

Project File Number: CU-13-00007

Project Name: Larson Fruit Co. Conditional Use Permit

Applicant: Keith Larson



Comments regarding

CU-13-00007

Date: 12-12-13

Subj: Larsen Fruit Farm Housing Proposal at Burbank Creek

From: Brad Pool resident of Burbank Creek



Just this last week I received a letter from Kittitas Planning regarding this proposal.

After reviewing the letter and associated documents I find I must strongly object to this plan for various reasons as listed below as well as others not listed.

1) I feel that this proposal was intentionally hidden from local residents in order to minimize time for objections.

a) proposal has been in the works for some time now according to what I see documented and yet residents are only now receiving information on the proposal and are given barely one week to respond. Due date for response being 12-20-13.

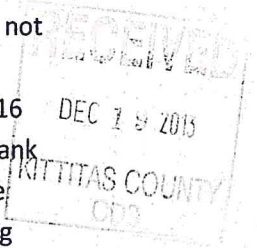
b) required 'Land Use Action' signage was posted in such a manner as to not be readily visible to the local residents. It was posted well off the main road on which residents travel. It was posted behind a locked gate and behind 'No Trespassing' signs that would prevent locals from viewing unless they crossed these no trespass areas which of course could be deemed illegal. It would have been no trouble to post an informational sign at the main road. The project location is listed with an address of 1121 BURBANK CREEK RD. Being that the address lists Burbank Creek as it's location should'nt the 'Land Use' signage been on Burbank Creek where residents may have had a chance to acknowledge? Unless of course it was posted in this manner to hinder opposition.

Some documentaiton lists the location of the project as being approx. 1 mile east of SR 821 on Burbank road while in at least 2 other places the location is said to be 3 miles to the east of SR 821 on Burbank Creek road.

a) I have received 2 letters (1 correction) regarding the location of said project. One says section 15 while the correction notice says section 27. After reviewing documents online I find the permit says (still) section 15 and in looking at the map provided in documents it shows section 15 as the proposed location.

b) After physically viewing the proposed location (derived from the signage) I find that land has already been cleared for the project. This would seem to be an assumption that a permit would be forthcoming..... regardless of any opposition. Wonder where that idea might come from? Why would land be cleared for a project like this prior to permit approval.

Documents tout less vehicle travel in the area since these will be foriegn workers and will not have cars. If this is the case why are there 16 parking spaces provided? This project upon completion can house up to 48 residents at one time. If even one third of these (16) (thus 16 spaces?) of the residents have cars and use them at all it would be devastating to the Burbank road. Burbank road is at best a one lane, gravel road with few turn outs and more than one blind corner. May times in the past (I have lived here 17 yrs.) I have been met by a speeding farm worker either coming to work or leaving.



Larsen fruit will no doubt say the proposal will allieviate these occurances. To that I would ask; will no domestic workers be used anymore? Will housed workers be not allowed to have vehicles? Will housed workers be not allowed to have visitors (with cars)?

Burbank road has been a point of contention between Larsen and local residents as long as I know of. It was only this fall (2013) that they have taken a major initiative to upgrade the road after many years of damage from orchard equipment. They have in recent past been adding small amounts of gravel in specific areas just prior to harvest mostly to minimize damage to fruit being transported, not to benefit the roadway specifically.

For the most part over the last 17 years, I have, at my own time and expense, taken care of much of the road albiet not to the most satisfactory condition due to lack of finance and equipment. Not once over this time period has Larsen Fruit offered to help.

In 2008 the residents were notified by USPS that mail delivery to our location would cease unless the road was repaired to their expectations. At that time I organized several residents to provide funds for repair and for physical help to do the work. The cost of the project was in the area of \$2500.00. Of this I was able to procure \$500.00 from Larsen Fruit but could not procure any equipment or physical help. The remainder of finances came from local residents.

If Larsen Fruit is expecting to use only foriegn workers from now on what impact will that have on all the domestic workers and their families who have, over the years, been faithful workers for Larsen Fruit and come to expect and hope for another seasons employment?

I fully believe wildlife habitat will be negatively affected. It is ridiculous to presume that with the addition of up to 48 people would not have a negative effect.

Just today I watched as a deer was being slaughtered in one of the orchards. I investigated this as I thought it might be a case of poaching. I immediately contacted 911 and WDFW. I found that a permitted hunt had taken place under the guise of depedation. I find it repulsive that gates (of the orchards) can be left wide open for hours on end then if wildlife happens to wander in looking for food it becomes the culprit and must be eradicated. Will the same thing happen if wildlife finds it's way into the project area.



I was told (by Larsen rep.) that it was not feasible to close the gates after entry.

At the time the hunt was discovered by a resident there was a hunting dog (owned by some member of the hunt or permit holder) running loose. Dogs are in general forbidden to be used/in the field during a big game hunt.

Larsen Fruit acknowledges a set of rules will be in place regarding conduct of it's workers. What are these rules?

Regardless of many studies professing farm housing in a neighborhood does not impact home prices I would disagree. Of all the studies I find that none ask two relative questions;

1) given two identical properties with the same asking price yet one property has farm worker housing close by, which property would most likely attract more offers? This reduces potential buyers of the property in proximity of farm housing which in effect reduces property values.

2) would you like farm housing in your backyard?

I believe the answers would point in a direction that opposes farm housing.

According to code 17.60a the project must be desirable to public convenience or essential and not be detrimental or injurious to the peace of surrounding neighborhood. Project is not compatible with my property zoning of rural/residential. Project is clearly not desirable to the public of this area. The 'public' are the residents of the immediate area not those from miles away who have no vested interest in the area other than monetary.

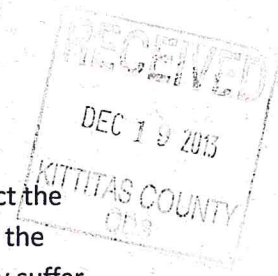
The area of the project is not serviced by fire protection. The only fire protection mentioned for the project amounts solely to the structures. It does not address the surrounding areas which are constantly in jeopardy due to the nature of it (tinder dry sagebrush and grasses).

For years the local people have been in conflict with Larsen fruit regarding trash in the area from farm workers. Larsen has been asked to at least do a weekly cleanup of the areas. The trash continues. Some of the local residents make a habit of walking the area to pick up trash.

There have been multiple burglaries in the area and I have been told that for one occurrence the perpetrators were discovered and that they were workers related to Larsen Fruit. What security measures will be instituted? As the situation stands now the workers are here during daylight hours only. This proposal will bring a significant amount of people to the area 24 hours a day.

Is this project in compliance with WISHA?

Given the history (my perception) of Larsen Fruit's lack of responsible actions in the past, i.e. trash, road damage, wildlife protection, I find it difficult to believe anything will change for the



better with the addition of this project.

In short, it is evident that this project is not desirable in this area. It will drastically affect the peace of residents. It will likely result in more trash in surrounding areas. Regardless of the contention of less traffic I doubt that will be the case. Wildlife in the area will definitely suffer. As wildlife becomes more remote due to population increase the lifestyle of local residents will suffer.

If this project is to be allowed regardless of resident opposition I would suggest there be some enforceable conditions in place to help alleviate resident concerns;

- 1) continued maintenance of Burbank Creek road to a condition equivalent to present state from 1121 Burbank Creek road west to SR 821.
- 2) improve and maintain the lateral roadway between the two orchards on the north side of Burbank Creek road from the postal sign (723) to the cattle guard/orchard gate on the east side of the western orchard along this lateral. This roadway receives a large amount of orchard related traffic also. It should be improved and maintained to an equivalent of Burbank Creek road at present.
- 3) trash detail along Burbank Creek road from 1121 Burbank Creek road continuing to SR 821 and also along the above mention lateral. This detail should include inside and outside of fences that surround all orchards. It should also include the fence line on the east side of Roza View road. The detail should include all fence lines surrounding all orchard areas. Trash can be found in all of these areas. This detail should be monthly a minimum.
- 4) dusk to dawn curfew established for workers.
- 5) all gates should be kept closed at all times other than during immediate entrance or exit to help avoid wildlife entrance to orchards. This would greatly reduce the occurrence of depredation killing.
- 6) all fences should be maintained to eliminate wildlife entry (specifically deer and elk). At present at least one gate has been reduced in height enough that deer can easily jump to gain entrance. This gate happens to be one for entrance to the orchard where a depredation kill took place on 12-12-13.
- 7) all efforts to remove wildlife safely should be exhausted prior to any slaughter and prior to slaughter residents should be informed of pending action and be allowed to monitor any hunt. A willing member of the community (actually residing) should be the permitted hunter.

Respectfully

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