



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 11, 2025

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Julia Krog, Director

SUBJECT: Discussion and Possible Direction to Staff Regarding Establishing a New Use Type of Transient Habitation: Low Intensity Camping

This agenda item is to discuss and seek possible direction from the Board of Supervisors on establishing a new use type of Transient Habitation: Low Intensity Camping, which would allow a limited number of short-term commercial campsites on properties within the Inland areas of the County. Planning and Building Services sought preliminary direction from the Mendocino County Planning Commission ("Commission") on November 7, 2024 and is now seeking preliminary direction from the Board of Supervisors ("Board") before proceeding with any stakeholder/public meetings.

The Board previously provided direction to staff on the Inland Zoning Code Update regarding potential regulations for temporary camping for profit on June 8, 2022. During the review of the Inland Zoning Code Update, the Commission recommended against adopting regulations for this use type. Ultimately, the Board did not adopt regulations for this use type as part of the Inland Zoning Code Update but directed staff to come back with a subsequent ordinance amendment to regulate this use type. The Commission's reasons for recommending against adopting Low Intensity Camping provisions at that time were as follows:

1. Additional time is needed to hear comments from emergency service providers, especially fire districts, and resource agencies such as Department of Transportation and Environmental Health Division.
2. Concern that separate regulations may be necessary for the western portion of the County that, while governed by the Inland Zoning Code, is generally seen as being part of the Mendocino coast, which generally has greater demand for transient habitation and impacts to traffic and services in the Mendocino Coast area that already includes several permitted campgrounds.
3. There was disagreement over what parcel sizes and zoning districts are an appropriate fit for Low Intensity Camping and what kind of property setbacks would minimize disruption of neighbors. Additional planning time is necessary to assure public input and participation by providing public meetings in every district, hear public comments and address the impacts that may occur.
4. Camp sites create numerous impacts that affect adjacent parcels that are not fully addressed by the proposed ordinance provisions. These impacts include noise and light and glare that affect neighbors, and the potential for degradation of private and public roads by increased traffic related to Low Intensity Camping or other transportation impacts. Additional operational requirements to mitigate these impacts and concerns by both property owners and residents are necessary. Additional time is required to develop solutions, inform, and hear public comment.
5. Camp sites require adequate water supply, sewage disposal and solid waste disposal and oversight for the health and safety of those camping. Additional operational requirements to

Speak to these issues were requested, and therefore additional time is necessary to develop solutions and hear public comment.

November 7, 2024 Planning Commission:

During the November 7, 2024 Planning Commission meeting, the Commission discussed their general thoughts and concerns surrounding this type of land use activity. There was a strong desire expressed by the Commission that there be robust public participation in the drafting of the regulations. Recommendations for conducting public workshops were provided by several Commissioners including providing visual graphics for delineating separate regulations for areas proximate to the Coastal Zone and areas further inland.

During the meeting, staff identified several areas of overlap between the Commissioners that were present, as follows:

1. Different regulations should be established for areas proximate to the Coastal Zone that are subject to the Inland Zoning regulations. Suggestions were made regarding potential distances from the coastal bluff that may demarcate the separation (e.g. 5 miles, 7 miles, or the Mendocino range).
2. An on-site host is critical to address potential nuisance concerns.
3. Quiet hours should be established to address potential noise nuisance concerns.
4. Special consideration shall be given to properties that are under Williamson Act contract.
5. A desire to see that no accessible bathrooms be required; however, staff noted that the requirement would need to be looked at further to determine consistency with other state, federal and local laws.

In addition to these areas of agreement amongst the Commissioners, individual Commissioners had specific comments/concerns but there was not a majority of the Commission that agreed. These comments/concerns are summarized as follows:

- Traffic/transportation impacts to local roads and state highways.
- Intensity and density of campgrounds on the coast.
- Require more robust permitting process if located on a private road.
- Notification to neighbors if located on a private road.
- Impact on fire insurance policies both where campsite is located and adjacent landowners.
- Fire risk.
- Nuisance to neighbors from noise such as barking dogs, car doors closing, music, generators, etc.
- Exclude residentially zoned properties or limit number of campsites.
- Ensure solid waste removal from site.

Requested Direction from Board:

In addition to any general comments/concerns from the Board, the Department requests the Board provide direction on the following topics and questions to allow staff to effectively prepare a draft ordinance for consideration. Please provide direction on the following topics/questions:

1. Does the Board desire to see separate regulations established for areas proximate to the Coastal Zone that are subject to the Inland Zoning regulations?
 - a. If yes, does the Board have any direction to provide the Department on where that separation should occur? Please see the attached map in Attachment A showing three options:
 - i. 4 mile boundary from coastal bluff,
 - ii. 7 mile boundary from coastal bluff, and
 - iii. Roadshed boundary. A roadshed contains all the roads and driveways that connect to a major accessway or highway, similar to the way a watershed contains tributary streams feeding a river. The roadsheds were created to assist staff with assigning physical addresses, but they can also provide a snapshot of geographically connected communities by illustrating access to existing development
2. Are there certain zoning districts that should be excluded from consideration? Table 20.040-A from the Inland Zoning Code may be helpful in reviewing the various zoning districts and is provided as Attachment B.

3. Does the Board desire to have a minimum parcel size requirement? For example, not allow for campsites on parcels less than 1 acre in size.
4. Does the Board desire to have a cap on the number of campsites that are allowed on any one parcel?
5. Does the Board desire to have a cap on the number of campsites allowed within areas subject to the Inland Zoning Code?
6. Does the Board desire to have an on-site host requirement, essentially meaning that a dwelling unit shall be required and is occupied by a designated host?
7. Does the Board desire to have minimum setback standards between campsites and either adjacent properties or dwellings beyond standard zoning setbacks?
8. Does the Board desire for discretionary permits to be required for all sites?
9. Does the Board desire for regulations to have different permit requirements for sites located on private roads?
10. Does the Board desire to see more restrictive requirements on properties under Williamson Act contract?
11. Does the Board have any direction they wish to provide Planning and Building Services on public outreach efforts for the ordinance preparation?

The Department welcomes any additional direction that the Board may wish to provide.

Attachments:

- A. Map of Options for Separating Areas Proximate to Coastal Zone
- B. Table 20.040-A from Inland Zoning Code
- C. November 7, 2024 Planning Commission Packet
- D. Public Comments submitted to Planning Commission for November 7, 2024