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From: [Anna Lea Garza](#)
To: [pbscommissions](#)
Subject: public comment for Nov 7
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November 5, 2024

TO: Mendocino County Planning Commission,
Planning & Building Services

CC: Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

RE: for Nov 7 meeting – Item **6c. Discussion and Possible Direction to Staff Regarding 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.**

I am writing once again to share my concerns regarding a new commercial use type under consideration, *Transient Habitation - Low Intensity Camping*.

I understand that the Planning & Building department has received input on this issue from both the county's fire chiefs and the MCFSC (Mendocino County Fire Safe Council). I believe this expert input is critical to forming a safe and working ordinance for hip camps in Mendocino County.

Please consider the following issues and suggestions for the new Use type for transient habitation/low intensity camping:

- * charge a transient occupancy tax to each group of camping guests. In the same way that TOT on campsites are allocated in the County, allocate the collected TOT to the public services most likely to be utilized by visitors, specifically Fire and Emergency responders

- * 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 use permit to have a home/fire inspection. Property owners could pay the fee for inspection. This is done for new builds in the County. Owners must pass inspection and remediate findings before

permits are issued

- * penalties/fines should be charged for not following safety code
- * any open flames or camp fires should only be allowed and regulated according to requirements from the County's Fire agencies
- * address ingress/egress issues for emergency vehicles – private roads must allow all-weather access for emergency responders. This is essential not just for guests at a hip camp but for residents of adjacent properties as well.

Other issues of concern that should be addressed in this ordinance include:

- * noise to adjacent neighbors – consider a reasonable setback to dispel noise and disturbance to properties adjacent to the camp-site
- * lights, traffic, pets, sensitive habitats are concerns
- * maintenance of private roads – will neighbors adjacent to the hip camp unfairly be paying for additional maintenance for ingress/egress of camping vehicles? How can this be resolved?
- * 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?
- * septic, sewage disposal, facilities for guest hygiene
- * property values and ability to re-fi or sell properties could become problematic for home owners next door to camp sites.

I understand the benefits to individual families and our local economy that could be derived from the operation of hip camps on private properties – another revenue stream into our region. I hope, however, that the County very carefully considers the safety and environmental impact trade offs that come with this decision. In a rural and forested community what can appear a reasonable way forward, can end up endangering the land, our native habitats, and the residents. There can be unintended consequences in other areas too. Recently many homeowners are struggling to maintain fire insurance coverage. Adding a hip camp next door may make situations worse by increasing home fire insurance rates or making it harder to get insurance at all. This issue is already critical in California.

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