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MAR 06 2023

Date: 3/6/2023

KITTITAS COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

To: Kelly Bacon, Staff Planner,
Kittitas County Community Development Services

Kittitas County Commissioners

From:  James Ritter, Ellensburg

Subject: Letter of Concern, (CU-23-00001)

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It was recently brought to my attention that a meat packing plant (with on-site slaughter) is proposed to be built on Wilson Creek Road in Ellensburg by 3 BR Custom Cuts. (Parcel #214534).

Based on the incomplete, and vague SEPA application, and the adverse economic, ecological, environmental, health, traffic, & safety impacts that having a commercial slaughterhouse would have on the community surrounding this project, I am requesting that the Kittitas County Community Development Services, and Kittitas County Commissioners deny the conditional use permit requested on CU023-00001.

I have owned my property near this proposed project since the early 1990's, with the assurances that this was, and would remain an Ag-5 area, where no commercial development would be allowed. My residence is at 680 Lyons Road, and this proposed project will have direct negative impact on my property. Specifically, potential groundwater contamination, existing well water availability & capacity, aesthetic detractors, and reductions in residential property values.

I am in favor of a meat packing facility to be built in Kittitas County, however, building a commercial meat processing operation in a rural residential area that is not zoned for such activities seems to not only violate current zoning codes, but would completely change the rural ambience of the entire area.

If Kittitas County approves this proposed project, it would appear to be placing the business needs and profits of this out-of-state property owner, over the concerns and negative impacts to the residents, and registered voters near this site.

My family are multi-generational meat cutters, and packing plant owners, and I fully understand the negative impacts these facilities have on nearby residents, and their quality of life. Most meat packing plants are located in Light Industrial Zones for the specific reasons where the infrastructure is more adequate to accommodate increases in commercial truck traffic, sewage treatment, environmental concerns, water consumption & contamination, and increases in noise, odor & vermin.

Other than existing commercial meat processing plants that have been “grandfathered” into remaining in their existing historic locations, I am not aware of any such facilities being allowed within Washington State to be constructed outside of Commercial, and/or Light Industrial zones. The only exception to this would be that a facility of this type would be so far removed from residential areas, that no adverse impact would be possible. This is not the case with CU-23-00001.

My concerns also involve the lack of transparency, vague responses on the SEPEA application, and the implication that at least one Kittitas County elected official has publicly endorsed this project on county letterhead, prior to the completion of the SEPA review process, and/or public comment. This action appears to be inappropriate, a clear conflict of interest, and undermines public confidence in our public officials.

I am also concerned that Kittitas County “expects to issue a Determination of Non-Significance for this proposal”. It appears that Kittitas County officials have already decided this project can move forward. Based on the environmental concerns my neighbors and I have regarding this project, what criteria did Kittitas County officials use to draw this conclusion?

I would like clarity from Kittitas County Community Development on the following issues, in writing, to be included with this application process.

- How many live head of cattle will be held on this land while waiting to be processed?
- For how long will they be held in corrals/pastures prior to slaughter?
- How many head will be killed per day?
- How many days per week will this plant be operating?
- How many stock transportation trucks will be delivering cattle to this facility using Wilson Creek Road?
- On 3/3/23 Baker Commodities (the company that collects all animal biproducts from the Kittitas County area, such as hides, heads, meat, bones, and entrails) advised me they schedule their collections in Ellensburg only one time per week (Tuesdays). This seems to conflict with the statement that these products will be removed daily from this location. This means that all the discarded animal biproducts will be stored on-site, rotting for several days in the hot temperatures, and creating ongoing, offensive odors throughout this neighborhood. This will routinely be attracting predators, and vermin that are drawn to the smell.

- Since it appears large, commercial amounts blood and other contaminated water will be going into a standard septic system and drain field, what will keep these contaminants away from existing wells on neighboring properties, or from contaminating other waterways downstream, including the Yakima River.
- The property associated with this permit routinely floods and has a fish-bearing (Lyle) creek nearby. The flooding will likely send whatever contaminants on the property in question, onto other landowner's properties. What will prevent these contaminants from entering neighboring properties?
- In most cases, rendering trucks that depart these facilities leak their contents on public roadways that deposit fat, blood, feces, and other contaminants on these surfaces. This results in slippery and other hazardous condition on the public roadway. Even with the best intended mitigation efforts, nothing can be done to prevent the ongoing smell, and vermin-attracting conditions to this problem.
- It appears that there may be some debate over whether this project is a commercial slaughterhouse operation in an area not zoned for such purpose. The fact that there may have been a request to have a commercial well installed on this parcel, the fact that Belsaas & Smith contractors only bid on commercial projects, the fact that there are multiple phases to this project, and the fact that a Conditional Use Permit is even being required, appears to show that this is certainly a commercial operation.
- What negative impacts will a proposed commercial well have on nearby resident's wells?
- What efforts will the owner of this plant take to prevent ground water & neighboring well contamination?
- When will Phases 2 & 3 be completed?
- With this project eventually tripling in size, these concerns will magnify neighborhood opposition, including significant increases in commercial truck traffic on an existing school bus route. What mitigation will Kittitas County require to assure the safety of children on this route who live in a neighborhood that has never been zoned for commercial businesses?
- With large semi-trucks hauling livestock onto this parcel, all northbound stock trucks on Wilson Creek Road would be forced to turn into the oncoming southbound lanes in order to make the eastbound turn onto the proposed project property. This action creates a continual unsafe traffic hazard.

- With what frequency will trucks be delivering livestock, making deliveries, and/or pick-ups to this property, and will these activities go beyond the normal hours of business operations, and create additional traffic noise and congestion in the area?
- This area may have critical wetlands areas near, or on this parcel. Has a wetlands delineation survey been completed for this project, and if so, what was the conclusion?
- Does a Conditional Use Permit exempt 3BR Custom Cuts from complying with any existing state laws, county ordinances, or other zoning requirements that currently exist for neighboring residents under the Ag-5 zoning area?
- What current county ordinances will be enforced to guarantee nearby residents that excessive noise, traffic, safety, and public health violations will not occur?
- Are the monies funding this meat packing operation received from any government grants, including the USDA?
- Will Kittitas County government be receiving any funding relating to these grants for this project?
- Based on the original design for this meat packing facility, it appears that this project will not offer a significant number of jobs into this region to offset the negative impacts it will create.
- I would like to be notified when the public hearing is scheduled for this project.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to express my concerns relating to this project.


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