Presenter

Eric and Ruby Chen
Launi Julio
Fred Fibi
Cheryl Gerlock
Gord Putnam
Chad Kieser
Shelley Takacs
Nancy Cornelius
Ava Siemens

Written Submissions

Andre Lema
Valerie Belanger
Ava Siemens
Launi Julio
Robert Lema
Frances Gagnon
Leo and Val Belanger

AGRITOURISM EVENTS IN STURGEON COUNTY

PRESENTATION FOR CONSIDERATION ON THE PROPOSED CORE CRITERIA DRAFT

SUBMITTED BY SHELLEY TAKACS, COPPER CREEK BARN LTD.

How will the current draft support businesses that are not agricultural?

- AG-Residential: the current draft does not permit Agritourism Events to occur, how/why was this determined and what about current operating businesses that fall under this category?
- Discretionary use as an option?
  - Properties that are not AG-Major/AG-Minor and are not in sub-divisions can apply for discretionary use and must align with the required provisions under the County's Temporary Event permit application.

Permanent facilities are not permitted under the current draft.

- How or why was this determined?
- Current operating businesses that already have a structure completed with commercial building standards and previous County approval of all permits/inspections should be allowed to continue to operate
- A permanent structure helps to mitigate noise which supports limiting the impact to neighbouring properties
- Will agriculturally based businesses with existing structures be subject to the same requirements for commercial building standards and inspections?

Maximum of 10 events in a calendar year in the current draft

- What criteria was considered when determining the maximum number?
- For businesses that are seasonal, this limits the amount of events that can occur to cover the costs of operating such events thus impacting a small business' income
- Perhaps limiting the amount of events in a week can help mitigate the impact to neighbouring properties without impacting a business' ability to generate income.

Agritourism Events and the benefit to Sturgeon County

Events such as Weddings helps bring revenue to other small businesses in the County as the Couple and their guests are looking for local vendors &/or experiences when travelling in for the weekend

- Florists and Floral farmers/greenhouses
- Caterers, photographers (also showcasing locations in and around Sturgeon County), officiants etc. to name a few
- Bed & Breakfasts, campgrounds
- Farmers Markets, Distillery tours, etc.

*Wedding vendors and the guests attending these events generate a large social media presence that provides local Sturgeon County businesses with continued advertising and interest.

Final questions

- If the current draft remains as written, will current operating businesses that do not meet this criteria be grandfathered in?
- What provisions will be made for businesses that have booked clients for this upcoming season? If the timelines are delayed, will we continue to apply for Temporary Event Permits as done over the past two years?

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback.





















1/13/2022

Andre and Trish Lema
26227A SH633
Sturgeon County, AB

Agribusiness Agritourism Review Task Force
Sturgeon County, AB.

RE; Lived Experience Adjacent to Trestles Edge

Dear Review Board,

Further to our submittal on the supplied form, we thought it appropriate to add to the form with comments on our experience with an existing events center.

Trestles Edge has operated for 2 years. The first year was fairly muted with some events occurring in the afternoon, none that created much noise or traffic in the evening (limited by COVID restrictions). Last summer the operation had celebrations that began in the afternoon and carried on till well after 1;00am. The area could be rented for the entire weekend and included RV spots. The venue is located very near 4 residences and the noise during many events can be clearly heard even during the wedding speeches. At this location, the noise carries very well.

As a resident, our enjoyment of our properties occurs on the weekends and evenings. This is the same time as a wedding event. In Alberta we have precious few warm summer evenings and unfortunately this timing matches perfectly with an outdoor wedding event. The facility can and has operated mid week until the late hours also and for most who work early the next day the noise is an obvious annoyance.

Trestles edge access is at a convergence of the railroad, river, busy highway, and a secondary road with residential traffic and a large farming operation. This perfect storm of traffic and location has already been the scene of several both small and serious accidents (a number of deaths).

From a residents' perspective, our expectation of a neighbor is much less noise and traffic. Our expectation of the area is what it has historically been; residences and agriculture. Events facilities change the quiet country life into something much different and our ability to enjoy it.

Caution needs to be taken on this type of party venue to consider proximity to neighbors and traffic volume. Appropriate locations are rare given the nature of the business and the number of residents now in the county.

Sincerely,

Andre and Trish Lema

January 13, 2022

Leo and Val Belanger
54202, Range Road 263
Sturgeon County, AB

Agribusiness Agritourism Review Task Force
Sturgeon County, AB.

RE; Residence Experience Adjacent to Trestles Edge

Dear Review Board,

Further to our submittal on the supplied form, we thought this letter would assist the board with our view and to add to the form the comments of our experience with an existing events center.

Trestles Edge has operated for approximately 2 years that we are aware of. We were only notified by our neighbours and not the operators of Trestles Edge starting their business. Trestles Edge did not come to see us to discuss any temporary use of having events at the property they own. We are not sure why as we are extremely close in proximity to their business and just hope it was an oversight of not coming to see us.

The first year we recall was fairly quiet with some events occurring in the afternoon, none that created much noise or traffic in the evening (limited of course by COVID restrictions). Last summer the operation had celebrations that began in the afternoon and carried on till well after midnight. The area could be rented for the entire weekend and included RV spots. The venue is located very near 4 residences and the noise during many events can be clearly heard even during the wedding speeches. Our residence being higher up on a landscape view than the other 3 residences, the noise carries very well.

As residents, our enjoyment of our properties like many others occurs on the weekends and evenings since we have resided here from 1992 to present. We experienced individuals accessing the railroad line very late in the evening and the railroad line is beside our residence. We do not think it is appropriate for individuals to access this rail road line and it is a safety issue – we are not 100% sure it was individuals from the event going on at Trestle's Edge however there were no other vehicles we could see nearby.

In Alberta we have precious few warm summer evenings and unfortunately this timing matches perfectly with an outdoor wedding event. The facility can and has operated mid week until the late hours also and for most who work early the next day the noise is an obvious annoyance.

Trestle's Edge access is at a convergence of the railroad, river, busy highway, and a secondary road with residential traffic and a large farming operation. This perfect storm of traffic and location has already been the scene of several both small and serious accidents (including deaths). We have had our own incident and know first hand the dangerous harm that can potentially increase.

From our own perspective, our expectation of a neighbor is much less noise and traffic. Our reason for choosing to live and grow our family in the country is to be of residences and agriculture. Being given land to pass down to our own children to enjoy country living is what we are striving for and hoping for our own children to be able to benefit from this as well.

Extreme caution needs to be taken on this type of party venue to consider proximity to fellow neighbors and traffic volume. Appropriate locations are rare given the nature of the business and the number of residents now in the county.

Sincerely,

Leo and Val Belanger

January 18, 2022

Agribusiness Agritourism Review Task Force
Sturgeon County, AB

RE: Trestle's Edge wedding business in country residential area

Dear Members of the Review Board,

Thanks to each of you for your time, energy and work on the task force. As Sturgeon County "values its agribusiness operators, *and the ability for residents to peacefully grow and enjoy their properties,"* I offer my experience with a wedding venue affecting neighbours.

I grew up in Sturgeon County, on a quarter-section west of St. Albert, NW10-54-W4, along the Sturgeon River, Villeneuve Road and CN Railway. I now live a short drive away, spending considerable time with my parents who have lived here for more than 6 decades. It's vital to our family that they live independently and enjoy their years on their property with peace of mind.

My parents sold a small parcel of land across the river, zoned as *country residential*. A house was built and a family made it home. After it was sold, the new owners did not reside on the property. This is a critical concern for my parents' safety and security; there are incidents of trespassing, and the home appears vacant of residents.

For the past 2 years, the property has become a commercial venture with continuing development of Trestle's Edge Weddings and Events: trestlesedge.com Their website and social media show images that spill outside the property, such as under the trestle, on the adjacent gravel road, by the beaver dam, in fields and crops, and an aerial video of the land. With hundreds of people in the area at events, there's more chance for some to explore, return and park on the road, walk on the railway, and through to private properties.

Beyond the significant points of excessive noise and traffic, I have some other considerations to note. Elders, a young family or newcomers can be taken advantage of or influenced unknowingly when regulations are lacking. It's difficult to have the onus put on them to call the owners when parties are too loud and long, having RV's parked across the river, and loss of privacy. It becomes a long-term stressful situation. Considerations:

- negative impact on the environment, local ecosystem, wildlife, beavers, plants and river, due to the volume of human activities, artificial materials, fires from candles, sparklers, photo smoke bombs, and any potential issue of improper treatment of sewage and waste
- eroding the sense of community and neighbors living peacefully
- potential depreciation of property value and ability to sell, as the business evolves
- respect that an area may be the home of a family for generations
- emergencies, fire and police response times

As bylaws are better defined, I am hopeful that this land will be preserved as residential country living. A wedding and event venue needs a different place, perhaps a business, recreation or golf course area. The quality of life for people like my parents is paramount.

Sincerely,

Frances (Lema) Gagnon
3 Gentry Crt, St. Albert AB T8N 5K1
780-221-2850

January 17, 2022

Robert and Kathryn Lema
26227B SH633
Sturgeon County, AB

Agribusiness Agritourism Review Task Force
Sturgeon County, AB

RE: Lived Experience Adjacent to Trestle's Edge

Dear Review Board:

Further to our submittal on the supplied form, we thought it appropriate to add our comments on our experience with an existing events centre.

Trestle's Edge has operated for over two years, but we were not officially notified of their intent of operations until August 28, 2021. One of the owners came to our home and asked us to sign a form acknowledging that we were aware of their intent to keep operating their weddings and events business.

At that time we expressed some of our concerns with Trestle's Edge:

- The property in question was previously owned by us, was subdivided in the 1980s as a 2.4ha parcel and zoned as country residential. A few years later a residence was built, a family moved in and we had close neighbours right across the Sturgeon River. Since the new owners of Trestle's Edge purchased the property, no one has lived in the residence and that has been a concern to us as very close by neighbours. Since this is a very attractive residence and acreage a number of people have been trespassing on the grounds. The owners have also expressed to us their concerns about people trespassing on the property to use their outdoor toilets and facilities, even in winter.
- We have experienced excessive late night noise levels at some wedding/party events, mostly in the summer of 2021. Responding to our concerns, the owners hired Accoustical Consultants Inc. to monitor events on September 4 and September 8 2021, with equipment set up near our home. We have not heard back from the owners on the results of the sound recordings.
- As residents and tax payers on NW10-54-W4 for over 60 years, we hope to be able to continue living peacefully on this property with many of our family members and with both new and older neighbours.
- It seems to us that the owners of Trestle's Edge look at this very attractive property as a commodity, wanting to capitalize on its value. To us this property has been and continues to be an ideal, quiet location for an occupied country residential residence.
- We do no think a business like this should be located so close to five residences.

Sincerely,

Robert and Kathy Lema

January 18, 2022

Ivan & Ava Siemens
56307 Lily Lake Rd. Sturgeon County

RE: Sturgeon County Agribusiness and Agritourism Review.

Thank you for considering our input regarding the Sturgeon County Agribusiness and Agritourism Review.

BACKGROUND

We have been land owners in Sturgeon County for the past 8 years, and have been residing next door to Prairie Gardens, a significant agritourism operator, for even longer than that. We feel we have valuable experience that is relevant to the "Guiding Principals" used by the Task Force.

There have been many challenges, and it has taken years to reach the fairly peaceable point we are at now. We feel that the bylaw could be a valuable tool in aiding neighbors and agritourism to co-exist and support each other from the beginning.

GENERAL VIEWS OF AGRITOURISM

We acknowledge the important value to the local economy that agritourism provides, as well as the inherent benefits to farmers who wish to diversify their operations. Many agritourism related activities such as corn mazes, pumpkin patch, market gardens, U-pick, and educational tours have minimal impact on neighbors when appropriate practices concerning patron numbers, signage and parking are established. We are in favor of agritourism events being defined separately from agritourism activities. In our experience, while both agritourism activities and events can present noise related challenges, the events tend to take it to a more extreme level.

ISSUES OF CONCERN

- Use of amplified sound at events
- Number of Events
- Proposed hours of operation
- Permitting/Appeal Process

1. <u>Use of amplified Sound at Events</u>

Even with many attempts at establishing a respectful volume for amplified sound (for example, wedding speeches, bands and DJs), we found that even a moderate level of amplification could be heard clearly from a significant distance away. In an outdoor rural setting, there are few physical barriers to contain

disruptive and pervasive sound travel. Unlike a more urban setting there is also minimal competing noise (sirens, vehicles, people in the streets, etc). In our experience, noise that has not been contained could be clearly heard inside our buildings and at the point on our property furthest from the events.

Significant amplified sound is not appropriate in an outdoor setting and should be heavily restricted in any agritourism event bylaw.

2. **Number of Events**

By their nature and association with agriculture, and given the fact that permanent structures can not be built to support them, agritourism events will primarily be booked during the nicer parts of the year.

When the 10 events are compressed into the nicer months, say May to September (20 weekends), these weddings/events now occupy 50% of nice-weather weekends. These are the few weekends in our year that everybody, including the adjacent landowners, want to be outside, enjoying the peace and quiet of the countryside, and enjoying the use of their property. This is not possible when there are frequent, disruptive events.

We would like to see the Task Force revisit this number of events and consider either lowering it or restricting the number of weddings that can be included per year.

3. HOURS OF OPERATION

Allowing agritourism events to continue late into the evening does not ultimately meet the guiding principles laid out by the Task Force. The goal of providing supplementary income to the farm, which is ultimately the primary purpose of agritourism events, can be achieved by focusing on primarily daytime weddings and/or events that don't go past 9 pm. If people want to have late night, DJ hosted dancing and drinking celebrations, we would argue that an open-air rural setting is not the appropriate venue. Neighbors have work, lives and families that are negatively impacted by these events that go to 10pm or 1am regardless of the day of the week.

We would like to see all events end by 9pm unless those events can be contained on the property with regards to noise and other concerns.

4. PERMITTING PROCESS CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS

The way the draft definitions read, only activities deemed "discretionary use" involve adjacent land owners in the permitting process. This appears to not be included under a permitted use. Given our experiences as outlined previously, and given that each scenario can present unique challenges, it is unacceptable for agritourism events to acquire permits without involving neighbors in the process.

Neighbors and neighboring agritourism operators are not always able to come to fair agreements when problems arise relating to the “use, enjoyment, value…” of their properties. These problems are not always apparent until things have operated for some time. There needs to be a way to facilitate conflict resolution and add/remove site specific conditions as needed.

Questions:

1. Could you clarify how adjacent land owners can engage in the permitting process, specifically for Agritourism Events.
2. What is the duration of time event permits are issued for?
3. It appears to only benefit the agritourism/event operators to disallow the opportunity for neighbors to appeal county decisions. Please explain why this point was made.
4. How do you intend to facilitate conflict resolution as issues arise within the time a permit is in place?

Thank you for hearing us and thank you for your time.