

# County supervisors approve Field & Pond event center

By **Anne Ternus-Bellamy** From page A1 | September 14, 2016

WOODLAND — Yolo County supervisors on Tuesday overruled planning commissioners and voted to issue a use permit for the Field & Pond event center and bed-and-breakfast north of Winters.

The decision will allow Dahvie James and Philip Watt to host up to 20 events — primarily weddings — on their Road 29 property every year in addition to operating a nine-room bed-and-breakfast.

During a four-hour hearing on Tuesday — which featured public comment from more than 40 people — the applicants agreed to a number of new conditions suggested by supervisors, including holding events only on Saturdays; ending events by 11 p.m. with music stopping at 10 p.m.; using shuttles to transport guests for all events and not holding events between July 15 and Sept. 15 to accommodate tomato harvesting.

The vote was 4-1 with Supervisors Don Saylor and Jim Provenza of Davis, Matt Rexroad of Woodland and Oscar Villegas of West Sacramento voting in favor of issuing the use permit and Supervisor Duane Chamberlain of the rural 5th District voting against it.

Field & Pond has been at the center of controversy for more than a year, ever since James and Watt first proposed an event center that would host up to 70 events annually. That plan subsequently was trimmed to 35 events, the number that Yolo County Planning Commission members considered last month before denying the use permit.

The annual number of events was reduced again to 20 before the applicants' appeal to the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday.

Opponents, primarily farmers who live on and work fields and orchards along Road 29, said large events at Field & Pond interfere with farming activities, including the ability to use crop dusters, and clog narrow Road 29 with traffic.

Joe Rominger, who grows tomatoes off Road 29, said the increased traffic from Field & Pond would impact his ability to transport his produce off the farm.

“I have 100 employees in spring, summer and fall,” he told supervisors earlier this year. “I don’t want to have to tell those guys they’re going to lose their jobs because of another ill-placed event center.”

His concerns — repeated Tuesday — were echoed by several other farmers, including six other members of the Rominger family.

“Every single adjacent neighbor is opposed to this,” said Bruce Rominger.

And while most of the concerns related to farming operations, another Road 29 resident, Bob Schneider, focused on the environmental impact.

Schneider — senior policy director for the conservation group, Tuleyome — owns a ranch at the end of Road 29 and said his concerns about Field & Pond also involve habitat protection.

“There are lots of good people here on all sides,” Schneider said Tuesday, “but based on current zoning and environmental (reviews), you need to support the Planning Commission.”

However, the lack of clear guidelines by the county on what sorts of event centers are acceptable in Yolo County and what are not posed challenges for supervisors.

James said he repeatedly met with county planners about the Field & Pond proposal, even before purchasing the property on Road 29, and he said he was repeatedly encouraged to move forward.

Several supervisors agreed Tuesday that the county has actively encouraged activities and businesses that promote agritourism — and has approved a number of event centers in the past few years — adding to the difficulty they faced in deciding whether to approve Field & Pond over farmers’ objections.

“The county owns some of this mess,” Villegas said. “We definitely said, ‘Yes, we’re open for business,’ and left some flexibility in there.”

Provenza agreed, saying, “to me, it comes down to an issue of fairness.”

Under existing code, owners of parcels larger than 40 acres may host up to eight paid events per year on their property without obtaining a use permit. Field & Pond has been doing just that, hosting a number of weddings over the last six months, many of which prompted complaints from neighbors to the county about noise and traffic.

Saylor, who said the concerns voiced by opponents “do have merit,” noted that if “we simply deny the permit and say go forward and keep doing what you’re doing without any conditions, then we’re perpetuating a Wild West.”

Instead, supervisors suggested — and the applicants agreed — to the additional conditions prior to the board’s vote.

Those conditions include limiting the number of guests to 150 for most events and allowing up to 300 at four events annually, providing security and other personnel at all events and requiring Field & Pond to obtain written consent from neighbors to host an event during the blackout period running from July 15 to Sept. 15.

— Reach Anne Ternus-Bellamy at [aternus@davisenterprise.net](mailto:aternus@davisenterprise.net) or 530-747-8051. Follow her on Twitter at [@ATernusBellamy](https://twitter.com/ATernusBellamy)