

LEWIS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Lorie Spogen, Chair

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Date: August 1, 2023

To: Lewis County Board of County Commissioners

From: Lewis County Planning Commission

Subject: **Transmittal to the BOCC – Amendment to Lewis County Codes for RV Parks and Campgrounds**

Dear Commissioners:

The purpose of this report is to transmit to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) draft amendments to the Lewis County Code.

In addition to the changes described below, the Planning Commission would like the BOCC to consider reducing the required minimum lot size for an RV park or campground from 2.5 acres to 2 acres. The original 2.5 acres was based on the assumptions regarding rural character in the early 2000's. Now, many counties in Washington have a 2-acre minimum lot size for RV parks and campgrounds. Planning Commission feels that this minor reduction would maintain rural character and provide sufficient area for meeting standards regarding well and septic, while allowing more lots in Lewis County to consider becoming a RV park or campground. It will also make Lewis County more consistent with other counties in the state.

The largest change to the Lewis County Code (LCC) relates to how new RV parks and campgrounds are processed. Currently, development regulations for RV Parks and Campgrounds are found in Title 16, Subdivisions, LCC. This is not the correct location because RV parks and campgrounds are not subdivisions, they are a land use. Therefore, the Planning Commission recommends moving the development regulations for RV parks and campgrounds from Title 16 and added to Title 17, Land Use and Development Regulations.

In addition, the existing Title 16 development regulations include many requirements that are duplicative of other code sections and in some cases create a conflict. The Planning Commission recommends removing duplicative requirements. It should be noted, all code sections of the LCC may be applied to any proposed development; there is no need to say, "all other code

sections apply.” For example, if there is a proposed public or private road, then the development regulations regarding the road apply without restating that the regulations apply.

PROPOSED CODE AMENDMENTS

The proposed amendments are found in Attachments A through F, as well as summarized below by topic. The new code is Chapter 17.144, RV Parks and Campgrounds. Note, the best way to read the code amendments on a computer is in 2-page format where the commentary is on the left and the code is on the right. In this format the commentary will directly explain the amendments.

1. Definitions

The definitions related to RV parks and campgrounds are being removed from Chapter 16.04 and added to Chapter 17.10. In addition, new definitions are added to Chapter 17.10 to clarify words used in the development regulations. New definitions included: cabin, primitive campground, dispersed camping, camper club, lodging unit, tent, transient accommodations and yurt.

2. Review Process

Currently all RV parks and campgrounds are required to have a Binding Site Plan. The process is changed to allow new RV parks and campground through a Special Use Permit, no Binding Site Plan required. This is appropriate because RV parks and campgrounds do not need the level of review required by a Binding Site Plan and it reduces the time and money it takes for an applicant to have their proposal reviewed. A Special Use Permit still requires public notice and is decided by the Hearings Examiner.

3. Thresholds

Clarification is added that if the RV park/campground will have sites that can be individually leased and transferred to another person, then it is a “camper club”. Camper clubs are considered a Master Planned Resort and must comply with Chapter 17.20E, Master Planned Resort, instead of 17.144. In addition, if the allowed density standards of 17.144 are exceeded, then the RV park/campground must meet Chapter 17.20E, Master Planned Resort, requirements. For example, if the owner/operator would like more than 25% of the camping sites to be occupied by a cabin or yurt, then the RV park/campground must meet the Master Planned Resort requirements. Please see Density, below, for further explanation.

Clarification is also added that if any camping site is occupied by an RV with a single person/entity for 181 days or more, then the RV park/campground is considered a Mobile Home Park and must comply with Chapter 15.30, Mobile Home Parks, instead of 17.144. Please see Length of Stay, below, for further explanation.

4. Density

A new addition to the code allows for no more than 25% of the camping sites to be occupied by a cabin or yurt, provided that the cabin/yurt is no more than 400 sq ft in size. This allows a “park model” for RV parks and campgrounds, thus expanding the diversity of lodging offered. An

example of how this is calculated is if there are 25 camping sites total, then no more than 6 of those may be occupied by a cabin or yurt. The remaining 19 must be RV or tent camping.

There is also a new allowance for an owner/operator who wants to create a tent-only campground. They may create a higher density of camping sites than is required for a campground that allows both RVs and tents.

5. Length of Stay

Currently depending on the type of RV park/campground, users may stay up to 60 days or 180 days. The new code will allow people to stay up to 210 days at all RV parks and campgrounds, which is 7 months. This is to allow seasonal employees to live at a RV park/campground. If the owner/operator of the RV park/campground allows a single person or entity to stay for 211 days or longer, then the RV park/campground is considered a Mobile Home Park and must meet regulations related to that use.

Cabins or yurts may only be occupied for up to 30 days. This is consistent with the state's definition of short term rentals, which are transient accommodations for stays no longer than 30 days.

6. Caretaker Accommodations

The new code allows one camping site to be occupied by a permanent RV or cabin for use by a caretaker, ranger or manager of the RV park/campground. If this is a cabin or yurt, then it does count towards the allowance for cabins. However, it does not count towards the threshold for a Mobile Home Park. In addition, the cabin or yurt may be up to 1,296 sq ft in size (as opposed to the maximum 400 sq ft size for transient cabins.)

7. Accessory Uses

The current code is silent on accessory uses such as a swimming pool, "snack shack" or convenience store. Accessory uses are called out in the new code as an allowed use when in aide of and completely contained within the RV park or campground.

8. Screening and Buffering

Screening and buffering is required by the current regulations, but is clarified in the new code to require the screening to be a minimum of 6 feet high and that it obscure at least 80% visibility from adjacent properties. This will reduce the off-site visual impacts of RV parks/campgrounds on their surrounding neighbors. There is an allowance for a waterbody, such as a river or lake, to be used as the buffer and screening.

9. Removed

The following requirements were duplicative and removed: SEPA review, significant natural features, roads, bridges, signs, drainage, off-site impacts and solid waste. Again, there are existing requirements in the LCC that will apply regardless and there is no need to repeat or reference those in the new Chapter 17.144. When codes are repeated there is a danger that one

section of LCC will get updated and another section will be forgotten, creating a conflict between codes.

Findings of Fact

1. Lewis County is required by RCW 36.70A.130 to periodically review and evaluate its comprehensive land use plan and development regulations to ensure the plan and regulations comply with the Washington State Growth Management Act; and
2. RCW 36.170A.130(2)(a) requires that amendments to comprehensive land use plans not be made more than once per year except adoption of comprehensive plan amendments necessary to enact a planned action under RCW 43.21C.440, including amendments to development regulations that are consistent with a comprehensive plan adopted under RCW 36.70A; and
3. The Lewis County Comprehensive Plan (Ordinance 1287) was adopted in 2017 by the Board of County Commissioners and is consistent with RCW 06.70A, Growth Management; and
4. As provided for by RCW 36.70A.130 and RCW 43.21C.440, the Lewis County Planning Commission elected to conduct a periodic review and update LCC 17.144, RV Parks and Campgrounds, 16.04, Definitions, 17.30.460, Accessory Uses (Resource Lands), 16.14, Recreational Vehicle Park Divisions, 17.42, Zoning Summary, and 15.30, Mobile Home Parks; and
5. Staff provided notice for a public hearing on the proposed code amendments in the manner prescribed in LCC 17.12 on July 6, 2023; and
6. On July 25, 2023, the Lewis County Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposed code amendments found in Attachment A through G of this Transmittal Letter; and
7. Following the public hearing, the Planning Commission deliberated and determined that the proposed amendments met the intent and requirements of the Growth Management Act and were in accordance with the public interest.

Recommendation

Based on the above findings, the Lewis County Planning Commission recommends that the Board of County Commissioners pass an ordinance that adopts the proposed changes to the Lewis County Code, as presented in Attachment A through G of this Transmittal Letter.

Being duly authorized to transmit the recommendations on behalf of the Lewis County Planning Commission, I hereby respectfully submit the documents to the Lewis County Board of County Commissioners.

- Attachments:**
- A – Proposed Amendments to LCC 17.10, Definitions
 - B – Proposed Amendments to LCC 17.144, RV Parks and Campgrounds
 - C – Proposed Amendments to LCC 16.04, Definitions
 - D – Proposed Amendments to LCC 17.30.460, Accessory Uses (Resource Lands)
 - E – Proposed Amendments to LCC 16.14, Recreational Vehicle Park Divisions
 - F – Proposed Amendments to LCC 17.42, Zoning Summary
 - G – Proposed Amendments to LCC 15.30, Mobile Home Parks

Submitted by Lorie Spogen Date 8-9-2023
Lorie Spogen, Chair
Lewis County Planning Commission