

Craig and Jeanette Pedersen
3339 Ridgewood Road
Willits, CA 95490
August 22, 2020

County of Mendocino
Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1010
Ukiah CA 95482
Board of Supervisors' Email: bos@mendocinocounty.org

RE: Private Road Name Petition RN 2020-0002

August 22, 2020

Esteemed Board Members,

First and foremost, we request that if this proposal is not rejected outright prior to the Board's consideration that the hearing be postponed until the public can again attend board meetings in person. The disruption of a wholesale road and address change is the last thing we need in these trying times. To quote the Notice of Public Hearing "we thank you for your understanding during this difficult time..." There are landowners who don't have internet and some who need to drive to a different location to gain cell coverage making participation in the virtual meeting difficult.

We are submitting this letter in addition to the attached letter sent to the County of Mendocino Department of Planning and Building Services dated June 21, 2020, to ensure you receive our comments and concerns regarding this proposal. Sorry for some duplication.

Concerns regarding statements in the Memorandum regarding the Adoption of Road Name Petition: RN_2020-0002 Old Boy Scout Road (hereafter referred to as petition road):

"Old Boy Scout Road is officially unnamed but is widely known in the area by that name. A small sign currently stands at the intersection of "Old Boy Scout Road" and Ridgewood Road, further aiding its identification."

We argue that the Petition road is only locally known as Old Boy Scout Road not "widely" known. No basis is provided for this statement. The referenced road sign is a very small sign posted high up on a large oak tree and is hardly noticeable save by those of us who know it is there. A number of years ago the Pine Mountain Fire Safe Council (PMFSC) purchased and installed road signs throughout the community. The sign for the petition road was promptly destroyed and removed by vandals.

“During work creating shaded fuel breaks in the area in 2019, comments were made by a CALFIRE Battalion Chief (BC) regarding the confusion between the ‘main’ stretch of Ridgewood Road and the portion known as Old Boy Scout Road, which initially brought the issue to the attention of the Department. There also exists at least one duplicate address between the two that requires correction. When contacted regarding an address change, the property owner stated that they were waiting for the road to be named so they wouldn’t have to change their address twice.”

We believe the primary reason for the proposed name change is due to a Planning and Building Services error in issuing duplicate address numbers. The statement regarding the property owner “waiting” for the road to be named supports our theory. The fix for this error should not be cause to inconvenience the entirety of those living on this road. Why is it they seem to be the only property owner directly contacted?

To our knowledge, CAL FIRE, Little Lake Fire, the Sheriff’s office nor any other emergency response agency has had any trouble finding our house. The first three have all responded for various reasons.

“Given its existing signage and awareness in the community, staff believes this road is an excellent candidate for formal adoption. On May 27, 2020 a notice was sent to all affected owners stating the Department’s intent to begin the road name process. Of the 30+ notices sent to property owners, only two responses were received; both stated opposition to road naming. Stated concerns include no perceived issue with current addressing, the estimated cost of implementing such a change and the time required for agencies and companies, including Google Maps, to be made aware of the updated addressing. Referrals to CAL FIRE and the Mendocino County Sheriff’s office were returned in favor of adoption, and no response was received from the Little Lake Fire District.”

We argue that “Given its existing signage and awareness in the community” is the reason it shouldn’t be changed. Again, we have never had any problems with agencies, UPS, contractors, friends, etc. finding our property. Anyone can google our address and be directed right to our house. That won’t be true if this project is approved.

Mr. Ford notes that of the 30+ notices sent to property owners, only two responses were received; both stating opposition. We would like to point out that a non-response must not be taken to indicate support of the proposal. If Mr. Ford would like to tally support/opposition then a positive contact and response from each landowner is necessary. Otherwise the meaning of the responses can be misconstrued.

He also notes that CAL FIRE and the Sheriff's Office returned referrals in favor of the change. CAL FIRE and the Sheriff's Office are essentially compelled to support the proposal.

There are 31 parcels identified on the map accompanying Mr. Ford's initial letter. There are 5 landowners who own multiple parcels three of which appear to only have one address. Therefore, there are 28 individuals who will be affected. We directly contacted 13 of the property owners. Ten of those we spoke with are opposed to changing the road name and addressing. We are also opposed to the proposal. Of the two who were not clearly opposed, one has a Bear Canyon address and the other a Mariposa Creek address. One said she would support leaving the addresses as is if a sign was posted at the junction of Ridgewood Road designating the addresses accessed by the petition road.

Concerns regarding the May 27, 2020, letter from PBS Planner Ford to property owners:

That letter indicates the requested action is for the sole and exclusive purpose of identifying and distinguishing said road for emergency services agencies and the convenience of the general public.

Concerns:

- 1) In short, we believe the proposal is counter to the stated goals and will have the opposite effect.
- 2) One can currently enter our address into any navigation program (phone maps, GPS, etc) and be guided directly to our home. Upon receiving the letter noted above, we contacted Mr. Ford and, among other things, I asked if he knew how long it would take for the proposed address change to reflect in those navigation programs. He replied that he didn't know and that many older addresses within Mendocino County can't be found using such programs. He added that he wasn't "proposing the change for Google." Jeanette and I both retired from CALFIRE and know that during large scale emergencies there are emergency response resources from outside the County and they typically rely on those programs to respond to calls (we certainly did). Mr. Ford's response and the prospect that emergency services agencies and the general public will not be able to readily be directed to our home via such mapping programs is contrary to the stated purpose of the action of improving emergency response and clarity for the general public.
- 3) This proposal will likely result in more confusion as there are two additional private spur roads that join the Petition road and access multiple parcels. These roads would also need to be named different from the petition road and addressed separately to meet a standard protocol and meet the stated goal. The first road joins the petition road immediately south of the junction with Ridgewood Road and leads west accessing at least six parcels. The

second road heads east from the petition road between parcels 105-070-08 and 105-080-08. If these are not similarly addressed the proposal simply moves the problem to the next road junction for those parcels (one quarter of all those mapped). If Planning and Building Services truly believes there is a problem then they need to put the time in to properly correct it not just move it. Additionally, it seems arbitrary as to where the proposed petition road is terminated. Any proposed fix should explore the entirety of the road system to ensure this “fix” doesn’t create additional confusion. We don’t believe this project was adequately studied and that any proposal should seek input from the affected landowners during development not after a decision has already been made to provide to the Board.

- 4) It is always difficult to deal with making necessary notifications and ensuring all appropriate entities are made aware when one moves to a new address. However, in this instance that is compounded by changing the address “name” of a known location. This will likely cause confusion for those who know the current address location and result in delays in service (emergency response, UPS, FEDEX, contractors etc.). This is contrary to the stated purpose of the action. What would you think if you received a “new” address for a friend? You would think they moved. How does this provide clarity and convenience?
- 5) The letter states “the action of the County in naming this private road does not accept or imply any County responsibility... Additionally, “It will be the collective responsibility of the property owners to install a sign identifying the road for emergency services”. This assignment of signing responsibility appears to be a requirement when landowners petition for the road naming. If the County proceeds in changing the road name and addresses against the will of the residents, the least the County can do is provide a sign. As noted, this is a private road and it is difficult to get assistance from many of the resident users to conduct routine maintenance. The PMFSC group installed a road sign years ago and it was promptly destroyed.
- 6) We will need to obtain new address numbers to comply with CALFIRE addressing requirements, new driver’s licenses and other documents. Travel requires multiple forms of identification and they must match.
- 7) The Private Road Naming Petition code requires 75% of affected property owners sign the petition in order for it to be reviewed. It seems reasonable that the County should need to obtain the same level of acceptance from landowners before proceeding. The eleven landowners in opposition to a road and address change noted previously comprise greater than 33% of the total. And we expect more opposed by the time of the hearing. Pursuant to Mendocino County Code Section 18.16.979(b) Private Road Names, if this petition had

been brought by one or more of the landowners it would be rejected outright due to not meeting the 75% threshold. For this reason alone, the Board should reject the petition.

BOTTOM LINE: We are opposed to the name and address petition and ask the Board to reject it.

Potential Alternatives if not outright rejected:

- 1) Preferred - Simply assign one of the parcels a new address and do nothing else. Regardless of the decision regarding the petition, at least one of these landowners is getting a new address.
- 2) Landowners create and post a sign of all addresses at the intersection with Ridgewood Road. This is consistent with many private roads throughout the County.

Again, it is troubling that the first we hear about this potential change is after Planning and Building Services made their decision. Please reject this petition.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Craig and Jeanette Pedersen

Attachments: June 21, 2020, letter to County of Mendocino Department of Planning and Building Services. We attached this letter because it had not been uploaded to the PBS site for this project as of August 25, 2020. Mr. Ford notes in his memorandum to the Board that two letters had been received however we only found one.