

In addition to my prior memo, (below) I want to make certain that the ZHO sees the movie previously submitted (and sent again with this note) that demonstrate what happens when Webb Ranch is in operation. You will see baby strollers being pushed across Alpine right where cars and trucks are exiting from I-280 at freeway speeds. You will also notice that the pedestrian path and the bike lanes on both sides of Alpine are blocked endangering pedestrians and cyclists. You will also see that the CHP officer is NOT directing traffic on Alpine, but is helping customers find parking spaces on Webb property. I have **repeatedly** asked that there be NO PARKING designations from Ansel Lane to just before the I-280 on ramp. I also want to point out the presence of the yurts which had been there for years until recently removed.

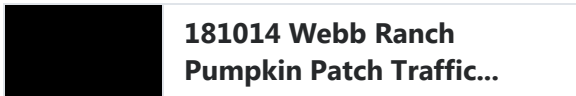
It is disturbing that the ranch and its various activities has been operating for years without an up-to-date Use Permit and no effective county checking until I complained.

I would also point out the crystal clear danger for emergency vehicles. You will notice in the video clip one ambulance trying to negotiate the chaotic traffic.

The Planning Dept. memo indicates that the traffic situation was brought under control. That is NOT so. The Use Permit is asking for permission to undertake a wide variety of unspecified activities from the middle of September to mid January. That is excessive. Recently Public Works spent time and money installing a red zone at Prospect & Alameda where it is entirely NOT needed and where there is no safety issue, yet has done nothing to ameliorate this obviously ultra-hazardous situation which is exacerbated by the frequent parking problems associated with the back entrance to the Dish. Just to reiterate, the parking problems in the video are ALL WEBB RANCH related. In addition, for a Use Permit for the Fruit Stand, Webb needs to get Event Permits for the Pumpkin patch. I object to the Christmas tree function, since these trees are not grown by Webb, but are imported from other locations.

Please find the video at the following link address:

[181014 Webb Ranch Pumpkin Patch Traffic.mp4](#)



If you have any problems viewing the video, please let me know.

COMMENTS ON WEBB RANCH APPLICATION FOR USE PERMIT WITH ADDITIONS

Basis for Comment:

I have lived down the road from Webb for 50+ years and used to shop there all the time, so am familiar with what has happened over the years. My **main** concern is public safety and the owner's commitment and ability to abide by any conditions..

The Planning Dept. Record:

Both the physical file (which I reviewed about a year ago) and the Accela records are such a chaotic mess that it will be hard for the Zoning Hearing Officer to make any sense out of it. It is not made easy given that records for the various and sundry activities at 2720 and 2718 are all mixed up: *fruit stand, Pumpkin Patch/amusement park, Christmas Tree Farm, Brookside Orchids, farming operations/ farm laborer housing, horse boarding/riding, U-pick operations, and a charitable equine activity*. The file also even contained complaints from the Mayor of Portola Valley.

Prior Compliance Issues:

There has been a history of Stop Work Notices and Zoning violations *e.g.* VIOL 2015-00012 (*too many horses*) SWN 98-10060 (*unpermitted greenhouse*) SWN 2014-00109 (*illegal sewer hook up*) SWN 91-0146 (*Mobile homes*) 12/07/17 Zoning Violation (*Christmas Tree operation*) VIOL 2008-00050 (*debris in creek*)

The Accela file shows that multiple permits were taken out but cancelled or expired, and appeared to show that this was because fees were not paid. There was also a large yurt than has since disappeared.

Financial Ability to Comply with any Conditions:

The web stated that on April 16, 2020 Webb Ranch received a very substantial loan from Morgan Stanley.

Validity of any Purported Existing Use Permit:

There was a simple fruit stand in the present location as far back as the 1920s. There have been many subsequent structural modifications and expansion of functions. There was supposedly a Use Permit for the fruit stand granted in 1982. There were no reviews of this permit that I could find in the file and according to the Webb Ranch site that use was abandoned

In 2013, Webb Ranch focused 100% of its farming resources on growing and marketing its California Certified Organic Farmer (CCOF) produce through various outlets. The Farmers Market at Hwy 280 @ Alpine Road stopped offering produce on a daily basis. Webb Ranch went "Back to the Future," to once again provide produce to local farmers markets, grocery stores, and select restaurants

There were also several contemporaneous articles in local newspapers commenting on this, citing traffic problems as I recall.

Continual Expansion of Activities:

Pumpkin Patch: This started off as a simple pumpkin patch, selling organic pumpkins grown on site. Since then it has added:

A petting zoo, a train ride, pony rides, hay rides, a store, a corn maze and a photo stand.

See their website: [Webb Ranch and Farmers Market](#)



Webb Ranch and Farmers Market

Webb Ranch and Farmers Market in Portola Valley, CA has been family owned and run since 1922.

Christmas Tree Farm: These trees are apparently not grown on site but are trucked in

PROBLEMS:

Traffic: Some years ago Alpine Road was a quiet, country road and horses from Webb ranch used to be ridden down to the Stanford Red Barn. Since then, I-280 was built and until Covid, “rush hour” traffic existed most of the day in both directions and was backed up along I-280. Post Covid, the number of vehicles have decreased but the speed has increased. Also, Alpine has become the route of choice for massive construction trucks. Webb Ranch Fruit Stand is located right by the I-280 on/off ramps, just south of a blind curve, the main entrance to all the facilities on Ansel Lane, the back entrance to SLAC and the parking lot for the Dish. The main danger is from vehicles exiting the North bound I-280 onto Alpine at highway speeds.

Visitors to Webb Ranch overflow (or cannot access) the small front parking lot, ignore the back lot (that used to have a notice banning visitors) and park on both sides of Alpine, blocking the bike lanes. Those parked on the east side of Alpine then make a mad dash across two lanes of traffic to Webb Ranch. I have submitted videos of such incidents showing even small children in the road, and cyclists having to veer out into the traffic lane. Cars exiting WR were frequently making U turns across traffic to go towards downtown Menlo Park/Palo Alto. In response to a complaint the county cited them for a zoning violation and found:

*As forwarded to us by email from LisaA, there was a complaint from a neighbor around the traffic problems arising at Webb Ranch (WR) created by their pumpkin sales this past weekend. Cars were parked up near I-280 freeway, on both sides of Alpine Rd, with visitors running across roadways, etc. While the WR UP renewal/amendment has been pending with us, it DOES allow pumpkin sales on weekends. However, none of the last approval conditions included the need for traffic control or coordination with Co. Sheriff or CHP. Lisa, Tiare (project planner) & I met to talk about options to pursue. Upon contacting WR, **Tiare spoke with Al Behr (one of owners, then to Deano (farm stand operator), who confirmed following: 1) this past weekend, traffic on I-280 heading towards Hwy 92 was backed up such that people likely decided to pull off & get their pumpkins from WR instead, 2) WR traffic & parking became problematic when an upper parking lot was not being used to its capacity, 3) traffic WAS being assisted/directed to some degree by CHP. However, Deano assured Tiare that during this weekend & next week, they'll coordinate with CDP to direct/assist with traffic off I-280 & they'll have a WR person dedicated to directing traffic & WR visitors. While their UP does state that it includes the farmhouse stand, pumpkin sales & Xmas tree sales, their actual UP has not yet been amended to formally include the Xmas tree sales. While we'll proceed to renew/amend their present UP, we'll require that they get a Temporary Events Permit for this year's Xmas trees sales.***

The above statement in red at (1) is nonsense. The operation was widely advertised and vehicles were coming from all directions. (2) is an understatement and (3) was not true since the CHP officers were location IN the WR parking lot assisting drivers backing up and turning around. The green statement concerning the “actual” UP is misleading in that even if it did include “pumpkin sales” it most certainly did not include all the other activities that had been added.

The Traffic control requirements shown on Accela *were* totally inadequate:

Traffic Control - CHP

Traffic Control - Webb Ranch Pumpkin Farm - see attached traffic control plan for directing clients in and out of Webb Ranch. Applicant shall provide CA MUTCD signs and flaggers at all times. Permit from Oct 1 thru Oct 31 Saturday and Sundays only from 10 AM - 6 PM

The above have been some augmented by the present conditions. Weekends are also the prime time for cyclists, and CHP presence or not, people were still parking on Alpine and blocking the bike lanes and there were still some U-turns.

Fire:

Several years ago there was a large fire in a greenhouse which caused chaos because the first responders could not locate the hydrants and the fire engines had to run a "bucket brigade" to Bishop Lane to fill their tanks. Last year there were a couple of grass fires in that area. Before that there was a serial arsonist who ignited fires all along Alpine road, Arastradero, the parks, and the entrance to the Dish.

There is now a Building Permit application dated 12/31/2019 (BLDG 2019-02782) which is for a concrete slab for one 500 gal. diesel and one 500 gal. gas tank. This is supposed to be added to the Use Permit!

Nobody in the county seems to have any objection. Since MPFD is usually the first responder to any fires in this area they should certainly be notified of this application.

Given the history of fires, the proximity to a high fire danger zone, heavy traffic and difficulty of evacuation, number of horses and cattle, and the abutting Stanford Weekend Acres subdivision this is of very great concern and has absolutely no business being tacked on to a Use Permit that seeming allows an unlimited number of commercial activities in an area zoned RE.

Covid:

There is little likelihood that the situation will change before the end of the year and a blanket approval is unwarranted.

CONCLUSION:

This application is overly broad. The application as listed on the Agenda is not limited in any way as to **what exactly** is or could be included. The Agenda listing even omits the provision or gas and diesel storage that was supposed to be added. It should also be stated where those storage facilities are to be located. There is no specific provision for fire precautions.

There has to be a NO PARKING designation on the west side of Alpine from Ansel Lane. There also needs to be some structure other than a hay bale and a few cones that prevents left turns out of the parking lot since on-coming 280-bound traffic is approaching from a blind turn usually at high rates of speed.

The above comments are not designed to prevent/limit Webb's business but are to alert the county to the numerous safety issues that have existed and to ensure that sufficient measures are in place to prevent hazards that are apparent to those who live in the area, but may not be that apparent to infrequent observers. Alpine Road is extremely dangerous, especially so for cyclists (one of whom died near WR a few years ago) and for pedestrians. Assuming that the county approves the Use Permit, the first review should be in **one year's time**, not three, so that any necessary adjustments can be made. Plus, it is to be hoped that MPFD be alerted to this application and be given a copy of any conditions since they are the usual first responder.