

Lindsey Ozbolt

From: Judy T <judmo50@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 03, 2016 1:38 PM
To: Lindsey Ozbolt
Subject: Fwd: Letter
Attachments: Teanaway KOA.pdf; ATT00001.htm

Hi Lindsey

I just left you a message at your office. I'm sending our comments in a PDF but didn't know if you needed a hard copy. If you do I will bring a copy to your office on Friday. Please let me know either way.

Thank You, Judy Tokarsyck

lindsey.ozbolt@co.kittitas.wa.us

February 28, 2016

Kittitas County Community Development Services
Attn: Lindsey Ozbolt
411 N Ruby St #2
Ellensburg, WA 98926

RE: Yakima River Campground Project; CU-15-00002, SD-15-00001, SP-15-00001

I would like to be a party of record for the above listed applications.

I have lived in the immediate area of this project for nearly 35 years, and am a 4th generation Upper County resident. I am well versed in the issues along the Yakima River and the vicinity of this proposal, far more than the applicant, his consultants, or County staff. My exposure and familiarity can only come with decades of living, walking, and experiencing nature in the area.

That said, my comments and concerns at this time include the following:

Conditional Use Permit

- The applicant seems to repeatedly rely on the fact that a conditional use permit had been issued to the previous owners (a church) decades ago for a similar, but for a far smaller scale project. The fact that this CUP was issued then should have no bearing to a decision today. Much has changed over the decades, including environmental laws, environmental conditions in the area, and the expectations of the neighbors. The applicant refers to the users of this campground as “transitory” in nature, which is a far cry from the church members that would have occupied the property under the previous CUP. No weight whatsoever should be given to the fact that a CUP had been issued decades ago for the same property. There are few comparisons between a 75 site church camp and a 190 site campground/RV park.

KOA Campground

- The applicant’s own proposal makes reference to this project having characteristics consistent with a “KOA” campground. These styles of campgrounds are typically not found in such rural areas, so far removed from city services. There are no assurances that this campground will not, in time, turn into a semi-permanent encampment. Mentioning a 14-day limit in the CUP application doesn’t mean that anyone will be holding this business accountable five or ten years from now.

Noise

- The applicant’s proposal notes that there will be “noise from vehicles and associated users.” The applicant has made no effort to quantify this noise, which could be excessive given the 190

campsites that would be occupied by hundreds of people, including campers with loud music and even the possibility of live entertainment.

Flooding

- The Yakima River has notoriously flooded in this area, impacting properties all along the river. There seems to be little thought about the impacts of having people reside adjacent to a flooding river for up to 14 days at a time. What requirements will be in place for the applicant to ensure that the entire property is not engulfed by flood waters from the Yakima River, causing the taxpayers to bale them out?

Safety and Security

- We recently saw the brutal effects of wildfire to our ecosystem and community just a few miles from the project site. Introducing 190 campfires to this wooded area, which is traditionally bone dry during the summer, seems like a terrible idea. The applicant should be restricted to one communal fire pit with appropriate wildfire prevention strategies required.
- Given that this project will be 30-minutes from a large regional university, I shudder to think what river parties and alcohol-infused campouts will overrun this otherwise rural area. One must also wonder how good of stewards to the river these drunken campers will be.
- There have been major issues over the past few years with major float parties on the Yakima River, and the associated crime that comes with them. Having a campground and RV park adjacent to the river would only exacerbate this problem.
- There also have been an increasing number of river rescues as people have become stranded along the river, or worse yet, drowned. In fact, I can even remember a time when a Sheriff's Deputy had to come to our house to borrow a saw to cut a drowning victim's corpse from one of many log jams and tree snags along the river. The impacts of encouraging further use of the river for this recreation has not been addressed by the applicant.
- The applicant notes that campers may need to "rely" on RV sewage dumps in Cle Elum and at the Indian John Rest Area, suggesting that the public will need to at least partially subsidize the impacts of this private business.
- The applicant has not addressed the impacts that the proposal would have towards the state-owned public fishing area, parking lot, and boat launch located to the west of the property. It is very likely that this public resource will be over-run by the residents of the KOA-style campground, making this once public area an essentially private resource for the applicant's customers.

Critical Areas and Wildlife

- The applicant's Critical Areas Report relies on data from 2007. A lot can change in 9 years in an ecosystem, in particular when adjacent to a river. The applicant should have a new Critical Areas Report and survey conducted, especially given the fragile nature of the river and the dependence of communities and tribes downstream on this resource.

- I have personally observed a plethora of wildlife in the immediate area of the proposed project, including deer, elk, beavers, eagles, and hawks (to name just a few). The proposal would introduce 190 camp and RV sites, along with hundreds of people and associated vehicles to these wildlife ecosystems. These animals, in particular the deer and elk, will be displaced and forced to cross the two heavily traveled state routes near-by.
- Given the water rights issues in the Upper County, one must wonder if the existing ground well is still adequate to support 190 campsites (with 2-4 people per site, this could equate to 380-760 people)?

Traffic

- It is difficult to provide comments on the traffic impacts of the proposal since CDS has allowed the applicant to postpone completing a TIA until after the comment period.
- Once initiated, the TIA should include an analysis of a full campground (100% occupancy) at the peak seasonal periods (Memorial Day/4th of July/Labor Day weekends) in order to fully understand the impacts of the proposal.
- Analysis should be completed in particular at the SR 970/SR 10 intersection. Level of service times at this intersection have degraded significantly over the years, particularly on the weekends. This has resulted in drivers taking unnecessary risks in order to turn onto SR 970, resulting in several collisions over the years. The introduction of additional traffic during these peak weekend travel times will add to the hazardous conditions at this intersection.
- I am personally aware of train vs vehicle collisions along this stretch of the railroad east of Cle Elum. Adding hundreds of daily vehicle trips across a railroad crossing such as this is just asking for an accident to happen. At a minimum, railroad crossing arms/barriers should be installed at the campground crossing.

Land Preservation

- The applicant boasts that the project preserves a significant portion of the subject property. In reality, 32% of the property is preserved, which is not much given the extremely fragile nature of the Yakima River and shores. The vast majority of the preserved land is on an island surrounded by the river, making it effectively unusable for development anyway. The 190 camp sites are instead planned for the remaining 68% of the property.

Comprehensive Plan Compliance

- I fail to see how a KOA-style RV park would maintain the “rural character” of the area and would be “compatible with wildlife habitat.” A KOA-style campground in no way protects or preserves the natural resources of the Yakima River as the applicant claims. I would suggest that it endangers the river far more than it protects it.

I'm not sure why any reasonable person would think that it is a good idea to add a 190 site campground that could house upwards of 800 people at a property that is wedged between a fast flowing, often flooded river, and an active railroad line.

The applicant has not demonstrated how such a project would in any way preserve this site or protect the Yakima River. It is inconsistent with the spirit of the Comprehensive Plan and the rural nature of the area. We ask that CDS issue a Determination of Significance and require a complete Environmental Impact Statement in order to fully understand the impacts this project will have upon the Yakima River and our community.

Sincerely,

Mike and Judy Tokarsyck
5441 Airport Road
Cle Elum, WA 98922

Lindsey Ozbolt

From: Judy T <judmo50@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 03, 2016 4:13 PM
To: Lindsey Ozbolt
Subject: Re: Letter

Thanks

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 3, 2016, at 1:49 PM, Lindsey Ozbolt <lindsey.ozbolt@co.kittitas.wa.us> wrote:

Judy,
Your comments have been received. A hard copy is not necessary.

Regards,

Lindsey Ozbolt
Planner II
Community Development Services
411 North Ruby St., Suite 2
Ellensburg, WA 98926
509.962.7637

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