



Mariposa County

Mariposa County MINUTES of the Planning Commission

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ART BAGGETT, CHAIR
WARREN GRAY
MICK HERMAN
DENI SMITH, VICE CHAIR
JOHN MCCAMMAN

DISTRICT I
DISTRICT II
DISTRICT III
DISTRICT IV
DISTRICT V

PLANNING COMMISSION FINAL ACTION SUMMARY MINUTES (Approved 8/8/25) JULY 18, 2025

A. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Baggett called the meeting to order at 9:05 A.M.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Art Baggett	District I	Present	9:00 AM
Warren Gray	District II	Present	9:00 AM
Mick Herman	District III	Excused	0:00 AM
Deni Smith	District IV	Present	9:00 AM
John McCamman	District V	Present	9:00 AM

B. Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Gray led the pledge.

C. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Persons wishing to speak on any item on interest within the subject matter or jurisdiction of the Commission that is not on the agenda.

There was no public comment received.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. Approve the May 30, 2025, Planning Commission Minutes

By motion of Commissioner McCamman, seconded by Commissioner Smith, the Planning Commission approved the minutes of May 30, 2025, as presented. Motion passed.

RESULTS: APPROVED

AYES: Commissioner Baggett, Commissioner Gray, Commissioner Smith, Commissioner McCamman

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

EXCUSED: Commissioner Herman

2. **Approve the June 6, 2025 Planning Commission Minutes**

By motion of Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner McCamman, the Planning Commission approved the minutes of June 6, 2025, as presented. Motion passed.

RESULTS: APPROVED

AYES: Commissioner Baggett, Commissioner Gray, Commissioner Smith, Commissioner McCamman

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

EXCUSED: Commissioner Herman

E. Discussion and Actions

1. **Discussion and action on the selection of Planning Commission members for a County Administrative Officer led Ad-Hoc Committee to Write the Much-Needed Code Compliance Ordinances and Program Documents.**

Planning Director Steve Engfer reported that the Code Compliance Advisory Committee (CCAC) reached a consensus recommending staff bring an item to the Board of Supervisors regarding the County Administrative Officer (CAO), Joe Lynch, leading an Ad-Hoc Committee. At the Board of Supervisors meeting on July 1, 2025, the Board directed CAO Lynch to lead and facilitate the efforts of the Ad-Hoc Committee in drafting the Code Compliance Ordinances and Program Documents. This committee consists of CCAC members Gabe Edwards, Colleen Rhodes, and Floyd Davis.

Engfer noted that it was included in the Board's discussion that two of the Planning Commission members would participate in the Ad-Hoc Committee. Engfer then asked the Commission to select two members to appoint to the Ad-Hoc Committee.

McCamman nominated Baggett and Gray. Baggett and Gray accepted the nomination.

By motion of Commissioner McCamman, seconded by Commissioner Smith, the Planning Commission approved the appointment of Commissioner Baggett and Commissioner Gray as members of the Ad-Hoc Committee. Motion passed.

RESULTS: APPROVED

AYES: Commissioner Baggett, Commissioner Gray, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Smith,

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

EXCUSED: Commissioner Herman

County Administrative Officer (CAO), Joe Lynch provided public comment, stating that staff will coordinate and schedule the upcoming meetings of the Ad-Hoc Committee. He expressed flexibility regarding attendance, noting that participation via phone, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams is acceptable. CAO Lynch

confirmed his commitment to facilitating the committee through the completion of the draft Code Compliance Ordinances and Program Documents. He emphasized the importance of this work to the public, stating that it will address longstanding issues while continuing to tackle matters of ongoing concern. He further clarified that the intent is for the Ad-Hoc Committee to report back to the Planning Commission, in alignment with the direction provided by the Board of Supervisors.

2. **Discussion and Action on the Draft Development Code Update, Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9, Zoning Ordinance Articles**

Engfer noted that public comments were received from the Central Sierra Chapter of the California Native Plant Society and from Midpines resident Anna Puchkoff after the meeting packet was published. These comments have been provided to the Commission and are available on the back table.

Engfer then introduced Senior Planner Ben Goger who presented the Articles.

Gray asked for clarification regarding Home Enterprise on page 35. Goger clarified that that the paragraph was a memo for the General Plan changes.

The Commission addressed Article 1, starting with Page 41 (1-3), Item I – Permits Issues in Error. Baggett expressed that if a permit was issued in error and the work has started then the permit shall be deemed issued and that the applicant should not be penalized. He then suggested for the language to be revised. Previous Planning Director Sarah Williams suggested amending the last sentences “Permits issued in error maybe void and eligible for revocation” to state “Permits issued in error maybe void and eligible for revocation, if there was miss information by applicant” as this would provide clarification when the County would have discretion to void the permit.

The Commission addressed Article 2:

Page 60, table 2-1, Park Model Homes, Goger noted that the memo was used as a holding place to change Park Model Homes to Park Model Trailer to align with the new definition and Government Code.

McCamman noted that he did not see a clear conflict between Timer Exclusive and Agricultural Exclusive. After discussion staff confirmed that Timber Exclusive was allowed in Agricultural Exclusive. The consensus from the Commission was to marry up TEZPPCUP in 17.108.

Ken Melton (resident) provided public comments on Article 2:

- Page 79, chapter 17.14.040 – Site Design and Architectural Standards, Item A – Frontage on Maintained Road, Melton expressed concerns about the first sentence and staff advised that this section was for commercial zones and not residential zones.
- Page 79, chapter 17.14.040 – Site Design and Architectural Standards, Item B – Viewsheds/Open Space, C – Structure Design, Landscaping and Scenic Environment, Melton asked for clarification on what a view shed is as there was no definition to reference and suggested that there be one.

Baggett agreed with Melton and stated there should be a definition for some criteria that should be applied. Staff will review for the best practice definition.

- Page 79, chapter 17.14.050 – Additional Regulations, A- Additional Development Standards Regulations, 1a – Setback from Residential Zones, 1-vehicle Parking, Melton recommended that the Planning Director may allow parking within the setback area, provided that any negative impacts on neighboring properties can be mitigated. Adopting this approach would render the existing application requirement unnecessary.

The Commission reached consensus to maximize the Planning Directors discretion in terms of a variance of standards where the issue was mitigated. This approach would institutionalize director level discretion, allowing staff to handle these variance decisions administratively, rather than elevating them to Planning Commission hearings. If the issue is already mitigated staff could approve the request directly.

Public comment received from Brenda Ostrom (Resident), who expressed concern about continuous, high-intensity lighting. While she finds occasional car headlights acceptable, 24/7 lighting is problematic. It creates excessive glare that prevents walkers' eyes from adjusting properly, posing a safety hazard. She urged that lighting be specifically addressed in Article 2, page 79, C2 – Compatibility with Rural Character. She emphasized that lighting standards, especially those aligned with dark sky principles should be applied universally, across both the town planning area and throughout the county.

Engfer noted that there were no specific language changes to Page 79 (2-22), A. Additional Development Standards Regulations, 1 – All Zones, a. Setback from Residential Zones. Staff was directed to include the definitions.

McCamman emphasized that the Commission preferred not to reference the name "Dark Sky" directly in documents, due to potential complications. However, the Commission does intend to use the lighting standards. Baggett suggested the using the name "Night Sky".

Goger explained that staff proposed adding a lighting standard immediately following the noise standard, in alignment with the comprehensive plan to page 92, The Airport Overlay Zone, the airport comprehensive land use plan. The proposed language would read: "New residential developments and major renovations to existing residential properties shall not install upward facing or ground mounted lighting that could pose a hazard to aircraft."

Goger then shared that the Mariposa Public Utility Board would not be supportive of any changes made to the Open Watershed Overlay Zone on page 92, Item C.

A brief discussion occurred regarding the watershed overlay and Williams suggested adding to the language in Item C2 "if an engineer grading plan and septic design plan is proposed".

Baggett called for recess at 10:19 A.M. and reconvened at 10:28 A.M.

The Commission continued addressing Article 2:

Goger highlighted that the staff report listed staff's recommendations to increase the side and rear yard's setbacks to 30 feet to be aligned with zone 1 of Board of Forestry and for fire safety. Goger noted that the Board of Forestry asked if the community wanted to obtain in fire safe community status to adopt the Board

of Forestry or exceed those codes within the local zoning and recommended that the Commission should not set up a zoning ordinance that would impede that best practice.

A brief discussion occurred regarding setbacks with smaller parcels consideration for fire wise community standards and collectively for county wide. Goger noted that the statute allowing a 4-foot setback reduction is very specific its applicability in a High State Responsibility Area (SRA) remains uncertain at this time. However, if a Cal Fire inspector identifies a legitimate health or safety concern relating to the placement of an ADU, they could take action to revoke the permit or require a larger setback.

Engfer introduced the Mariposa County Fire Staff, John Patton and Patience Good, who were in attendance to discuss and answer any fire questions.

Cal Fire staff Patience Good highlighted that, under California Public Resources Code 4290, new developments in State Responsibility Areas must meet defensible space requirements including a 30-foot setback from structures to property lines or vegetation ignition zones. If a property cannot meet these standards, Cal Fire staff works directly with the homeowner to identify mitigation alternatives. Patience noted that in at least one instance, approval was granted for a structure (a shed) that could not meet the setback requirement, on condition that mitigation measures were implemented to ensure safety. Throughout, staff strives to apply code requirements consistently while allowing for site-specific accommodations when full compliance is infeasible, always aiming to uphold fire safety and defensible space objectives.

Goger advised that if the county wanted to join the fire reduction list, then the Commission should not set up a provision that would stand in the way and that the zoning standards should meet or exceed the requirements.

John Patton, County Fire staff and Firewise Coordinator, spoke about key fire risk reduction components and their alignment with Cal Fire and national standards:

- A 30-foot setback is one of the most effective ways to reduce wildfire risk, particularly from radiant heat.
- This standard aligns with Cal Fire's defensible space requirements under California Public Resources Code 4290, which help prevent structure ignition during intense wildfire conditions.
- The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), which oversees the Firewise USA Program, also supports this structure, dividing defensible space into three zones: 0-5 feet (immediate zone), 5-30 feet (intermediate zone, 30-100 feet (extended zone).

These zones are based on the same fire behavior research and methodology used by Cal Fire, reinforcing the credibility and importance of maintaining adequate defensible space. Patton then emphasized the importance of infrastructure such as engine turnarounds, which ensure fire apparatus can safely access and exit properties during emergencies.

Public comment received from Ken Melton (Resident) who corrected earlier misinformation, clarifying the roles of 4290 and 4291 in Mariposa County's fire safety framework, and emphasized that Mariposa County's Board of Supervisors retains jurisdiction over structure setback regulations proposed that pertain to side yards, front yards, etc. Wildland firefighting and defensible space standards fall under Cal Fire's authority, not the Commission's.

Goger explained that there is a dedicated easement whose width varies. We propose increasing its width, so the easement centerline shifts from 20 feet to 30 feet. This change would align the side and rear setback lines accordingly and maintain the proposed 10% setback allowance.

Public comment received from Brenda Ostrom (Resident), in support of the 10% rule for setbacks.

After discussion, staff will review the centerline definition that will be stricken and replace with new language and to make the language clearer to septic setbacks.

The consensus of the commission was to change the setbacks requirement to 30 feet.

Public comment received from Brenda Ostrom (Resident), who spoke about keeping rural residential landscape.

Goger noted that under Prohibited Usage, remove section Stable Provision - per the Agricultural Advisory Committee to restore this language in the stable provision.

The Commission concurred due to the biohazard conversation from the joint AAC meeting.

Baggett called for recess at 12:12 P.M. and reconvened at 12:20 P.M.

The Commission moved on to address Article 3:

Goger responded to public comment regarding local plants and noted that staff recommend supporting local and adopting the definition but add language that's currently used similar to permeable paving, stating we support local native plants and landscaping plans. The Commission approved staff recommendation.

Goger then spoke about the Murals recommendation that required approval from the Commission recommending to the Board of Supervisors to approve that an application for a mural could be reviewed at staff level for commercial buildings. The Commission approved staff recommendation.

Goger explained that vacation rentals, which function similarly to quasi commercial uses are dispersed throughout the community. If the Commission wishes to apply focused oversight to them selectively by location, that could be an option. However, adopting shielded lighting standards countywide ensures a simple, low-barrier regulatory baseline across all jurisdictions and uses:

- Shielded light fixtures are relatively easy to comply with.
- Applying this standard consistently across the county avoids uneven enforcement and gaps.

Baggett added that requiring downcast light fixtures rather than elaborate lighting plans simplifies implementation. A single fixture approval system makes compliance straightforward.

The Commission's recommendation was to advance signage standards. 17.40.03 as is but recommend that the project review process for County wide signage standards be reviewed for consistencies and initiated by the Board of Supervisors. In addition, the Night Sky ordinance for non-residence should be brought to the Board of Supervisors' attention.

The Commission moved to address Article 4:

Baggett brought up concerns regarding workforce housing provisions and historic design review application.

Goger presented a proposal to define "remote location workforce housing" to support seasonal housing needs, inspired by public comments about Recreational Vehicles (RVs) park style housing. This new flexible housing type will be incorporated into the existing planned residential cluster development with preserved open space. Staff proposed that such developments occur on parcels over 20 acres and may be approved by the Planning Director without discretionary review. During discussion, McCamman questioned excluding glamping style, 24/7 park model housing from cluster developments. Engfer responded that the Commission could propose including it in the planned residential development.

Goger noted that staff will strike out the procedure document from Article 4, on page 200. Goger provided the Commission with other minor edits:

- Recreational Vehicle Park Improvements - Road Standard Widths
- Public Super Approval for the new temporary occupancy trailers – will have MPUD called out (any community sewer system)
- Exceeding the State standard for density bonus
- Wireless facilities section to improve its readability

The Commission discussed who should review Historic Design Review Applications. Baggett suggested recommending that the Planning Commission, not the Historic Sites and Record Preservation Commission (HSRPC), handle them, citing long delays that took up to nine months in HSRPC reviews. Williams clarified that the HSRPC advises the Planning Director, who has the authority to approve applications, and noted that the code limits HSRPC's review time to 14 days. After discussion, the Commission agreed with staff that the current HSRPC review process is faster than shifting reviews to the Commission.

Public comment received from Ken Melton:

- Page 175 (4-6), chapter 17.52.040 -Agritourism, item D – Unlimited Agritourism Uses, Melton noted that the County used a false method to determine the road standards pertaining to Average Daily Trips (ADTs).

Baggett directed staff to add this item to the Board of Supervisors list for consideration.

- Page 175 (4-6), chapter 17.52.040 – Agritourism, item D2, Melton expressed concerns about the requirements for privately maintained access road agreements, stating that such requirements are not supported by State law. Melton suggested removing this paragraph.
- Page 187 (4-18), chapter 17.52.10 – Mobile and Manufactured Homes, Mobile Home Parks, Melton noted that the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) regulates RVs Parks and questioned the use of the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and explained that the CUP is wide open with no set of rules.

Baggett directed staff to provide a definition. Staff flagged this item for review to determine if it's applicable.

- Page 190, chapter 17.52.150 – Recreational Vehicle Parks, Compliance, Melton noted that this was HCD jurisdiction and expressed concerns regarding the sentence stating that "Recreational vehicle parks shall comply with all applicable State Uniform Building Code and Fire Code requirements" as the County cannot inspect the unit.

Bagget directed staff to correct or clarify this paragraph. Staff flagged this item for review.

- Page 198 (4-29), chapter 17.52.200 – Temporary Camping, Maximum Number of Days, Melton noted that there is a conflict as this sentence is written incorrectly that included “occupancy standards established in the Building Code”, he reminded that this is regulated by HCD and suggested removing this sentence.
- Page, 198 (4-29), chapter 17.52.220, Temporary Occupancy of Travel Trailers, Recreational Vehicles, and Park Trailers, Melton noted that the title for this section was redundant as Travel Trailers and Park Trailers are considered a recreational vehicle and was used in the next few pages.

Baggett directed staff to simplify this.

- Page 199 (4-30), chapter 17.52.220, Temporary Occupancy of Travel Trailers, Recreational Vehicles, and Park Trailers, Item C6, Melton noted that this sentence “Units must comply with County fire safety standards” shouldn’t be used as this was under HCD’s jurisdiction.

Baggett asked the Commission for comments for Articles 6 and 7, which will be brought back at the next meeting.

A brief discussion took place about the legality of solar farms in Mariposa County. Williams explained that for a use to be allowed in a particular zone, it must be specifically identified as a Permitted Use, Conditional Use Permit, or Administrative Use Permit. If the use is not listed or is dissimilar to those listed, it is not allowed. Baggett suggested adding solar farms as an allowable use in the County’s zoning regulations. Staff will review this recommendation and report back at the next meeting.

F. Commissioner Reports

McCamman will be excused at the July 25, 2025 Meeting.

G. Information Items

Information was received by Planning Director, Steve Engfer.

H. Future Agenda Items

Baggett suggested Planning Commission July 25, 2025 will be cancelled.

By motion of Commissioner McCamman, seconded by Commissioner Smith, the Planning Commission approved to cancel the July 25, 2025 meeting. Motion passed.

RESULTS: APPROVED

AYES: Commissioner Baggett, Commissioner Gray, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Smith,

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

EXCUSED: Commissioner Herman

August 9, 2025:

- Articles 6, 7, 8 and 9
- Solar Farm Proposal

- Conditional Use Permit Application
- Article 5 Draft (subdivision)

August 22, 2025:

- Article 5 will be brought back to the Commission on August 22, 2025
- Recommendation to the General Plan Review
- Resolution to include recommendation for miscellaneous items discussed (Sign Ordinance, Noise Ordinance, etc.), a recommendation request for consideration of initiating the public process CEQA review

I. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

ART BAGGETT, Chair
Mariposa County Planning Commission

SOPHEA CRAIGHEAD, Secretary
Mariposa County Planning Commission

Note: Full audio recordings of the minutes are available from the Planning Department by request or online: [Agendas & Minutes | Mariposa County, CA - Official Website](#)



**Items that came in
after the Agenda and
packet was prepared
and publicly posted.**



CENTRAL SIERRA CHAPTER

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

July 12, 2025

TO: Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
Mariposa County Planning Commission
Mariposa County Planning Department

REFERENCE: Mariposa County 2025 Development Code Update | July 2025

We appreciate the tremendous time and effort expended by both county staff and the Planning Commission to update the Mariposa County Development Code. We recognize the enormous scope and scale of this project and appreciate the work that both staff and Commission members have dedicated to building standards that protect the health, safety and rural character of Mariposa County. Planning is key to good stewardship. We understand that your work to plan for sound development will provide a solid foundation and necessary building blocks to ensure the ongoing health, vitality and well-being of Mariposa County. Good standards will build good neighbors and good stewards across Mariposa communities.

We have been listening to the recordings and reading the minutes of Planning Commission meetings from September 2024 (when the project was introduced) to date. After doing so, there are six (6) topics of interest and concern that we would like to bring to the attention of county leadership. You will find these explained below, along with specific requests and our rationale.

Our primary topics of interest and concern are:

PARKING

We fully support and thank the Planning Commission for their recommendation to include permeable parking surfaces across all uses in code. This is critical for minimizing stormwater runoff, reducing flooding, preventing erosion and pollution of nearby environments, and protecting our watersheds. Additionally, permeable materials can lower surface temperatures and help replenish groundwater. Thank you for recognizing these important values to Mariposa County.

LANDSCAPING

For clarity, **we request consistent language for landscaping related to local native plants across all code.** Code language is currently mixed and difficult to interpret or support. **We request use of the term “local native plants” for landscaping, using the definition: drought tolerant plants that are locally indigenous (originate from) the lower elevations of the central Sierra Nevada region.** One reliable reference for looking up native status is Calflora (www.calflora.org, an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization). Specificity *is important*, because the use of non-local native plants or other non-local drought tolerant plants has the potential to introduce invasive species that compete with local flora for nutrients and water, while reducing Mariposa County’s rich biodiversity and unique landscape. Local native plants have also adapted to our environment over millennia and are fire adapted and fire resilient.

SETBACKS

If the county intends to proceed with an effort to reduce setbacks, we request that you engage a process that fully educates the community of the proposed changes and that includes adequate time for community feedback. Reducing setbacks increases the potential for negative environmental impact on the land and the surrounding environment. Reducing setbacks encroaches on our rural values of not intruding on the privacy of neighbors, not disturbing others' peace and quiet, or diminishing the use, atmosphere or value of their rural home and surroundings. This is a matter that impacts property rights and values. **We advocate for a process in which the community has the opportunity to fully weigh in on this matter of significance, so that the Board of Supervisors can make a community-informed decision before reducing property set-backs.**

LIGHT | RURAL NIGHT SKIES

Mariposa County citizens value our expansive rural night skies. The value of dark night skies has been well-established and is, furthermore, a fully-expressed goal of Mariposa County General Plan: Goal 11-1d, that supports International Dark Sky standards.

The reality, however, is that Mariposa has experienced a significant increase in light pollution over the past decade due to a lack of clear standards, resulting in significant light trespass. Our rural night sky must be protected. In order to protect and promote the public health, safety and welfare, as well as the rural quality of life we value, **we request the county to develop a *Dark Sky/Rural Sky Ordinance* that provides lighting guidelines for all uses across Mariposa County, with these goals:**

1. To preserve community character and promote a safe and pleasant nighttime environment for residents and visitors;
2. To protect and reclaim the ability to view the scenic night sky in Mariposa County that may be diminished due to increased upward projection of light or other light trespass;
3. To minimize current and future light pollution, protect against glare and excessive lighting;
4. To permit reasonable uses of outdoor lighting for nighttime safety, utility, and security;
5. To prevent nuisances caused by unnecessary light intensity, direct glare, and light trespass;
6. To not disturb the nighttime navigation and migration, as well as other natural behaviors and ecosystems, of many species, flora and fauna;
7. Through new building permits, to phase out existing nonconforming fixtures that violate these standards;
8. To prevent inappropriate, poorly designed or installed outdoor lighting and encourage high quality lighting design; and
9. To promote efficient and cost-effective lighting practices and systems to conserve energy.

Many counties and other jurisdictions in California have developed Dark Sky Standards. For reference: [Mono County Dark Sky Regulations](#), and [Nevada City/County \(draft\)](#); also counties of Ventura, Los Angeles, Kern, San Luis Obispo, San Diego, San Bernardino, Inyo.

NOISE POLLUTION

Research has proven the harm from noise pollution to humans, ecosystems, wildlife and plants. Excessive noise interferes with sleep, communication, relaxation, and the full use of one's property. It

contributes to hearing impairment and a wide range of adverse physiological and psychological stress conditions, and it adversely affects the value of real property. Noise standards are not addressed across all land uses in Mariposa County. **We ask that the county develop noise standards for all uses to support the health and well-being of our citizens, wildlife, and to protect the full-use and value of real property.** See the recently adopted Madera County regulations and application for all uses - [Madera County Noise Regulations](#).

NEW ACCESSORY USES

Finally, it is not yet clear to us which of the new Accessory Uses in the updated Development Code are required by the State or have been, otherwise, added to Mariposa County Code. With regard to: **12.52.040 Agritourism/Glamping; 12.52.070 Campgrounds; 17.52.200 Temporary Camping; 17.52.220 Temporary Occupancy of Travel Trailers, Recreational Vehicles, and Transportable Housing Units,** we understand certain value of these new uses and that that they must be addressed. We also recognize that they all hold potential for significant impact to the rural character of the county; overuse and high impact on our water and ecosystems; and negative impact to adjoining property use and values. **We advocate for a meaningful and thorough public and stakeholder engagement process, including an assessment of the impact of said uses on the conservation aspects of the General Plan, prior to moving forward on development and adoption of appropriate standards for these new high-impact uses.**

We believe it is critical to address these six (6) issues in order to ensure the health, well-being, and vitality of our community, to protect our ecosystems, flora and fauna, and to provide the rural lifestyle that we all enjoy *and expect* as residents of Mariposa County.

Accordingly, we request that county leadership direct staff to address these areas in the *2025 Mariposa County Development Code* update, to provide additional opportunity for community education and input, and to develop new Light/Rural Night Skies and Noise ordinances for all uses in the county. This will ensure the health, well-being and vitality of our communities, citizens, resources, ecosystems, and rural lifestyle. We are committed to supporting these processes at all levels.

Thank you for your work to build these foundational building blocks upon which the ongoing health of our much-loved community will be built!

Very sincerely,

**Peggy Moore, Vice-President, Mariposa County
Central Sierra Chapter, California Native Plant Society**



**David Campbell, President
Central Sierra Chapter, California Native Plant Society**

We are dedicated to protecting California's native plants and their natural habitats, today and into the future, through science, education, stewardship, gardening, and advocacy.

7/17/2025

Dear Planning Commission and Mariposa County Board of Supervisors,

I live in Midpines and am writing to express my concerns and comments regarding the proposed updates to the Mariposa County Development Code. After renting in the area for 10 years, I was fortunate to finally find and afford housing here with my fiancé, something that has become increasingly difficult for many locals. I have serious concerns about how the proposed changes in the development may impact the rural character of Mariposa. Our town's charm lies in its historic, rustic, and scenic qualities, the same qualities that make it such a special and beautiful place to live.

The 2006 General Plan did an excellent job identifying actions necessary to preserve Mariposa's rural identity, including the protection of our natural landscapes and resources. Any amendments to the development code should be approached with great caution and scrutiny to ensure they remain consistent with the General Plan's clear goals: to safeguard Mariposa's landscape, heritage, and environmental integrity.

Certain changes to the development code will impact the rural scenic and historic character of Mariposa, and below I clearly map out my concerns concisely as I've bulleted them for ease of reading. I want my public comment to be carried throughout the meetings, discussions, and analysis process with the Mariposa Planning Department and Planning Commission.

Setbacks

Sufficient setbacks from property lines, creeks, lakes, and scenic corridors help preserve the rural character of Mariposa County.

Scenery and rural character

- The setback being slashed to a 6th of its original distance, from 25 ft to 4ft will change the density and the concentration of development that is antithetical to rural living scenery.
- Setbacks serve both aesthetic and functional purposes, including:
 - Visual preservation of the countryside.
 - Free flood mitigation (1 acre of floodplain can hold up to 1 million gallons of water) [NFIP Floodplain Management Requirements](#)

Free protection from flood damages

- Evident increases in flood frequency via changes in weather and climate have resulted in catastrophic flooding in communities. In July 2025 alone, flash floods have resulted in severe and fatal damages in Texas, New Mexico, New York, New Jersey, South Carolina, and Illinois)

- Since Mariposa County does not participate in the FEMA National Flood Insurance Program, setbacks are even more critical to mitigate flood risk.
- Preserving natural floodplains is essential to protect homes, buildings, and water resources – as many Mariposa residents rely on their groundwater wells for water supplies. Reducing runoff with slow water down to help recharge groundwater supplies, prevent flood risks and protect water quality.

Protect human health and valuable livestock

- Maintain setback requirements for stables and pens (e.g. retain §17.30.040F(2)) for:
 - Human and animal safety
 - Protection of water resources from animal waste
- Animal waste near water sources creates point-source pollution, threatening:
 - Water supplies
 - Recreational and mining areas as people wade in creeks for gold
 - Public health through waterborne diseases
- The domesticated animals in Mariposa are a foundation to the history and economy of the area. Mariposa residents value their animals (chickens, goats, pigs, dogs, horses, etc.), and ensuring their distance away from vectors of disease and illness supports local culture and well-being.

Dark Skies

- A defining feature of rural life is the ability to view a clear, star-filled night sky.
- Preserving Mariposa's night sky requires maintaining downward-facing lighting standards.
- These lighting requirements should apply not only to commercial properties but also to residential ones.
- Reducing light pollution is key to protecting the rural character of the region.
- Proposed updates to the development plan should extend Outdoor Light and Glare standards to residential areas.
- Retain applicability of 17.46.040 AS IS in the 2006 plan "Applicability. The standards established in this Chapter shall apply to all new development applications. The standards shall also apply to all existing and proposed vacation rental applications and bed and breakfast uses and applications." This should be written to include residential development.

Housing

Section 3.2.10 of the 2006 General Plan is titled "Home Ownership is a Priority." This is an important tenant I think should be revisited with every decision in the development code in ch

- The proposal to change to 17.52.060 Adding a 'transient occupancy certificate' to be retained with the ownership transfer of short-term rentals, commodifies the vacation rental supplies (like taxi cab tokens in NYC), and will have wide-ranging economic, social, and regulatory consequences including, but not limited to:
 - Artificial inflation of property values: When short-term rental permits become highly profitable or tradeable, investors may treat them as assets, driving up real estate prices.
 - Barrier to entry for local buyers: Locals are priced out as speculative buyers prioritize rental returns over residency.
 - Unequal access: Wealthier individuals or corporations can buy up multiple properties, consolidating permits and profits—limiting opportunities for local families.
 - Loss of community cohesion: As homes turn into transient rentals, fewer full-time residents live in neighborhoods, weakening community ties.
 - Strain on infrastructure: Services like water, trash, roads, and emergency response get stressed by tourist volumes, especially in small towns.
 - "Hotelization" of neighborhoods: Homes function more like businesses, often without the same oversight or standards as hotels.
 - Speculative markets are hard to unwind: If permits are bought and sold like assets, it becomes politically and legally difficult to revoke or reduce them later.
 - Administrative burden: Tracking, taxing, and enforcing compliance becomes costly and contentious.
 - Undermines local policy goals: Commodification may directly conflict with General Plan objectives, such as promoting homeownership, rural character, and resource conservation.
 - Treating vacation rental permits like tradeable assets risks shifting housing from a community resource to a speculative investment tool.
 - This can destabilize local housing markets, weaken regulatory flexibility, and undermine long-term sustainability goals.
- Concerns:
 - Short-term rentals compete with local residents looking for long-term housing.

- They also compete with local hotels and long-standing hospitality businesses, reducing their occupancy and economic viability.
- Suggested Action:
 - Retain or consider reducing the 10% cap on short-term rentals to protect community housing stock.
 - Prevent the administration or transfer of Transient Occupancy Certificates to non-immediate family members.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of my concerns. I love living in Mariposa County and while I understand the challenges to keep the development code current with modern lifestyles, I want to emphasize the value and merit in retaining the current code to preserve our landscape's rural character, natural scenery, and country quality of life. This can be accomplished all while protecting our communities, structures, and natural resources.

Sincerely,

Anna Puchkoff

Resident of Mariposa County, in Midpines.

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