

December 14, 2020

Re: Hidden Point LLC CUP application

Dear Commissioners Osiadacz, Wachsmith, and Wright,

My name is Gretchen Chambers and I live at 3200 Emerick Road with my husband, Bill Ames. We have owned a parcel adjacent to this address since 1989. After the Taylor Bridge Fire, we acquired 3200 Emerick and three other contiguous parcels for a total of 62 acres. Our parcel numbers are 737634, 167634, 907634, 847634, and 187634.

Bill and I are signees of Patricia Galloway's letter to you of December 11, 2020. I am writing today to offer a personal perspective of the special rural character of our area and how it is threatened by the Hidden Point LLC development.

For thirty years, we have worked to preserve and enhance our land as natural habitat. The Taylor Bridge Fire heightened our appreciation of the remaining natural landscape of the Swauk-Lookout area and we dedicated ourselves to keeping all that we could as healthy and sustainable as possible. My husband, a retired forester, and I, a retired landscape designer, have thinned trees and removed fuel from the understory on every acre of our land. We have planted hundreds of pine seedlings in the burned areas. We have been careful to leave logs and forest litter to a degree that supports fungi and other soil organisms essential to forest health. We have left isolated areas of dense growth untouched to continue serving as animal cover. For several seasons after the fire, I removed invasive species (knapweed, common teasel, tumbleweeds, mullein) from meadows and roadsides across our hill. These had colonized scorched areas and were spreading across the landscape. As a result, native grasses and plants have been able to compete and thrive.

We observe a wonderful array of animals and on our land, from voles to great herds of elk, and we want our land to support them all, including rattlers, woodpeckers, bear and large predators.

As we have been fire-wising, so have many of our neighbors and we appreciate the increased safety and sustainability from our collective efforts. We also enjoy the support and appreciation of neighbors who hike and ride their horses on the old logging road through our property. These neighbors respect our signage forbidding motorized vehicles. They help watch over our land and report wildlife signs and sightings. Over the years, sharing our love of the land with our neighbors has given Bill and me an increasing sense of both community and security.

But in the last year, that sense of community and security has been shaken by multiple, unprecedented incidences of trespassing, littering and disregard of fire hazard.

For several months in the winter of 2019-20, a construction vehicle from Hidden Point LLC was parked on our meadow across from their entrance where they had ample parking areas of graveled and stripped surfaces. It was finally removed after a second request.

In the spring of 2020, I began finding discarded alcohol containers on our property along upper Emerick Road. At the time, I thought the littering was an aberration, but I found more containers through the summer and fall. Littering has never been an issue before Hidden Point LLC activity.

In June of last summer, I encountered two motorcyclists coming from the south on our lower road who had driven around our south gate—this gate has two obvious signs forbidding motorized vehicles. The motorcyclists denied being associated with the “new neighbors on top of the hill,” and they drove off the way they came. Witnesses on upper Emerick reported that around this time two motorcycles were being driven on Hidden Point LLC’s land. The witnesses observed the motorcycles leaving Hidden Point, heading south then east toward our lower road and returning to Hidden Point shortly thereafter whereupon the drivers garaged their motorcycles.

Also, in this period, when the fire hazard was moderate, I discovered the remains of a small campfire where our land overlooks the gorge. Neighbors who are permitted to hike our land discovered discarded White Claw cans in this location. To get to this location, trespassers cannot avoid our ‘no trespassing’ signs.

A horsewoman who rides on our road reported seeing about this time a large, noisy gathering around a bon fire on the Hidden Point property. Upon riding back that way she found the fire still burning unattended and put it out herself.

During the past year, the Hidden Point owners told my husband and several neighbors to their faces they were building only for their family. Their extreme bulldozing of trees and land surface seemed out of proportion to their stated plans. We watched with increasing alarm as Hidden Point LLC made changes (road widening and gate installation) to other peoples’ lands—without informing them—while claiming the right to do so by easement.

Any of these incidents represents a disturbing disruption of the peace and security of our rural community. Collectively they comprise repeated demonstration of the complete disregard for our neighborhood that is embodied in the Hidden Point LLC’s proposal. Their CUP application has now shattered any sense of security we enjoyed for our lifestyle, our peace, and natural resources.

As Patricia Galloway outlines, the proposed guest ranch is a ranch in name only and does not conform to the zoning of our area. Guest cabins of any number would draw increased traffic through nearly three miles of private rural lands and house dozens of vacationers who would not limit themselves to Hidden Point’s parcels. The amount of water the guests and pool would draw from our aquifer is disproportionately large compared to the Hidden Point acreage. The proposal claims recreation activities of snow shoeing and mushroom hunting. Guests seeking rural and natural environs would not be content staying on 35 constructed and disturbed acres. They would find few mushrooms on Hidden Point land as most of its forest soil has been dozed and stripped of organic matter. This disturbed land is already sporting a great crop of tumbleweed. Other invasive weeds that start on disturbed ground will follow and infect neighboring properties—the tumbleweed has spread to adjacent parcels already. Especially since the business would be unstaffed, the behavior of the guests would not be actively regulated. The Hidden Point guests would seek recreation beyond Hidden Point’s boundaries and trespass our private forests and meadows, disrupting wildlife habitat and movement.

Caring about the rural character of our environs is why we live here and what binds our community. Hidden Point LLC has already demonstrated great carelessness for what we value. With its traffic and unvested, recreating guests, the Hidden Point hotel business would ruin our neighborhood’s peace, security and natural resources, which we have protected, cultivated and cherished for decades.

It is a well-known abuse of contractors to build now and ask forgiveness later. They claim having made great financial investment to win sympathy and the permits they require. I implore the Commissioners to uphold the commitment of the Comprehensive Plan to preserving the rural character of Kittitas County, and not reward developers for this kind of behavior, especially not Hidden Point LLC. Allowing them to develop and operate their hotel business would not only be a dangerous precedent for the entire county, it would gravely and irreparably harm our cherished rural community.

Blocking this proposal and requiring Hidden Point LLC to conform to the Ag-20 and Forest Range zoning allowing one residence plus one accessory dwelling unit (which a guest cabin is whether it has a cooking range or not) per parcel is the only option that upholds commitment to the rural character of Kittitas County.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Gretchen Chambers

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Cle Elum, WA 98922



Tumble weed along road on adjacent parcel to south, likely spread by the road-widening done by Hidden Point LLC



Gate (open) and road to right installed by Hidden Point LLC without informing property owners (Bill Walker and Cheryl Taylor). Dozer clearing to right (also unauthorized by owners) extends over 30 feet and is about as wide.



Littered beer bottle along upper Emerick Road.



About a third of the littered alcohol containers found on Chambers-Ames and Walker-Taylor properties along upper Emerick Road.

December 16, 2020

Addendum to Chambers Letter of December 14, 2020, regarding Hidden Point LLC CUP application

Dear Commissioners,

This is a brief addendum to my letter of December 14, 2020. I wish to make two points I feel I did not adequately present in my original letter. These are about 1) noise and 2) increased fire hazards that would be imposed by a Hidden Point hotel business.

Hidden Point vacationers, in addition to greatly increasing traffic on our roads and recreating beyond the borders of Hidden Point, would have outdoor gatherings that would create a lot of noise. The way noise carries from highpoints across our vales and valleys makes it seem the source is next door though it may be far away. Besides being very disturbing to the neighbors, regular music, running engines, and outdoor gatherings of people emanating from Hidden Point would repel wildlife from our area.

Regarding fire hazard, vacationers would not appreciate the conditions that make our area so very vulnerable to fire. The Hidden Point site is southern facing and especially exposed and windy. The Taylor Bridge Fire burned very hot and fast there. Combine the dryness, heat and winds of our summers with a careless cigarette or spark from an engine or chain and we would have another Taylor Bridge Fire raging across its face to neighboring lands. Fire season is already a period of great worry for Swauk-Lookout residents. Increasing the fire hazard with large groups of recreating people who are not fire-seasoned seems very unreasonable for our fire-prone area and represents an enormous imposition on the neighbors.

Thank you, again, for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Chambers

From: [Dan Carlson](#)
To: [Kelly Bacon \(CD\)](#)
Cc: [Jeremy Johnston](#)
Subject: FW: Hidden Point CU-20-0005
Date: Wednesday, December 16, 2020 1:30:29 PM
Attachments: [Chambers letter to Kittitas Commissioners regarding Hidden Point.docx](#)

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From: Kittitas County Commissioners Office <bocc@co.kittitas.wa.us>
Sent: Wednesday, December 16, 2020 1:01 PM
To: Cory Wright <cory.wright@co.kittitas.wa.us>; Laura Osiadacz <laura.osiadacz@co.kittitas.wa.us>; Brett Wachsmith <brett.wachsmith.co@co.kittitas.wa.us>
Cc: Dan Carlson <dan.carlson@co.kittitas.wa.us>
Subject: FW: Hidden Point CU-20-0005

PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO ALL. Thank you.

Julie Kjorsvik, CMC
Clerk of the Board
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"It's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years"
Abraham Lincoln

From: Gretchen Chambers <gretchbill@msn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 16, 2020 11:59 AM
To: Kittitas County Commissioners Office <bocc@co.kittitas.wa.us>
Subject: Hidden Point CU-20-0005

Dear Commissioners,

I apologize if I am sending my letter to you of December 14th a second time. I could not find it in my "sent" file and so am sending it again to make sure you get it. Please note I have sent an addendum to this letter which IS in my sent file. I apologize for any complication I may have caused.

Thank you for your consideration,

Gretchen Chambers

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