

From:
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To:
Kittitas County Community Development Services
Attn: Jamey Ayling

Subject: Opposition Statement regarding Conditional Permit CU-23-00003, 'Fowler Creek Guest Ranch'

Mr Ayling:

I am concerned about the effect of Zoning Conditional Permit CU-23-00003, 'Fowler Creek Guest Ranch' will have on the surrounding properties. The four specific issues that I have identified are Noise, Over Development, Wildfires and Traffic. Based on these four negative impacts alone, the permit should not be approved.

The permit applicant is Fowler Cr. Trails, LLC. The LLC is owned by Mr. Patrick G. Deneen. Pat Deneen is currently on the Kittitas County Planning commission. The expectation is that Mr. Deneen will have no direct or indirect part in the approval of the project. It is also expected that he will not use his position inside government to influence anyone involved in the approval process. Any insider manipulation of the process is a violation of the public's trust.

Noise:

The area around the proposed project is generally very quiet. At my residence there is very little noise from the freeways or the county roads. When there is problematic noise it is generally from amplified music. This has been an on and off problem for years. The thumping base notes from distant music carry a lot further than the full music and are very irritating. The source is hard to locate since base tones are non-directional. This happens occasionally, especially on weekends, where it continues late into the night and into early morning. There is no good enforcement mechanism if source can be found and the owner is uncooperative. Exhibit 7 mentions a large barn to accommodate 200 people and a dance floor. The application specifically stated the property would be used for weddings, birthdays and celebrations. Amplified music will certainly be present at these kinds of events.

Although my residence on Pasco Road probably won't be significantly affected by passing traffic, the county should be sensitive to the noise generated from the 92 additional trips and added ORV traffic on the residents with homes on Fowler Creek Rd and up into the Granite Creek area. This is especially troublesome since the traffic is expected to be over a short period in the morning. There is also the issue of noise from the 200 person celebration/wedding barn emptying onto Fowler Creek Road, possibly in the late night or early morning.

Over Development:

As stated before, this is a substantial commercial endeavor (up to 100 customers and 10 staff) setting up Rural area. That alone should put it out of character with the neighboring properties.

The proposed development will be on an ~84acre parcel previously subdivided into 27, 1 to 3 acre parcels in an area zoned R-5. It is 1-2/3 times higher than the standard R-5 density. This is already a very aggressive residential development for the area. If the permit for the Guest Ranch is approved, the property will still have the legal, sub-sized, existing building lots platted and those existing parcels could be sold in the future. The permit application leads one to believe that the guest ranch will be the only development on the property but I found nothing in the application that precludes future sales of the existing lots. I am not sure the county could or would prevent the sale from happening if the permit were to be granted.

I am also concerned that the 30 trailer/recreational vehicle lots will eventually become a trailer park with permanent, full time residents if the Guest Ranch business is not viable. Will the county take action is used as such?

While none of these concerns may be the in the plans of the current owner, properties change hands and there should be no expectation that the next owner will not the change the business model.

Wildfires:

The proposed use will also attract non-locals who will be less sensitive to the wildfire problem than residents. Off Road vehicles driven on dry material, fireworks, additional power lines, recreational campfire pits, RV hookups, smoking, drinking, and a general inattention to the ignition risk. The proposed use will invite all those activities.

This is an issue which is likely become critical in the near future. My insurance was not renewed based on the underwriter reassessing the wildfire risk in the area. My insurance agent said this has not been unusual in the county and sited several examples. The underwriter assesses the wildfire risk not only from fires originating on the insured property, but the risks associated with fires ignited on nearby properties. In general, increased levels of human activities create addition fire risk. Even if a property is well maintained and otherwise "Firewise", the insurance could still be canceled based on the uses and condition surrounding properties. This has been an issue nationally with insurance companies refusing to underwrite properties in moderate density rural areas. It's not only an insurance problem, it affects the safety of persons residing on the surrounding properties.

Traffic:

This concern relates specifically to Exhibit 12. I am not sure why the traffic study included traffic through the Westside Road at the Fowler Creek, Gobblers Nob, Mohar and Zrebiec intersections as issues. The closest intersection (Zrebiec) is .6 miles away from Fowler Creek. The Woods and Steel intersection which is closer was omitted. The impact at those intersections may be of interest to the county but will have little effect residents near the Guest Ranch.

The following pertains to traffic on Fowler Creek Rd. only. I reviewed the traffic study on Fowler Creek at the Westside intersection. Based on the Exhibit 12, section A(i) and (ii) estimate, the applicant anticipates an additional 92 round trips per day on Fowler Creek to/from the Guest Ranch mostly in the morning hours. Confusingly, Exhibit 12 also quotes an expected addition of only 9.177 additional trips per day based on the method in the Trip Generation Manual, 10th ed, Vol. 2, Section 29. The detailed basis for the estimates are not included.

Based on the county's three day count in Sept '22, the ADT (Average Daily Traffic) on Fowler Creek Rd was 191 trips/day. The application used the lower number (9.177 additional trips per day) to

calculate the additional traffic load on Fowler Creek Road. Using the lower traffic load, 9.177 additional trips, the estimate shows $(9.177+191)/191=1.048$ or a 4.8% increase on Fowler Creek Rd. Using 92 additional trips per day, the traffic would increase of $(92+191)/191=1.48$ or a 48% on Fowler Creek Rd. That is a very significant increase which was not addressed. The study also ignores the additional traffic from the guest's ORVs, quads, snowmobiles and dirt bikes that the Guest Ranch will attract. All of which are can be noisy, sometimes driven recklessly, will congest Fowler Creek Road, Granite Rd. and the surrounding areas.

Exhibit 7 mentions a large a "... large barn to be used for gatherings and events. The barn can accommodate up to 200 people, and will be perfect for weddings, birthday parties, and other special events." Are these additional 200 guests accounted for in either the 92 or the 9.177 additional trips estimated? It is hard to understand how. They obviously are not included in the 100 guest estimate mentioned elsewhere in the application. There will be situations where 200 partying guests, predictably some tired and overserved, depart the Guest Ranch on Fowler Creek Road. Possibly in the late night and early morning hours. This is unacceptable safety risk for the residents regardless of the road capacity and traffic counts.

Exhibit 12 should be reviewed by a county traffic engineer. The section is not clearly written and there appears to be at least one numerical error (math does not exactly work out). Exhibit 12 is not clear whether it is addressing traffic on Fowler Creek road or the total traffic through the intersection of Fowler Creek and Westside Road. It should address both, but the increased traffic on Fowler Creek Rd is the main concern for the property owners.

I somewhat related issue; the Fowler Creek Road/Westside Road intersection is already dangerous because of limited sight distance and speeding drivers. It is not uncommon to see broken glass and collision debris there. There needs to be better signage and improved sightlines in all traffic directions. Adding any addition traffic to the intersection will make the problem worse.

In conclusion I reiterate my opposition to issuing Conditional Permit CU-23-00003, 'Fowler Creek Guest Ranch'. The development will be detrimental to enjoyment and fire safety surrounding properties. Feel free to contact me if you have need more information.

Thanks for your attention
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