies such as Department of Transportation and Environmental Health Department.
- b. Concern that separate regulations may be necessary for the western portion of the County that, while governed by the Inland Zoning Code, is generally seen as being part of the Mendocino coast, which generally has greater demand for transient habitation and impacts to traffic and services in the Mendocino Coast area that already includes several permitted campgrounds.
- c. There was disagreement over what parcel sizes and zoning districts are an appropriate fit for Low Intensity Camping and what kind of property setbacks would minimize disruption of neighbors. Additional planning time is necessary to assure public input and participation by providing public meetings in every district, hear public comments and address the impacts that may occur.
- d. Camp sites create numerous impacts that affect adjacent parcels that are not fully addressed by the proposed ordinance provisions. These impacts include noise and light and glare that affect neighbors, and the potential for degradation of private and public roads by increased traffic related to Low Intensity Camping or other transportation impacts. Additional operational requirements to mitigate these impacts

and concerns by both property owners and residents are necessary. Additional time is required to develop solutions, inform, and hear public comment.

- e. Camp sites require adequate water supply, sewage disposal and solid waste disposal and oversight for the health and safety of those camping. Additional operational requirements to speak to these issues were requested, and therefore additional time is necessary to develop solutions and hear public comment.

In seeking direction from the Commission, staff thought it may be helpful to share an example of an ordinance from another jurisdiction who has recently adopted regulations for low intensity camping. The County of San Benito was the first and one of the few jurisdictions that has adopted regulations for low intensity camping. Staff has attached a copy of the County of San Benito ordinance to this memorandum as Attachment A. Additional information regarding their Low Impact Camping Ordinance can be found at:

<https://www.sanbenitocountyca.gov/departments/resource-management-agency/low-impact-camping-ordinance>.

Attachments:

- A. County of San Benito Low Impact Camping Ordinance

25.08.031 Low Impact Camping

This section refers to uses classified as Low Impact Camping as described in Chapter 25.09. Such uses are subject to the regulations below. This includes tent camping, glamping, dry RV camping, yurts, or something similar.

A. Location and Site Regulations

In accordance with Table 25.03-B of this Title, Low Impact Camping is permitted in the AR, AP, R, RR, and RT zones subject to the following:

1. Acreage requirements per Accessor Parcel Number (APN)
 - a. One (1) campsite per acre up to nine (9) campsites
2. No more than 6 (six) campers permitted per campsite.
3. Campsites shall be setback a minimum of one hundred (100) feet from property lines.
4. The property owner shall maintain sanitation facilities that are fully self-contained or connected to a permitted sewage disposal system serving the property. At least one (1) ADA restroom shall be required.

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5. All solid waste shall be removed from the premises after each occupancy, and onsite trash receptacles shall abide by applicable animal-protection trash best practices or requirements.
6. No on-street parking shall be permitted in connection with a Low Impact Camping site.

B. Operational Regulations

All Low Impact Camping areas shall be operated in the following manner:

1. Temporary Sleeping Accommodation Only

- a. No temporary sleeping accommodation shall be used for permanent human occupancy.
- b. Temporary sleeping accommodations shall not exceed fourteen (14) consecutive nights per camper.

2. Noise

All low Impact Camping Facilities shall comply with Chapter 19.39 – Noise Control Regulations of the San Benito Municipal Code. Specifically, no amplified sound equipment or live music shall be permitted between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

3. On-Site Manager

A designated on-site operator or manager shall be available by phone twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week.

4. Communal/Recreational Fire Pits

There can be only (1) communal wood burning fire pit per APN and shall be operated by the site manager or property owner. The site manager or property owner shall take all necessary training for the Fire Department or CalFire to operate.

Communal and recreational fires and fire pits shall comply with the following:

- a. Recreational fires are not to be wider than three (3) feet in diameter and two (2) feet in height.
- b. Recreational fires shall not be conducted within twenty-five (25) feet of a structure or combustible materials.
- c. Open burning, bonfires or recreational fires shall be constantly attended until the fire is extinguished. A minimum of one portable fire extinguisher with a

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minimum 4-A rating or other approved on-site fire-extinguishing equipment, such as dirt, sand, water barrel, garden hose or water truck, shall be available for immediate utilization.

- d. Portable outdoor fireplaces and barbeques shall be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and shall not be operated within fifteen (15) feet of a structure or combustible materials.
5. The business license holder shall obtain and maintain in good standing a certificate issued from the Tax Collector /Auditors Office for Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), whether the business license holder collects TOT directly or through a third-party platform.