

October 19, 2023

Jamey,

My name is Richard Johnson and my wife and I own property in Granite Creek at 1061 FS Rd 4517. I am strongly opposed to this project and am urging the County to deny conditional use for this development.

The proposal contains many falsehoods, and it appears to have been quickly put together without a lot of thought and analysis.

My primary concerns are with increased risk of fire, noise, traffic impacts, water availability and the effect on the peaceful character of this area, and of course the effect on the environment and wildlife. We see deer and elk up here and even have had wild turkeys come through our property several times, and we see them down in the field along Fowler Creek Rd. The other day there was a cool lizard under my front porch. A few years ago, our ring camera captured a cougar walking right in front of our cabin. Our neighbor to the north had a bear in his back yard a few years ago although I just saw the photos of it. This is a special place, and I want to see it protected.

The roads up here are just not safe for large RV's and the volume of traffic this development would bring into the community. FS Rd 4517 is a dangerous road, especially in the winter months, it can be a sheet of ice. The entrance to Fowler Creek Road from Westside Road has a blind corner which is dangerous, and the Westside Rd Intersection with Fowler Creek Road likely doesn't meet design criteria for large RV's since there is limited sight distance, and the two roads meet at a very sharp angle. The applicant has not addressed any of these issues, and it's their responsibility to do so.

Bringing a lot of transient visitors to this area that don't know the area and the fire risk are a big concern for me. A fire would be devastating to this area. We have had wildfire scares up in this area, but have been lucky so far. This development puts us at much higher risk.

The applicant in their response under the review criteria 17.60A.015 has stated that one of the benefits of the project is that there is limited short term lodging for recreation in the area and has said that people are "in most cases trespassing". This is simply not the case in my over 17 years of experience in the Granite Creek community. Where is the applicant's proof of this statement? Is it simply made up to make his resort development appear needed? The applicant continuously identifies the development as "guest ranch" which is very deceptive. The majority of the visitors will be paying to park RV's in the 30 RV pads which appear not to have water provided. Where is the authorization from BPA or PSE for that much power for this resort, where is the authorization for a drain field for that many RV lots and Cabins? The Kittitas County definition of a Guest Ranch implies Lodging for their customers, Gravel pads for RV's and are not lodging. Let's be real here, this appears to be an RV resort camouflaged as "guest ranch". The noise from this will be loud and constant, there will be no way to escape hearing them. And noise from a moving source is impossible to shield.

In the summer the Resort would likely be used heavily as a landing for dirt bikers riding the various trails to the south towards Mount Rainer. In the Winter the Resort would likely be used as a Snow Park for the snowmobilers riding the similar area. Currently there is ample space in the Snowpark located on Woods and Steel Road, just a few miles away. I have used the Woods and Steel snow park many times and it is highly underutilized. Their statement of need is not justified. Furthermore, there is a reason that the State of Washington places Sno-Parks far away from residential areas as possible. It would not be appropriate to place such a resort, campground or Sno-Park near Granite Creek. Noise up here will be constant if this development is built. And we can hear noises from quite far away up here. The sound can really carry.

In their Exhibit 1 Narrative, in the first paragraph, they say “recreational vehicle camping (parking)”. The inclusion of the word parking in parenthesis appears to be an acknowledgement that this is a Snow Park for recreational vehicles. Yet on page 3 under Outdoor Activities at the guest ranch, they don’t mention snowmobiles or dirt bikes. Also, in the narrative on page 2 they state “The development will be designed to minimize its impact on the environment and surrounding properties ... “. This is just plain false.

In their response to KCC 17.60A, the applicant suggests under their response to RR-G18 criteria that their guest ranch lot sizes are 1.13 to 3.54 acres in size. This is cannot be construed from the submitted information. They are proposing a single 84-acre development where the general public can temporarily rent RV sites and small cabins for a price. There is no lot that somebody buys or any such real estate transaction which is what is intended by RR-G18. These RV and Cabins are for temporary use by transient customers. This is a RV campground business on a single 84-acre site! It does not meet the criteria for Rural Residential R-5 development and their application for a conditional use permit should be denied based on non-compliance.

The applicant appears to be trying to suggest that the guest ranch is not a commercial activity when they respond to RR-G19 criteria. Deceptively they say “all commercial activities located within the guest ranch will be for individuals visiting the guest ranch”. This is like saying the Hilton Hotel is not a commercial activity because all commercial activity is limited to their guests, perhaps we could put a Hilton Hotel in Granite Creek too. Or it like saying Walmart is not a commercial activity because they limit their commercial activity only to the people that walk through the entrance, perhaps we should let Walmart put a store at Granite Creek. This list of absurd examples can go on and on. Certainly, the reviewers at Kittitas County can see through this subterfuge. Again, the proposal is a business and as such is a commercial activity! It does not meet the criteria for Rural Residential R-5 development and their application for a conditional use permit should be denied based on non-compliance.

The applicant says they will create RV sites that create rural feel when they respond to criteria RR-P37. It would be one thing if they were selling small lots for mobile homes and small cabins but they are not. There are renting temporary RV pads and small cabins to transient customers who come for a short stay. This is an RV resort or Campground. They are not going to put “guest ranch” on a sign on I-90 without advertising RV camping. An RV Campground in granite creek does NOT preserve the areas rural character. It does not meet the criteria for Rural Residential R-5 development and their application for a conditional use permit should be denied based on non-compliance.

Overall, the applicant has not done their due diligence in providing a complete and thorough and accurate analysis of the impacts due to this project. It is riddled with vague statements, downplaying and hiding true impacts, and some falsehoods. As proposed, this development will be a huge detriment and is grossly in non-compliance with established zoning regulation. These zoning regulations need to be enforced! All members of the Granite Creek community depended on Zoning Regulations when they made fell in love with the area and made their initial land. These zoning regulations need to be enforced by Kittitas County and I strongly urge you to reject this proposal and not grant a Conditional Use Permit.

Respectfully,

Richard Johnson, PE, SE

Registered Civil and Structural Engineer for the State of Washington, #24617