

## Supplemental Public Comment Received Following Agenda Posting

**Email Received 5/27/2024.**

Alpine County Planning Committee.

I am one of the homeowners on Blue Lakes Road (1251 Blue Lakes). I wrote in support of the Van Den Bergs application for hosting weddings on their property, but I think it is important to provide added context to my support on behalf of the Wuchenichs.

I wrote:

*"In the time the Van Den Bergs have been hosting events on their property, we have never been disrupted by the events or event goers. We have no objection to the continued permitting as it does not adversely impact our enjoyment or peace.*

*Overall, I believe it is positive for Alpine County to have more people visit and experience its special beauty and uniqueness. I hope all parties can find their way to a reasonable agreement under which these events can continue with minimal impact."*

I stand by my statement that the events have not had any negative impact on me. I also believe it is positive for the county HOWEVER my support is contingent on "***all parties can find their way to a reasonable agreement under which these events can continue with minimal impact.***"

The Wuchenichs are the people MOST impacted by this application. I believe, strongly that their voice carries the most weight here.

My support (or even dissent) is insignificant compared to the Wuchenichs. I live 3/4 of a mile from the Van Den Bergs. The Wuchenichs live in direct view and proximity. If there is not an arrangement that works for the Wuchenichs' then I oppose the issuance of a permit.

Jon Lax  
5307219655

**Email Received 5/28/2024.**

Sarah and Sam,

Since the Planning Division recommendation for approval of the Van Den Berg permit #2024022 was made without including my well-known detailed objections, or the Wuchenich's I need you to submit these two attachments to the Planning Commission **immediately** so that they can be reviewed by commission members before the meeting on Thursday.

I also need written confirmation that these transmittals have been made.

I am very surprised and disappointed by the lack of transparency on the process used by the Planning Division in developing its recommendation on the Vanderberg wedding conditional use permit, and by the poor analytical quality of the recommendation document. This document is not up to the high standard of the work I have seen recently on prior Planning Division documents.

Walter Bell

**Attachment 1 from Walter Bell received with email:**

**5/27/24**

**Walter Bell**

**Re: Vandenberg permit application #2024022 for Conditional Use For Expanded Home Occupation**

**Rebuttal to Planning Division Recommendations, and responses to Applicants Submissions**

Alpine County Planning Commission,

In addition to the letter stating my opposition to the issuance of this permit and the detailed reasons for that opposition (submitted separately), I am submitting my rebuttal to the Planning Division's recommendation document. Also in this document are my responses to portions of the Applicants Letter (Attachment 7 of the Planning Division document), their 18.67.15 Use Permit Findings, and their 18.70.120 Expanding Home Occupancy Findings. I apologize for the tedious detail required to cover these important topics.

**PLANNING DIVISION RECOMMENDATIONS DOCUMENT**

**Situation**

**C: Project description pg 42**

Paragraph 3: The term "private parties" and "small private events" is used to describe what events the business license covered. The 12 large commercial wedding events conducted by the Applicants were clearly well beyond the terms of this business license and thus were out of compliance (ie illegal) and were done with no prior consultation with the neighbors. This past, willful behavior by the Applicants needs to be called out and included in the consideration to grant them a conditional use permit to continue their commercial wedding business. If this permit is issued the Applicants are being rewarded with a permit that legalizes their past infractions without any consequences for those past infractions.

The complaints from the two residents (myself and the Wuchenichs) are characterized as "use, noise and lighting violations". This is a significant understatement. In fact, I gave Sam Booth and

Sarah Traiman on 12/11/23 a copy of a letter (see Appendix) which I sent to the Applicants on 10/11/23. In that letter I detailed the serious adverse neighborhood impacts of these 12 weddings last summer. Also, the Applicants offered very few solutions to the concerns and only one to me (reduce the number of weddings to 8).

**.D. Criteria for Decision pg 42 - 44**

A. The statement that forested areas near the Applicant’s site create a visual and noise barrier and therefore “unlikely to cause a disturbance” is **demonstrably false**, based on the neighbor experience of the 12 noisy and highly visible wedding ceremonies. These experiences have been clearly stated as such by John Wuchenich, the closest neighbor, to Sam Booth and Sarah Traiman in a number of phone conversations, and cited by me in my 10/11/23 letter (see appendix).

C. The statement that “the property is accessed by a private road and will not affect public traffic patterns” is **inaccurate**. With a maximum wedding size of 125 guests, plus staff, 60+ cars could be coming up or leaving Blue Lakes Road at one time on a Saturday. This is a heavily used road on summer weekends by the public headed to the Blue Lakes area, so the addition of this highly concentrated traffic certainly would affect public traffic patterns. The potentially alcohol impaired drivers bursting out onto Blue Lakes Road late at night is especially hazardous to public usage of Blue Lakes Road.

D. The statement “temporarily increase vehicle traffic” and “only for a short period before and after events” **grossly underestimate the safety and liability risks associated with 60 or more cars going up and down a one lane, steep and twisty joint access road**. And the increased traffic spans three days. Also, just because the Applicant’s driveway is the first one on the access road, the steep and twisty section occurs before that driveway on the first section of the shared access road, so the residents are still subjected to all the wedding related traffic. The traffic mitigation measures referenced by the Applicants (eg. one way traffic direction) do little to address the core safety and liability issues or the **additional risk of drunk drivers** as detailed in my other letter to the Commission. Further such one way traffic direction would significantly impact the ability of residents themselves to use the shared access road.

E. The requirement states “**the proposed project will complement and harmonize with the existing land uses in the vicinity**” The staff response only addresses the physical appearance of the Applicants residence and **ignores the impact on the existing land uses** in the vicinity. This vicinity includes the other properties in the neighborhood including mine, which are certainly not complemented or harmonized with by the occurrence of 12 large commercial weddings in the summer.

**Section 18.70.120 of Alpine County Code Section pg 44**

C. The staff response does not at all address the core requirement that this **commercial operation does not alter the character of the neighborhood or create adverse impacts to the surrounding area. This is clearly the case**. Instead, the response only states the Applicant’s assertion that they offer multiple practices to reduce disturbance. In fact, the only compromise offered to me was to reduce the number of wedding this coming summer to the eight already booked as of last December. Also, just because the parcels are 20 acres does not mean the residents in the

neighborhood are not adversely affected by the safety and liability issues of the shared access road, the noise and music of the ceremonies or the trespassing by guests

### **E. Staff Analysis pg 45**

The staff response proposed granting this permit to allow Community Development staff to monitor the success of the approved permit conditions. This would mean county staff on site for 12 Saturdays this summer including the late-night receptions. Since the Applicants have made no impactful changes to how the events are to be held from how they were held last summer, all this cost and effort would be just to **confirm what was already experienced last summer**. And it would be another lost summer for residents such as the Wuchenichs who are most directly affected by the events, and 24 more risky transits on the steep, twisty access road (12 at night with impaired drivers). Is this at all reasonable? How is it that staff would be available for this assignment when not one staffer came out last summer on a Saturday to observe even one of those weddings?

### **RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS**

#### **Standard conditions**

On the item relative to alcohol distribution, note that for the weddings last summer and the Applicants current website information, guests are allowed to bring their own alcohol. This uncontrolled consumption adds further risk to the access road safety and liability situation. How is this situation addressed by this condition?

### **PUBLIC NOTIFICATION**

Staff report states no comments have been received as of the date of this report. **This is misleading and disingenuous**. In fact, staff knew very well for months that the Wuchenichs and I were writing letters of opposition but were waiting for the application to be posted to finalize those letters. Despite that knowledge, **staff never informed me or the Wuchenichs that staff recommendations would be made at the same time the application was posted**, and that if we wanted our objections documented prior to staff recommendation, **we should send those letters in earlier**. Actually, John Wuchenich was told by Sarah Trainman **that the Planning Division would not be making a recommendation on approval or disapproval**. Additionally, staff suggested we just bring those letters to the Planning Commission meeting. Furthermore, on 12/11/23 I gave Sarah and Sam a copy of my letter to the Applicants (see Appendix) stating my concerns – intrusive noise, safety and liability risks on the shared access road, security issues with trespassing – in detail. So even at that early date, the **Planning Division staff had written knowledge of my concerns**.

### **ATTACHMENT 2**

As I stated to Sarah Traiman via email on 5/23/24, the location of Blue Camas Road is incorrect. The section of Blue Camas Road from Blue Lakes Road to the junction of the Vandenberg’s driveway is entirely on my property. None of it is on Reuter’s property.

## APPLICANTS SUBMISSIONS

### ATTACHMENT 7 APPLICANTS LETTER PG 53-54

#### Paragraph 5

Adjoining residents Walter Bell (me) and John Wuchenich are referred to as “part time residents”. This is irrelevant. Part time residents have the same right to enjoy their residences as full time residents. In fact, part time residents are often restricted to only using their residences on weekends, which means their summer usage time comes right during the peak Applicants commercial wedding events (12 per summer)

#### Paragraph 6

Applicants state “wedding business we have invested in and **running legally**”. In fact the Applicants were not running legally but rather on a holding large commercial weddings (12 last summer) on a business license for “private parties” and “small private events”. The fact that the Planning Division is now requiring Applicants to get a Conditional Use of Expanded Home Occupation permit for this commercial operating shows that the prior commercial operation was **out of compliance and hence illegal**. Having lived in the neighborhood for 20 years (10 years as full time resident) I know very well that the Applicants knew they needed a conditional use permit; they just chose to operate without one to **avoid the neighbor notification process** and disclosure process for this permit.

#### Paragraph 7

Applicant states “We have been trying to work out a solution to mitigate these neighbor’s concerns”. In fact the Applicant’s mitigation offers have been minimal. After receiving my letter of 10/11/23 detailing my concerns, they did not reply for several weeks and never responded in writing, despite my repeated requests to them to respond in writing before meeting in person. Still without a written response, I agreed to meet with the Applicants on 12/10/23. In that meeting they apologized for holding the 12 commercial wedding in the prior summer with no neighbor consultation, but only offered to reduce the summer 2024 weddings to the eight already booked. Note that they are now asking for 12 weddings in the application, and have raised the maximum to 125 from the pervious 60 they had listed originally on their web site.

#### Paragraph 8

Applicant states that four of six neighbors are personally fine with the continuation their commercial wedding business. **This is false and out of date**. As of today, Bell, Wuchenich, Craven, and Hesselink are against approval of this permit, leaving at most three supporting approval, one of which only approves if Wuchenich’s concerns are addressed (they have not). Two of those approving do not use Blue Camus Road for access and are thus not at risk of the access road safety and liability hazards detailed elsewhere in this document.

#### Paragraph 9

Just because an accident has not yet occurred on the steep and twisty access road, does not remove the safety and liability risk with 50+ cars with potentially impaired drivers navigating down a dark, steep access road. If the outcome of even a low probability event is **financially or physically**

**disastrous to other residents**, it is unacceptable and unfair to burden that risk on other residents just so **one resident can monetize their residence** by holding commercial wedding.

Paragraph 13

Statement by Applicant “with part time neighbors bordering only one side of our property” is false. The properties of both the Wuchenichs and Bell (me) border the Applicants. And again the designation of “part time” is irrelevant.

#### **Use Permit Findings pg 55 - 57**

##### **A.**

Paragraph 4

Statement by Applicants that “our operations integrate seamlessly with existing traffic patterns and do not pose safety hazards” is **clearly false**. It is impossible that a concentration of 60+ vehicles on a one lane road with limited pull outs does not cause safety hazards.

Paragraph 7

Statement “comparable outdoor lighting on neighboring properties” is false. There is no other outdoor lighting in the neighborhood at all comparable to levels used by the Applicants weddings.

Paragraph 9

Event liability insurance does not shield residents from **shared road liability risk**

Paragraph 10

Statement that four out of six neighbors support the Applicant’s business is **false and out of date**. It is three (one of those conditional on addressing the Wuchenich’s concerns) out of six and only one of those three have the safety and liability risk of the shared access road. Bert Hesselink, who has adjoining property to the neighborhood, also opposed issuance of the permit, so there are **at least four neighbors against approval**.

##### **C.**

Paragraph 1 the phrase “up to twelve annually ensures these activities do not compromise the land’s ecological and scenic values” is misleading. It is actually 12 events concentrated in the four months of summer. This concentration has a much greater impact on the ecology.

##### **D.**

Paragraph 1

The introduction of 60+ vehicles twice a day on nearly every summer Saturday on the single lane, steep and twisty shared access road (Blue Camas Road), with limited pull outs, **clearly generates much more than an acceptable level of traffic in this residential neighborhood**. In addition to the traffic congestion, **serious safety and liability are incurred on the residents**, especially during the late night surge of likely impaired drivers leaving the reception.

E. The requirement states “the proposed project will complement and harmonize with the existing land uses in the vicinity” The Applicant’s response only addresses the physical appearance of the Applicant’s residence and **ignores the impact on the existing land uses in the vicinity**. This vicinity includes the other properties in the neighborhood including mine, which are certainly not complemented or harmonized with by the occurrence of 12 large commercial weddings in the summer.

**18.70.120 Expanded Home Occupation Findings pg 58**

A. Applicant states “wedding will only occur on 12 days a year”. **This is misleading** on two counts. First the 12 wedding last year all occurred in four months. In addition, with the setup and teardown days, the **event day total is actual 36 days**. Also the reference to Desolation Hotel is specious as I believe that area is zoned commercial.

C. County code requires that “**The commercial operation does not alter the character of the neighborhood or create adverse impacts to the surrounding area**”. Applicant lists seamless integration with the natural environment, noise management, lighting considerations, traffic management as areas they have already addressed. As stated elsewhere in this document, none of these assertions are true based on the actual experience of the 12 weddings the Applicants held last summer. Further, the Applicants assert the 12 events per year “do not change the character of the neighborhood. Again this is misleading as the 12 events occur in the summer, completely taking up (3 days per event) virtually every summer weekend. **This is clearly an adverse impact to the surrounding area, and thus a violation of this county code.**

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Best regards,

Walter Bell

290 Blue Camas, Markleeville (Hope Valley)

waltertbell@gmail.com

## Appendix

Letter to Applicants on 10/11/23

Copy provided to Sam Booth and Sarah Traiman on 12/11/23

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10/11/23

Dave and Jean,

It has become clear to me that you are actively operating a commercial wedding business in our residential neighborhood. Your website <https://www.theaspencreeklodge.com/weddings> makes clear the scope of that business. In the last few months, the frequency and size of the weddings and reception parties, which are occurring almost every weekend, have brought large, noisy gatherings, including loud music, the infusion of hundreds of strangers into the neighborhood and, at times, heavy traffic on Blue Camas Road (BCR). I feel the unique qualities of our Hope Valley residential neighborhood – privacy, security, and serenity – are being lost.

In addition to intrusive wedding activities and noise, and the traffic on BCR, the influx of wedding guests and associated service personnel into our neighborhood advertises to a wide audience the existence of our upscale homes to the outside world. One of the guiding principles in managing security in our neighborhood, in my twenty years here, has been to keep the existence of our homes at a low profile to minimize the number of strangers wandering up BCR. This approach has enhanced our protection from burglaries and other dangerous intrusions into our isolated homes.

Of major concern to me are the safety and legal liability risks for all the residents along BCR. There is significant daytime and nighttime wedding related traffic which includes large numbers of guests as well as support personnel, some with cargo trucks. BCR was built as a one-lane private residential access road, and is narrow, steep, twisty, dark, and occasionally icy. It is not suited to the type of commercial traffic your weddings generate. Late-leaving reception guests, perhaps impaired from alcohol, could have trouble safely negotiating BCR. Were one of those drivers to go off the road or crash head on into a resident coming in late, a resulting lawsuit could put any one of us, or the entire Blue Camas Ranch Association (the owner of the easement) at significant legal peril. More importantly, such an accident could cause serious injuries to a wedding guest or a resident and their family members coming home late at night.

It is clear from your website that you are also promoting additional service offerings, like seminar hosting and winter activities, including cross country skiing, which could bring additional impacts to the neighborhood, including inadvertent trespassing and winter parking constraints.

I have copied this letter to all Blue Camas Road neighbors, some of whom may share my concerns, as I do not believe there have been any substantive discussions between you and your neighbors as to the extent of your commercial wedding business.

One resident told me that his family has been so heavily impacted by the wedding-related noise and activity that they are no longer able to fully enjoy their home and are starting to regret the purchase of their home in our neighborhood.

Has the county issued you a permit to run a commercial wedding business in our neighborhood? In my past experiences with the county, a Conditional Use Permit specific to a commercial wedding operation in our neighborhood is required. Part of that permit application is a notice in writing by the county to adjacent residents. I have received no such notice.

Walter

**Attachment 2 from Walter Bell email**

**5/27/24**

**Re: Vandenberg permit application #2024022 for Conditional Use For Expanded Home Occupation**

Alpine County Planning Commission,

**Forward**

Planning Division staff (Sarah Traiman) neglected, in her recommendation for approval of this permit to the Commission, any mention of my long standing and well known opposition to the proposed permit. She made her recommendation for permit approval without taking into account my opposition, despite my meeting with her and Sam Booth on 12/11/23 where I made clear my strong opposition. A written statement of my objections were provided to Sarah and Sam at that meeting (see Appendix). After that date, I was in regular contact with Sarah regarding the permit process. My known opposition was not encouraged to be submitted in writing prior to a staff decision, such that it would be taken into account before approval was recommended. Therefore, I submit this letter to the Planning Commission now, and will follow with a rebuttal on the staff recommendation for approval in a separate document which will be provided before the meeting on 5/30/24.

**Introduction**

As the owner of a residence adjoining Dave and Jean Vandenberg (Applicants) property, and as the property owner of the land underlying the shared access road easement, I am opposed to the issuance of this permit for the operation of a wedding hosting business in my rural, residential neighborhood. My opposition is due to the experience of 12 large commercial weddings held on the Applicant's property last summer, without proper permitting from the county or disclosure to neighborhood residents as to the scope of their commercial business operations. Thus, the adverse impacts of this commercial wedding business detailed in this letter are **not merely theoretical concerns or anticipated problems; these are impacts already experienced.**

The county guidelines for applying for this type of permit contains the following paragraph:

***“C. The expanded home occupation will be operated in a manner that does not alter the character of the neighborhood or create adverse impacts to the surrounding area.”***

I will detail below how this commercial business operation has **already violated this guideline** and will continue to do so if this permit is approved. Continuation of this commercial business will further erode my ability to enjoy the core attributes – privacy, serenity, and safety – of my residence.

These core values were essential to my decision to build my residence in this location in 2004. I was a full-time resident for ten years and continue to use it frequently as my scenic sanctuary.

The adverse impacts experienced last summer include high levels of traffic on the one lane, steep and twisty shared access road, multiday event noise and disruption, and the opening-up of our isolated neighborhood to hundreds of commercial visitors and event staff.

### **Shared access road safety and liability**

This commercial operation exposes neighborhood residents served by Blue Camas Road (Bell, Wuchenich, Craven, Freitas and Vandenberg) to serious safety and legal liability risks caused by wedding related traffic on our private shared access road (Blue Camas Road). Note that the property owners Reute and Lax are not served by this shared access road and thus not exposed to these safety and liability risks. Last summer, this commercial operation generated high levels of daytime and nighttime traffic from large numbers of guest and support staff vehicles (30-40+ total) per event. This traffic is not limited to the wedding day but also includes set up and take down days. Blue Camas Road was built as a one-lane private residential neighborhood access road with limited pullouts, and is narrow, steep, and twisty, with several blind curves (see photos at end of letter). It is not suited to the type of commercial traffic these weddings generate. Late-leaving reception guests, likely impaired from alcohol, could have trouble safely negotiating this private road in the dark. Note that the Applicant's wedding website specifies that **guests can bring their own alcohol, meaning there is essentially no control on the levels consumed**. Were one of those drivers to go off the steep road or crash head-on into a resident coming up the road on a blind curve, a resulting lawsuit could put me as the property owner under the easement, and the entire Blue Camas Ranch Association (the owner of the easement) at significant legal peril. Additionally, and even more critically, such an accident could cause serious injuries to a wedding guest or a resident. The mitigation approaches offered by the Applicants, such as traffic flow control, are insufficient to address the underlying risks of impaired drivers and/or are unacceptable restrictions to residents using the road. The event liability insurance cited by the Applicants as covering their property would offer no protection from an accident on the access road, which located on my property, not theirs. As with other impacts of this commercial operation, it is unreasonable to expose the all the property owners using this access road to these safety and liability risks, just so one resident can monetize their property by holding events.

### **Intrusive event noise and disruption**

The frequency and size of the 12 wedding parties last summer, which occurred virtually every weekend from July through October, last brought large, noisy gatherings, including loud, boisterous outdoor wedding ceremonies and reception dinners, and highly amplified music. This intrusion of noise to our otherwise quiet, serene mountain setting, could be heard across most of the neighborhood, destroying one of its most valuable and desired attributes. This noise pollution was not limited to the wedding day and evening, rather it started with large equipment set up the day prior the event and take down the day after. So three days of disruption spanning the entire weekend. The timing of this disruption is especially onerous for those residents who use their home as invaluable weekend get-a-ways from the noise of more urban locations. While these disruptions

affected all neighbors to some level, the impact is the worst for the Wuchenichs, whose home is directly across an open meadow from the event site (see photo at end of letter). The Applicants assertion that clumps of trees provide visual screening and sound isolation are not born out by the actual experiences of the 12 weddings last summer, in which neither of these assertions played out in actuality.

### **Neighborhood privacy and security**

In addition to intrusive wedding activities and noise, and the traffic on the private shared access road, the influx of wedding guests and associated service personnel into our neighborhood advertises to a wide audience the existence of our isolated homes to the outside world. One of the guiding principles in managing security in our neighborhood, in my twenty years here, has been to keep the existence of our homes at a low profile to minimize the number of strangers wandering up our private access road. This approach has greatly enhanced our protection from burglaries and other dangerous intrusions into our isolated homes and has been an essential element in the sense of neighborhood security and serenity. In addition, with 125 guests allowed per wedding in an area with open meadows and no border fencing, inadvertent trespassing is highly probable.

### **Long term impact to this section of Hope Valley**

Issuance of this zoning variance to allow such an intrusive commercial operation into this area of Hope Valley, would likely set a precedence that would make it easier to get approval of future commercial applications in this area. This would result in a cascading degradation of the unique scenic and serenity attributes of not only my neighborhood but of this whole section of Hope Valley, whose public lands are enjoyed and appreciated by many visitors every year.

### **Timeline summary**

**Summer 2023** Applicants held 12 large commercial wedding on their property

**10/11/23** I notified the Applicants in writing of my serious concerns about the impacts of their commercial operation to the neighborhood and said they needed a conditional use permit (see Appendix)

**12/11/23** After Applicants refused to discontinue their commercial operation, I met with Sam Booth and Sarah Trainman, detailing the adverse impacts, giving them a copy of my letter to the Applicants (see Appendix). In that meeting, I learned that the Applicants had received a Special Event (single event) permit for a wedding they hosted around October 2022.

**1/25/24** I received an email from Sarah Traiman saying she had the informed the Applicants that a Conditional Use Conditional Use For Expanded Home Occupation permit was required for their commercial wedding business.

**4/8/24** Applicant initiated an application for a conditional use permit.

My objections to this commercial wedding operation in our rural, residential area cover not only direct impacts to protection of my residence values – privacy, serenity and safety – but also extend to the broader neighborhood community.

Best regards,

Walter Bell

290 Blue Camas, Markleeville (Hope Valley)

[walterbell@gmail.com](mailto:walterbell@gmail.com)

## Appendix

Letter to Applicants on 10/11/23

Copy provided to Sam Booth and Sarah Traiman on 12/11/23

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10/11/23

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In addition to intrusive wedding activities and noise, and the traffic on BCR, the influx of wedding guests and associated service personnel into our neighborhood advertises to a wide audience the existence of our upscale homes to the outside world. One of the guiding principles in managing security in our neighborhood, in my twenty years here, has been to keep the existence of our homes at a low profile to minimize the number of strangers wandering up BCR. This approach has enhanced our protection from burglaries and other dangerous intrusions into our isolated homes.

Of major concern to me are the safety and legal liability risks for all the residents along BCR. There is significant daytime and nighttime wedding related traffic which includes large numbers of guests as well as support personnel, some with cargo trucks. BCR was built as a one-lane private residential access road, and is narrow, steep, twisty, dark, and occasionally icy. It is not suited to the type of commercial traffic your weddings generate. Late-leaving reception guests, perhaps impaired from alcohol, could have trouble safely negotiating BCR. Were one of those drivers to go off the road or crash head on into a resident coming in late, a resulting lawsuit could put any one of us, or the entire Blue Camas Ranch Association (the owner of the easement) at significant legal peril. More importantly, such an accident could cause serious injuries to a wedding guest or a resident and their family members coming home late at night.

It is clear from your website that you are also promoting additional service offerings, like seminar hosting and winter activities, including cross country skiing, which could bring additional impacts to the neighborhood, including inadvertent trespassing and winter parking constraints.

I have copied this letter to all Blue Camas Road neighbors, some of whom may share my concerns, as I do not believe there have been any substantive discussions between you and your neighbors as to the extent of your commercial wedding business.

May 28, 2024

Alpine County Planning Commission

**RE: Application for a Conditional Use permit for an Expanded Home Occupation for 155 Blue Camas Rd, Markleeville, File # 2024-010.**

We are providing this written comment as landowners of parcel APN 002-130-017, approximately 295 Blue Camas Road. We are in opposition to the conditional use permit for an expanded home occupation. We believe that granting of the permit would be detrimental to the health, safety or welfare of persons residing in the neighborhood and the general public attending the events.

**Blue Camas Road – Safety Concerns**

There is a very unsafe section of Blue Camas Road between Blue Lakes Road and the applicant’s driveway that every guest would have to traverse to reach the venue. The residents are familiar with the road and the extra precautions needed to travel on it, however, we are concerned that the general public will not be. We are particularly concerned about guests who have been consuming alcohol that will then have to navigate this dangerous section of road while negotiating oncoming traffic.

The existing Blue Camas Road does not meet the Alpine County Design Standards (see “Exhibit A” and the Table 1 below). This section of road is narrow, very steep (18%) and has extremely limited sight distance resulting in a blind corner. Please see Figures 1 and 2 for photographs of this hazardous section of road.

This corner has given the residence much trouble in the past. Even with knowledge of the difficulties of this corner, more than one individual has slid off the road. The neighborhood has placed some water filled barriers to help mitigate this risk, but their effectiveness remains unknown, and would not prevent a head on collision with two-way traffic. This section of road was never intended to serve non-residential traffic and is not safe to do so.

*Table 1 – Alpine County Design Standards vs Existing Conditions*

	Development Standard 3-5 Parcel Lane	Existing Blue Camas Road
Traveled Way Width	20 feet (paved surface)	11 feet typical, 21 feet at curve
Traveled Way Inside Radius	50 feet	30 feet
Maximum Centerline Grade	13%	18%

Additionally, there are no emergency access roads or secondary access to the applicant’s parcel. We are concerned in the event of a fire or other emergency the unsafe road infrastructure would not facilitate a safe evacuation for the 125 guests allowed under the proposed permit nor allow adequate access for first responders.



*Figure 1 – Traveling in towards the subject parcel (photo date 5/27/2024)*



*Figure 2 – Traveling out towards Blue Lakes Road (photo date 5/27/2024)*

One resident told me that his family has been so heavily impacted by the wedding-related noise and activity that they are no longer able to fully enjoy their home and are starting to regret the purchase of their home in our neighborhood.

Has the county issued you a permit to run a commercial wedding business in our neighborhood? In my past experiences with the county, a Conditional Use Permit specific to a commercial wedding operation in our neighborhood is required. Part of that permit application is a notice in writing by the county to adjacent residents. I have received no such notice.

Walter

### **Photographs**



1. Blue Camas Road uphill approach blind curve

**Proposed Recommendations:**

We believe the best course of action would be to have the applicants procure a separate access to their parcel that is designed and built to current County design standards. This would provide a safe road for the event guests and would allow the existing Blue Camas Road to serve as a secondary access to the venue in the event of an emergency.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

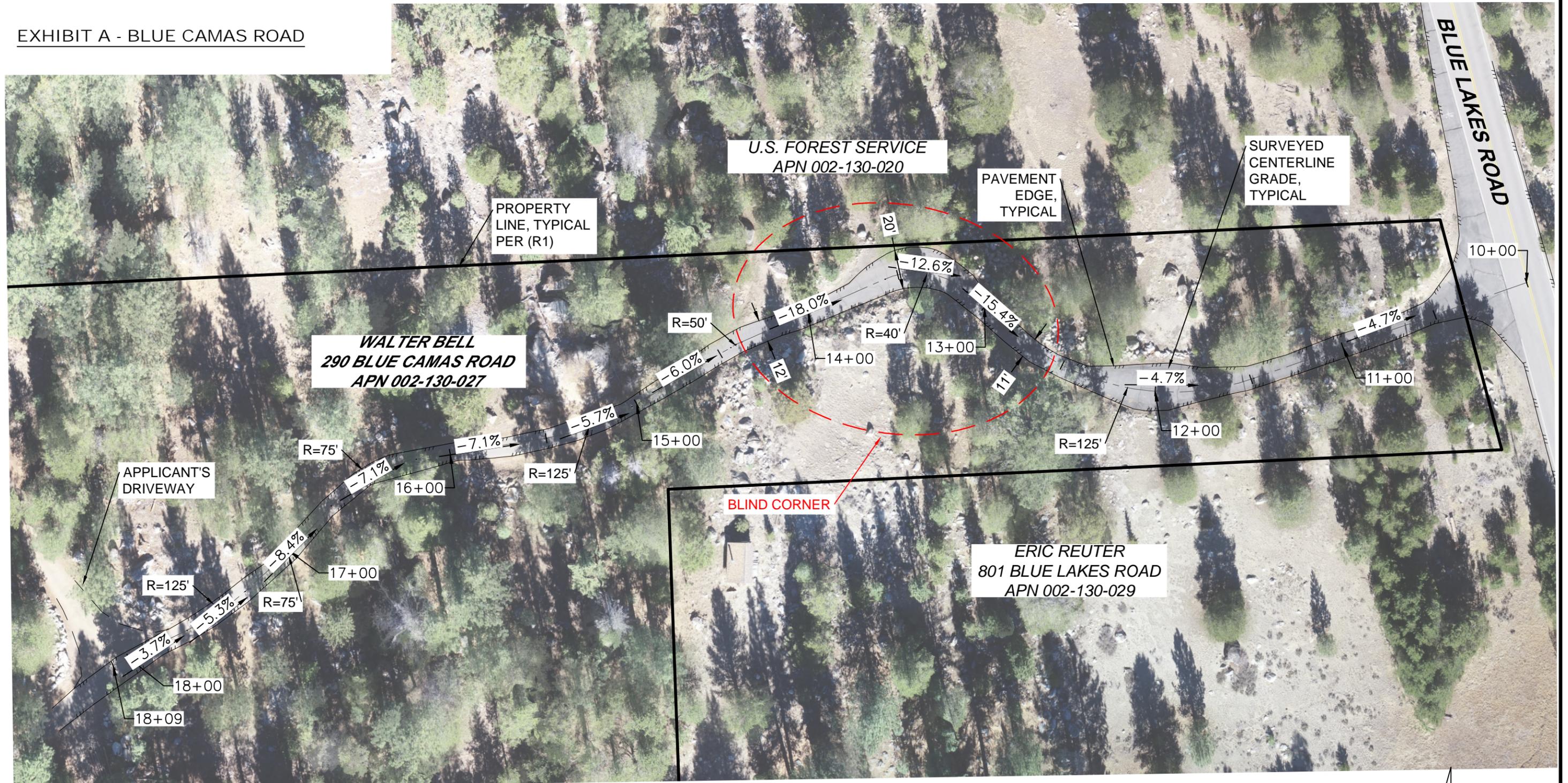


Michael Craven, PLS (CA & NV), PE (OR & WA)



Tom Craven

**EXHIBIT A - BLUE CAMAS ROAD**



**NOTES**

1. THIS EXHIBIT WAS PREPARED TO ACCOMPANY A LETTER TO THE ALPINE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION DATED 5/27/2024.
2. RADIUSES SHOWN ARE FOR A BEST FIT CENTERLINE TO THE EXISTING ROAD

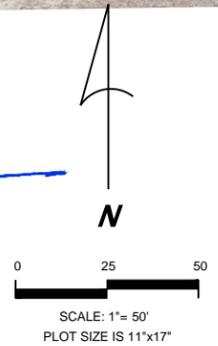
**BLUE CAMAS ROAD BACKGROUND**

BLUE CAMAS ROAD SITS ENTIRELY ON THE PARCEL OWNED BY WALTER BELL (290 BLUE CAMAS ROAD) AND PROVIDES ACCESS TO THE 5 PARCELS LOCATED OFF BLUE CAMAS ROAD VIA A 40' EASEMENT (BK 87, PG 3845). THE BLUE CAMAS RANCH ASSOCIATION WAS FORMED IN JANUARY OF 1986 (BK 52, PG 502, OFFICIAL ALPINE COUNTY RECORDS) TO PROVIDE A MECHANISM TO CONSTRUCT, MAINTAIN, AND ADMINISTER BLUE CAMAS ROAD. THE MEMBERS OF THE BLUE CAMAS ROAD ASSOCIATION ARE COMPRISED OF THE LAND OWNERS OF THE 5 PARCELS SERVED BY THE EASEMENT.

**REFERENCES**

(R1) PARCEL MAP NO. 96-02, FOR ARI MAKINEN, RECORDED DECEMBER 17, 1998, BOOK 4, PAGE 135, OFFICIAL RECORDS ALPINE COUNTY.

(R2) PARCEL MAP, RECORDED SEPTEMBER 27, 2006, BOOK 6, PAGE 79, OFFICIAL RECORDS ALPINE COUNTY.





2. Blue Camas Road approaching second blind curve



3. Blue Camas Road narrow road second blind curve



4. Blue Camas Road downhill section approaching drop off and blind curve



5. Wedding event site viewed from Wuchenich property near their residence

**Email received 5/28/2024.**

Good Morning Sam and Sarah,

We were not aware of any previous notice to provide comment for File #2024-022. But if there was and we missed it, I apologize for the tardiness of our comment. As landowners in the Blue Camas Road neighborhood, we would like to submit the attached comment letter and exhibit for section 4.3 of the planning commission meeting this Thursday.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Michael Craven

530-318-9776

**Attachment 1 from Michael Craven from email received 5/28/2024.**

**Email received 5/29/2024.**

Please confirm that you have received this email with attachments and forward it immediately to the Planning Commission members. Thank you.

To the Planning Commission

**Subject: Application for a Conditional Use permit for an Expanded Home Occupation for 155 Blue Camas Rd, Markleeville, File # 2024-010**

This letter is respectfully submitted by John and Gayle Wuchenich on behalf of the Wuchenich family (“we” or “us”), residing at 201 Blue Camas Rd., Markleeville, CA 96120 and responds to the Staff Report from the Community Development Department to Planning Commission dated May 30 2024 (“Report”) regarding the proposed conditional use permit application and sets out the bases on which a Conditional Use Permit for an Expanded Home Occupation (the “Permit”) should not be granted. We are the closest property to the property located at 155 Blue Camas Rd. Markleeville, CA 96120 (the “Location”).

- 1. That the proposed location of the project and the conditions under which it would be operated or maintained will not be detrimental to the health, safety or welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood or the general public or be materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity.**

The Report asserts that finding can be made. We respectfully disagree. During 2023, 13 weddings were held at the Location. We were present at their home during multiple wedding weekends, and found that:

- The size of the land parcels, space between the properties, and vegetation was insufficient to buffer the significant light and noise pollution resulting from a large wedding event, including loud music, consistent traffic, and sounds of partygoers. In fact, the light (e.g. headlights and commercial grade event lighting) and noise from the event entered our home.
- There were a significant number and nature of vehicles (both passenger and commercial, for guests and vendors) entering and exiting the property via Blue Camas Road across multiple days before and after each wedding (ranging from Thursday to Monday, depending on the event date/s).

In response to this criteria, we submit:

- Even with conditions to limit noise to a reasonable level, the inherent nature of a large and celebratory event occurring each weekend make it extremely likely that there will be a disturbance to neighbors, which we experienced firsthand in 2023 and can expect to experience further should the Permit be granted. Evidence of the noise pollution are attached as **Exhibit A**.
- In their application, the Applicants state to the Commissioners, “We feel that [the Property] is the perfect place to host *a few weddings per year*” (See attachment 7 of the Application; emphasis supplied). This statement is materially misleading. From June to October 2023, the Applicants hosted approximately 13 weddings/large events at the Property. This averages over two weddings per month. The Recommended Conditions in the Report allow for no more than 12 events per year, which (given that weddings and large events are likely to be palatable only during certain months due to weather) is not a limiting factor or a condition capable of mitigating any impact on surrounding properties. It is only one fewer than the number of events held in 2023.
- Blue Camas Road is a privately maintained road, and its continued integrity requires light use, incidental to ordinary use of the five residential properties that can be accessed via the road. The granting of the permit, and the resulting traffic, will lead to degradation of the road (*i.e.*, it will be materially injurious to the improvements in the vicinity of the Location). Blue Camas Road also becomes materially more dangerous during winter, when any resulting degradations caused may be hidden beneath snow and ice. As a result, significantly increased use of this road by wedding attendees and vendors would be detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood. We agree with and support the comments submitted by Lambertus Hesselink dated May 26, 2024 regarding the safety issues associated with the events and the insufficiency of any conditions to address these safety issues, including with respect to Blue Camas Road. We are deeply concerned about the sufficiency of Blue Camas Road for the proposed use (either on an ongoing basis or in the event of an emergency) and it does not appear that the Commission has taken steps to make inquiries to confirm or ensure that it is. Should an emergency occur, there is significant risk to the health, safety or welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood, and the recommended Conditions are insufficient to address these risks.
- Even with significant setbacks between the Location and nearby residences, the nature of the vegetation makes it likely that increased risks are not only to the Location but also nearby residences. For example, the increased risk of fires caused by factors inherent in the hosting of large events (such as overloading of generators, use of sparklers and other unpermitted fireworks,

extensive outdoor “mood lighting” or increased risks of fires caused by commercial catering activities) would be devastating to our property and improvements, as well as the landscape. The applicants have used, and explicitly advertise, outdoor fires, outdoor heaters and lighting, obvious fire hazards - see **Exhibit B**, as advertised on the Applicant’s business website (<https://www.theaspencreeklodge.com/>). Neither conditions to try to mitigate such risks, nor clear space for turnaround space for emergency vehicles (as referred to in the Report) can safeguard against such injury.

- It is foreseeable that even with the conditions recommended in the Report or oversight, large events pose an inherent risk that guests may engage in unsafe behaviors that could be detrimental to the health, safety or welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood or the general public or be materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity, such as creating outdoor fire pits or smoking outdoors during fire season, or unsafe driving on Blue Camas Road.

**2. That the proposed location of the project and the conditions under which it would be operated or maintained will be consistent with all pertinent county ordinances and the purpose of the zone district in which the site is located.**

The Report finds there is no apparent violation of county code requirements associated with the proposed uses, and we make no comments on this finding. However, the Report finds “that the proposed use of the property does not undermine the Agricultural Zone designation as the activities and accommodation required for the events will be temporary”. We disagree. While it may be true that the activities and accommodation required for any single event will be temporary, the application is not for a temporary use of land similar to a carnival or sales of Christmas trees, which are generally one-time annual events. Rather, the Conditional Use Permit requested here is for a **series** of events, each of a temporary nature.

It is clear that the Applicants have no intention of this business being a temporary endeavor. Indeed, the Applicants are requesting a variance to conduct a “wedding business” on a permanent and ongoing basis (see Applicant’s business website here: <https://www.theaspencreeklodge.com/>). The Applicants advertise that they accommodate weddings three seasons a year. On the occasions when we have asked the Applicants about their ongoing plans to host events at the location, we have not indicated that they intend to have a finite number of events over a finite period of time. Accordingly, these events should not be considered “temporary” and are unlikely to have negligible effects on the environment.

**3. That the proposed use is consistent with all elements of the county General Plan and with any specific plan which has been adopted for the area.**

The Report finds appear to be no conflicts of interest with the proposed use and the elements of the County General Plan. We disagree and submit:

- Conservation Element: The General Plan notes that this “considers the County's nearly pristine air, water, sound, and scenic beauty as a resource valued by County residents as well as visitors

from other parts of the world” (see <https://www.alpinecountyca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3805/General-Plan-Introduction>). The proposed events materially impact the pristine sound and scenic beauty, with significant noise and light pollution lasting for multiple days over multiple weekends a year. The proposed use is completely inconsistent with the Conservation Element of the General Plan.

- **Safety Element:** We refer to their response under (A).
- **Land Use:** The General Plan notes: “Alpine County is first and foremost a rural place and residents want it to stay that way.” The proposed use is completely inconsistent with this statement. The Report notes that “property is designated open space according to the General Plan”. However, the Open Space land use designation is intended to protect and promote wise use of the County’s natural resources. The types of land uses that the General Plan notes should be allowed on (OS) designated lands should be limited to uses that would be integrally related to the wise use and protection of natural resources including, but not limited to, the protection or development of mineral resources, the growing or harvesting of forest products, ranch or farm type agricultural production, protection of important wildlife and aquatic habitats, preservation of significant view corridors and dispersed recreation such as hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, and camping (see <https://www.alpinecountyca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3807/General-Plan-Land-Use-Element>). While there is a “recreational” element to hosting events and weddings, the proposed uses described in this list are of a fundamentally different nature to the proposed use, which is entirely commercial and likely detrimental to resource conservation and enjoyment.
- **Circulation Element:** The Report notes that the property is accessed via a private road and will not affect public traffic patterns. However, this fails to acknowledge that the private road is used to access five properties and the traffic patterns of this private road (and the surrounding roads) will be materially impacted, as we have been observed during prior events held at the Location. The maintenance of a private, rather than a public, road to access these properties is indicative of the current and assumed low circulation of traffic in this community. The hosting of these events on a seasonal basis dramatically impact that circulation.
- **Housing Element:** The Report finds that the proposed activity has no impact on Goals and Objectives established by the county general plan. However, the proposed use will have a material impact on the neighboring residents’ quiet enjoyment of their properties, and potentially a negative impact on home values. We spoke with an experienced and well respected realtor who routinely sells real estate in Alpine County, during which the important point was made that granting the Applicant’s requested variance could have long term impacts regarding the future zoning of the area in the event that further businesses are attracted to the area, which will constitute a material change to the nature of the community.
- **Economic Development:** The finding that proposed use of property generates county tax income and would likely be beneficial to economic activity in the county ignores that (i) the proportion of tax revenue the County receives from property taxes predominates at more than 68% (see <https://www.alpinecountyca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3812/General-Plan-Economic-Development>); and (ii) there will potentially be a material negative impact on property values of surrounding properties (thus impacting property taxes). Any potential benefits to economic activity in the county need to be carefully and appropriately balanced against the clear economic detriment to property values (and consequently, property taxes) in an area that attracts buyers interested in the pristine air, water, sound and scenic beauty of a rural community (just as we were attracted to the area for these reasons).

**4. That the proposed use will not overload utilities and will not generate more than an acceptable level of traffic on the streets in the vicinity.**

The proposed use will generate more than an acceptable level of traffic on the Blue Camas Road and surrounding roads (e.g., Blue Lakes Road). As noted above, on weekends when weddings were hosted, the level of traffic increased to an unacceptable level on multiple days both before and after the event. The fact that the Location is the first home on Blue Camas Road is inconsequential - it is precisely because the other properties are located **after** the Location on Blue Camas Road (which has space for a single vehicle to travel) that all neighboring properties have to contend with the traffic at in order to access their properties.

**5. That the proposed project will complement and harmonize with the existing and proposed land uses in the vicinity and will be compatible with the physical design aspects, land use intensities and dwelling unit densities of the neighborhood.**

As noted above in response to (C), the proposed use is of a different character than the land uses that the General Plan notes should be allowed on (OS) designated lands. If the impacts of proposed use were isolated to the Location, we would not be making this submission. Unfortunately, while the proposed use is concentrated on the southeast portion of the parcel, its impacts extend well beyond the Location. While the Report refers to characteristics of the home, the enhancements to the home needed to host the events (commercial grade lighting and sound) are inconsistent with the land use intensities and dwelling unit densities of the neighborhood. The proposed project is not complementary or in harmony with the existing land uses in the vicinity.

Finally, the Report notes that the expanded home occupation will be operated in a manner that does not alter the character of the neighborhood or create adverse impacts to the surrounding area. We do not agree that this is possible, given the Special Conditions. Allowing 12 events per year, with 125 guests per event) as per the “Recommended Conditions” in the Report) will alter the character of the neighborhood from a rural/residential community to a mixed use neighborhood. Conditions such as signage and informing guests of rules are unlikely to provide sufficient deterrent to guests or attendees from creating adverse impacts to the surrounding area.

**Proposed action:** The Commission should deny the conditional use permit application (2024-010) for an expanded home occupation as presented.

Respectfully,

John and Gayle Wuchenich

201 Blue Camas Rd., Markleeville, CA 96120

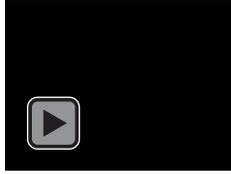
**Exhibit A:**

2 video attachments of noise, light, and headlight pollution (September 29, 2023)

**Exhibit B:**

2 wedding website screenshot images

**Attachment 1 from Gayle Wuchenich sent by email 5/29/2024.**



A -  
6.mov

**Attachment 2 from Gayle Wuchenich**



Exhibit A -  
IMG\_7158.mov

**Attachment 3 from Gayle Wuchenich**



Attachment 4 from Gayle Wuchenich

# AMENITIES



TABLES AND CHAIRS



WIFI



PORTABLE RESTROOMS



CAULDRONS



DANCE FLOOR



STRING LIGHTS



SPRAWLING LAWN



OUTDOOR HEATERS



BACKYARD GAMES



OVERNIGHT STAY



DIRECTIONAL SIGNS



BRIDAL SUITE

**Email received 5/29/2024**

Hi Sarah and Sam,

I found this document in my files, which I sent to Sam after our meeting on 12/11/23 (letter is misdated as 12/10/23).

Please pass it on to the Planning Commission before the meeting if possible, otherwise distribute it at the meeting.

It is a document written to Sam early in this process, stating in detail my concerns about the Vandenberg's commercial wedding business in my neighborhood, and my opposition to its continued operation. As such, it should be listed as a written opposition input to the granting of this permit in the Public Notification section of the staff recommendation document.

Thanks,

Walter

**Attachment received in email from Walter Bell 5/29/2024.**

12/10/23

Samuel Booth, Director

Alpine County Community Development

50 Diamond Valley Road

Markleeville, CA 96120

Sam,

I have had a residence at 290 Blue Camas Road, Markleeville (physically in Hope Valley off Blue Lakes Road) for nearly 20 years and lived there full time there for many years. It is in a small rural neighborhood of seven homes, five of which are accessed by a private road. It is zoned AG-CR-SH with most homes on 20 acre parcels. It has been a serene, secure and safe place to savor the natural beauty and calm of the surrounding Sierran forest of Hope Valley

Unfortunately, one adjoining neighbor, the Vandenberg's at 155 Blue Camas Road, started up a full blown commercial wedding business out of their residential neighborhood this past summer. They hosted 13 weddings this summer and have already booked eight more for next summer. These are very large commercial operations often with 70 plus guests and a starting price of \$6,000, and with extra services likely adding thousands more. Their website

<https://www.theaspencreeklodge.com/weddings> makes clear the scope of that business. The frequency and size of the weddings and reception parties, which are occurred almost every weekend, have brought large, noisy gatherings, including loud music, the infusion of hundreds of strangers into the neighborhood and, at times, heavy traffic on Blue Camas Road. I feel the unique qualities of my Hope Valley residential neighborhood – privacy, security, and serenity – are being lost.

In addition to intrusive wedding activities and noise, and the traffic on Blue Camus Road, the influx of wedding guests and associated service personnel into our neighborhood advertises to a wide audience the existence of our homes to the outside world. One of the guiding principles in managing security in our neighborhood, in my twenty years here, has been to keep the existence of our homes at a low profile to minimize the number of strangers wandering up Blue Camus Road, which is a private road. This approach has enhanced our protection from burglaries and other dangerous intrusions into our isolated homes.

Of major concern to me are also the safety and legal liability risks for all the residents along Blue Camus Road. There is significant daytime and nighttime wedding related traffic which includes large numbers of guests as well as support personnel, some with cargo trucks. Blue Camus Road was built as a one-lane private residential access road, and is narrow, steep, twisty, dark, and occasionally icy. It is not suited to the type of commercial traffic these weddings generate. Late-leaving reception guests, perhaps impaired from alcohol, could have trouble safely negotiating Blue Camus Road. Were one of those drivers to go off the road or crash head on into a resident coming in late, a resulting lawsuit could put any one of us, or the entire Blue Camas Ranch Association (the owner of the easement) at significant legal peril. More importantly, such an accident could cause serious injuries to a wedding guest or a resident and their family members coming home late at night.

It is clear on the website that the Vandenberg's are also promoting additional service offerings, like seminar hosting and winter activities, including cross country skiing, which could bring additional impacts to the neighborhood, including inadvertent trespassing and winter parking constraints.

The other residence owner (the Wuchenichs) whose property adjoins the Vandenberg's told me that his family has been so heavily impacted by the wedding-related noise and activity that they are no longer able to fully enjoy their home and are starting to regret the purchase of their home in our neighborhood.

In my past experiences with the county, a Conditional Use Permit specific to a commercial wedding operation in our neighborhood is required. Part of that permit application is a notice in writing by the county to adjacent residents. I have received no such notice, nor would I approve such a Conditional Use Permit for operation of this business in my residential neighborhood.

Before approaching you today, I made multiple effort to discuss my concerns about their commercial wedding business with the Vandenberg's, starting with my letter of 10/22/23 to them and copied to other neighbors (see attached). I received no response to that letter for several weeks and only recently did we meet to discuss that situation. We were unable to resolved concerns in that meeting, so I am now reaching out to you to initiate a formal complaint process with the county.

Based on my meeting today with you, I understand that the Vandenberg's received approval for a Special Event Permit for a wedding hosting at their residence. My belief is that such a permit is for a single event and that ongoing events, like 13 weddings in one summer as occurred in this case, should require a Condition Use Permit. Further, I believe you indicated that the terms of the Vandenberg's Special Event Permit required a new permit issued for each additional event, and that no such additional permit applications were received.

In conclusion, I am seeking to disallow the continuance of the Vandenberg's wedding hosting business at their residence adjoining mine, based on my belief that this commercial operation in my neighborhood requires a Condition Use Permit, which I would not approve because of the serious impacts to my residence and the neighborhood which I have detailed above.

If the county determines that such a Conditional Use Permit is not required, I believe the Vandenberg's Special Event Permit be reconsidered based on the following provisions of the Special Event Code.

**Chapter 18.78 Special Events**

**18.78.050 Revocation, Section C:**

The county sheriff may revoke any permit issued under the provisions of this chapter on any of the following grounds:

C. The conduct of such special event unduly interferes with traffic or pedestrian movement, or interferes with the public peace or rights of nearby residents, or with the enjoyment of their property. (Ord. 590 § 1 (part), 1996)

While this provision is directed toward the sheriff's ability to shut down a single event in progress (another indication that the Special Events code is intended to be used for single events) it does certainly raise the topic of disruption to nearby residents to enjoy their property.

**18.78.040 Processing procedure, section A line 4**

4. The event is in compliance with all applicable county ordinances.

If zoning is an applicable county ordinance, which seems like it would be, then the event needs to be in compliance with the zoning of the location of the special event. I do not believe this is the case of the Vandenberg's residence, which is zoned AG-CR-SH

Given the wedding bookings the Vandenberg's continue to make for next summer, please proceed on resolution of this issue with urgency. Let me know how I can assist with additional information.

Best regards,

Walter Bell

**Email Received 5/29/2024.**

Dear Sam and Sarah,

I hereby respectfully submit comments regarding Request Approval of a Conditional Use Permit for an Expanded Home Occupation for 155 Blue Camas Rd, Markleeville, File #2024-022.

Should you require further information from me, please do not hesitate to contact me via the email address in the header.

Sincerely,,

Bert Hesselink

1305 Blue Lakes Road.,

**Attachment 1 received with email from Bert Hesselink**

Comments regarding item: 4.3 on the Planning Commission Public Hearing slated for May 30, 2024: Request approval of a Conditional Use Permit for an Expanded Home Occupation for 155 Blue Camas Rd, Markleeville, File #2024-022

**Submitted by:** Lambertus Hesselink

**Date:** May 26, 2024

**Summary:** I oppose approval of the application at this time for lack of actionable plans for risk management, impact-mitigation, road-improvement, and nuisance-response.

**Concerns:**

1. Significant quality of life impacts:
  - a. Hope Valley is a jewel, one of the last unspoiled Sierra Nevada valleys in California. The proposed commercial venue negatively affects nearby property value and has the potential to significantly disturb the tranquility and peacefulness of this beautiful area. In my view, this is a commercial operation with preparation and cleanup operations before and after the events. Commercial weddings are not commensurate with an agricultural land designation.

2. Significant potential risk and event impacts have been described by other residents of Blue Camas Road. I concur with their findings.

My main concern is **increased fire risk**.

**Fire risk** in Hope Valley is of especially heightened concern. Current fuel loads in the area are high, leading to potentially explosive fire growth, as the Caldor and Tamarack fires have shown. The proposed operation would utilize outdoor heaters fueled by propane. A fallen heater, or a simple discarded cigarette could potentially cause a catastrophic fire.

The average flame speed for forest fires is 14.27 mph. The Paradise Fire consumed *105 acres per minute*. I live less than a mile south of the Vandenberg property. *A fire started on their property* during high wind conditions from the north would provide me with **less than two minutes** to reach Blue Lakes Road from my home. I would be trapped. Even at the average fire speed, I would only have *four minutes* to escape.

The narrow width of Blue Camas Road could prevent fire trucks from entering to respond to a fire emergency, while 125 guests would be attempting to leave on the narrow, winding, single lane road with no turnouts. As a result, my fire risk would significantly increase. Insurance companies would likely take notice and assess the increased fire risk by demanding higher premiums.

**Recommendation:**

Prior to approving the Provisional Use Permit, the County should require:

- An actionable risk management plan for fire and other emergencies.
- An actionable nuisance-response plan.

subject to County approval.

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lambertus Hesselink', written in a cursive style.

Lambertus Hesselink

**Email received 5/29/2024.**

Re: Vandenberg Permit Application #2024022

Dear Members of the Alpine County Planning Commission,

Hope Valley has been described as one of the “jewels of the Sierras” and its spectacular scenery of mountains, rivers and lakes a “tranquil utopia.” In 1989, 2,900 acres were designated as the “Hope Valley Wildlife Area.”

As residents of Hope Valley we realize how immensely privileged we are to live here, surrounded by forest and protected land. We, collectively and in turn, have a responsibility to preserve our area. The county does its part, and provides zoning in our residential neighborhood which prohibits outdoor use of home-based businesses. Why? The outdoor wedding venue operating adjacent to us—directly across an open meadow between our two homes—creates noise, traffic and lights which disturb us. Hundreds of people now come into our, otherwise, private neighborhood every month. It certainly “alters the character of the neighborhood and creates adverse impacts to the surrounding area” thus violating county code. Input from neighbors in situations such as ours is vital to good decision making, but we were not asked if this business disturbed us. So I ask, who best can determine if that code is being violated—an Alpine County planner in Markleeville or someone actually living where the problem exists?

We purchased our home in Hope Valley as a place to teach our children and grandchildren to love and protect nature—a secluded place AWAY from the noise and busyness of the world—surely not to live beside a busy wedding venue hosting 12 big events a summer. This is not our idea of tranquility, and I’m quite sure it wouldn’t be yours either, if a wedding venue moved in next door to you.

Please allow us the peaceful refuge Hope Valley should offer and deny this conditional use permit which is before you today. Thank you very much for your thoughtful consideration in this matter.

Gayle Rawles Wuchenich  
201 Blue Camas Road  
Hope Valley