

Board of County Commissioners Workshop



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STAFF REPORT

DRAFT AMENDMENTS TO RV PARKS/CAMPGROUNDS

Date: August 31, 2023
Staff: Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner
Attachments: RV Handouts

SUMMARY

Currently, development regulations for RV Parks and Campgrounds are found in Title 16, Subdivisions, of the Lewis County Code (LCC). This is not the correct code chapter because RV parks and campgrounds are not subdivisions, they are a land use. Therefore, the development regulations for RV parks and campgrounds are being removed 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. Duplicative requirements are being removed because all code sections of the LCC may be applied to any proposed development; there is no need to duplicate other regulations or to say, "all other code sections apply."

Note – Use of RVs on private property that does not qualify as a RV Park or Mobile Home Park are not addressed by this code amendment package. Recreational use of an RV on private property, when no fee is charged, is allowed for up to 60 consecutive days. Residential use of an RV is allowed on private property when the person(s) is staying in the RV for 61 or more consecutive days and in that situation the RV must meet the mobile home placement rules (LCC Chapter 15.25).

PROPOSED CODE AMENDMENTS

The proposed amendments are found in Exhibits A through F of Ordinance 1348 and are summarized below by topic. The new code that replaces Chapter 16.14 is Chapter 17.144, RV Parks and Campgrounds. 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 on the opposite page.

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. The change to a Special Use Permit will reduce 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 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 211 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

Currently, no cabins or yurts are allowed in a RV park or campground. A new addition to the code will allow for to 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 six (6) of those may be occupied by a cabin or yurt. The remaining 19 must be for RV or tent camping. There is also a new allowance for an owner/operator who wants to create a tent-only campground. In this situation the owner may provide a higher density of camping sites than is allowed for a campground that includes both RVs and tents.

5. Length of Stay

Currently users may stay up to 60 days or 180 days depending on the type of RV park/campground. 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. (Currently, if cut off between a RV Park and a Mobile Home Park is 181 days and this amendment will change it to 211 days.)

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. Cabins and Yurts

Cabins and yurts will be allowed to occupy up to 25% of the camping sites. This is intended to allow a diversity of ways to camp in a RV park or campground. Cabins and yurts must be no more than 400 square feet in size and will be required to hook up to a designed septic system.

7. Caretaker Accommodations

Currently, there is no allowance for caretaker accommodations. The new code allows one camping site to be occupied by a permanent RV or cabin/yurt for use by a caretaker, ranger or manager of the RV park/campground. If the accommodation is a cabin or yurt, then it does count towards the allowance for cabins/yurts. However, it does not count towards the length of stay 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/yurts.) Caretaker accommodations are similar to a single family residents and will be required to hook up to a designed septic system.

8. 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. Some accessory uses, such as a restaurant, will be required to hook up to a designed septic system.

9. Screening and Buffering

Screening and buffering is required by the current regulations and 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 a new allowance for a waterbody, such as a river or lake, to be used as the buffer and screening.

10. Removed

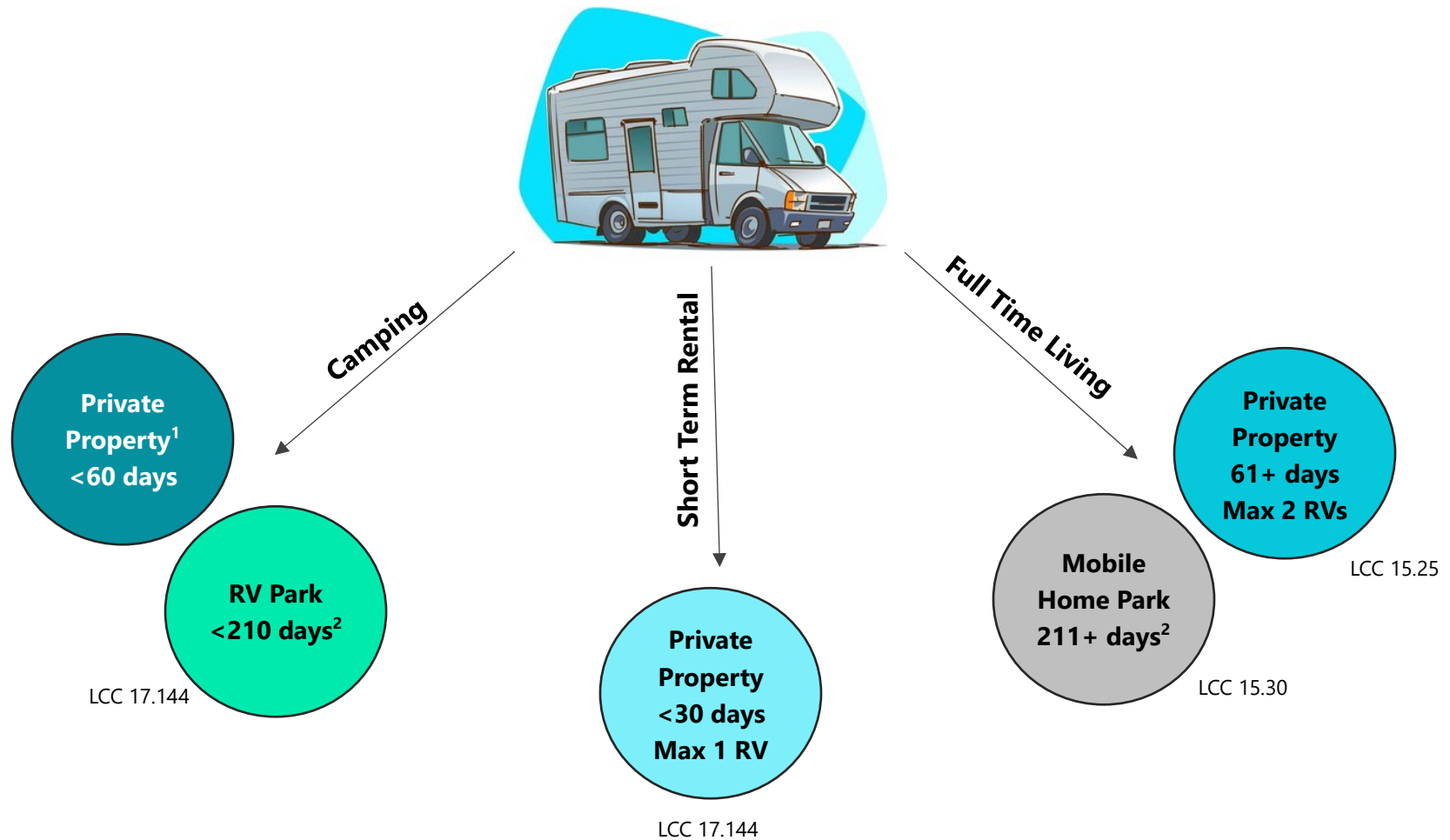
The following requirements were duplicative and removed: SEPA review, significant natural features, roads, bridges, signs, drainage, off-site impacts and solid waste. Again, there are existing requirements in the LCC that will apply regardless and there is no need to repeat or reference those in the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

NEXT STEPS

Staff will provide a presentation on the proposed amendments at the BOCC Wednesday Workshop on September 27. The BOCC will hold a public hearing to receive testimony on October 3 at the Business Meeting.

How do you want to use your recreational vehicle?

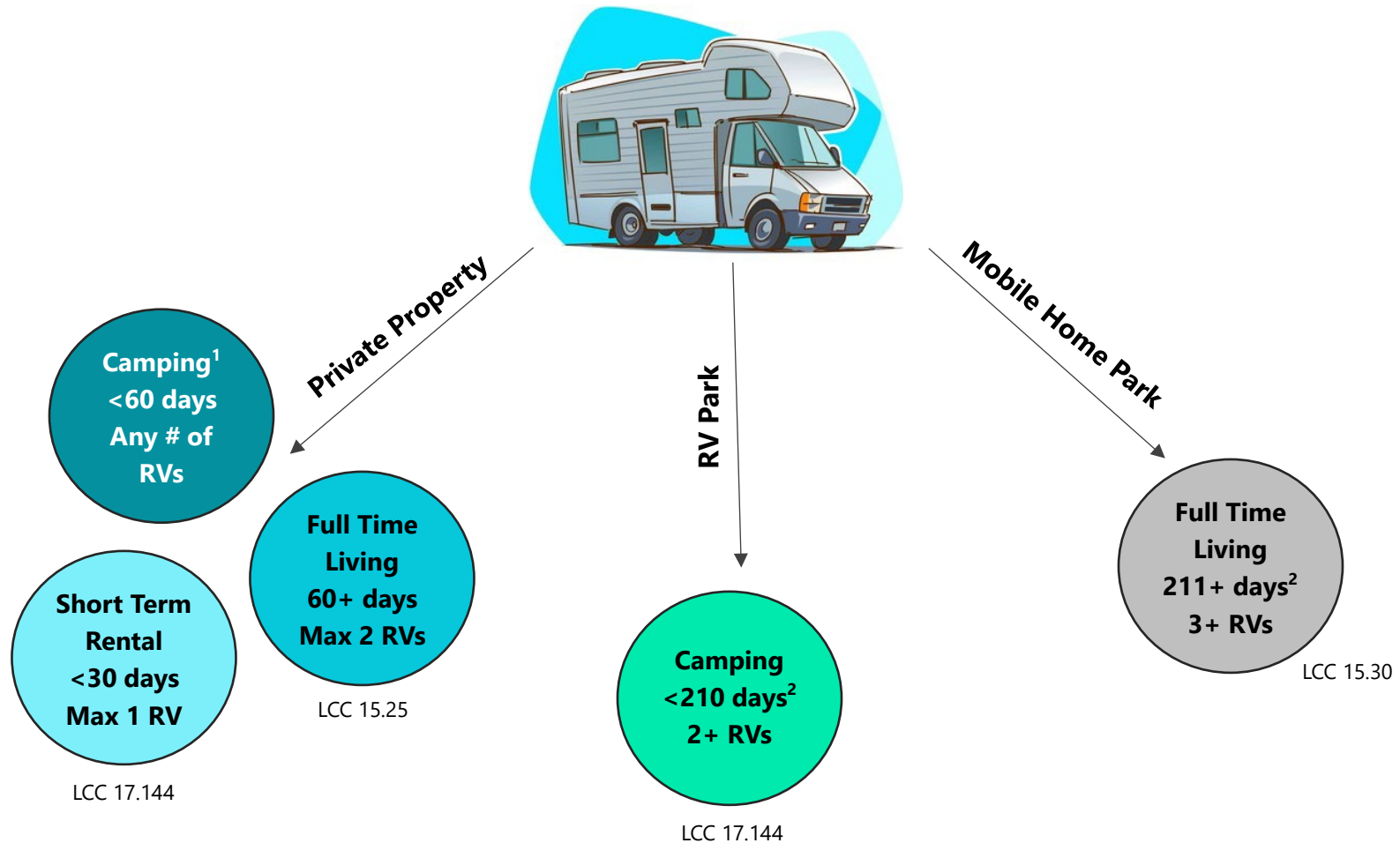
You have an RV. How do you plan on using it? Are you going to travel and camp? Are you going to live in it full time or let a family member/friend live in it? Are you going to rent it as a short term rental? The diagram below explains where you can park your RV in Lewis County, and for how long, depending on your answer.



1. When no fees are charged. If a fee is charged, then it's considered a STR or RV Park depending on the number of RVs.
2. The current allowance is 180 days. If Ordinance 1348 is passed, that will increase to 210 days.

How do you want to use your property for recreational vehicles?

You own property in Lewis County and you want to allow people to park their RV on it. Depending on how many RVs you want to allow and for how long you will allow people to stay in the RV, your property will be classified differently and there are different rules you need to follow.



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Updated August 2023

