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Wildwood Community Center  
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**April 20, 2018 (revised submission)**

City of Hood River  
Planning Department at City Hall  
211 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Hood River, OR 97031

**RE: Wildwood Community Center – Conditional Use Permit**

Please accept this narrative as part of my complete proposal and application for a Conditional Use Permit, per the requirements of the City of Hood River. This proposal is to convert the use of parts of the existing building located at 13 Railroad Street from a winery, tasting room, and associated storage facility to a Community Center that will include an event center (that will continue being used very similarly to the way it has been) with the addition of an independent school, (2) additional bathrooms in the basement, a movement studio, an art room, a pottery studio, music rooms, as well as a small amount of storage and common areas. We believe that an approved permit for these uses will not only continue to host a wonderful community event commonly known as ‘Tuesday Night at the Ruins’, but will add more space in which the community can gather, teach, learn, enrich, celebrate and connect year round.

**Background**

The history of the buildings located at 13 Railroad Street is long and diverse. Originally built as a cannery in 1914 for the Cloud-Newton Company, the main building (Western existing structure) was shut down within about 6 months due to a shortage of labor. It re-opened about a year later as the Hood River Canning Company. The eastern attached building, commonly known as The Ruins, was constructed sometime in the mid-1920’s when the canning company greatly increased its size and capacity with a roadway coming straight down from a cold storage house on State Street, as well as obtaining its own railroad spur. (Courtesy History Museum of Hood River County) Over the next 90+ years, the buildings changed hands and went through numerous renovations, most recently serving the Matthisens as a winery, tasting room, storage, and event center known as Springhouse Cellars and The Ruins.

In searching for a home for a new school concept that will provide student led, thematic based education to middle school aged kids in Hood River and surrounding areas, my partner Joe O’Neill and I came across the Springhouse Cellars building for sale. Initially it seemed too large, too expensive and had too many challenges to make this space work as a school, but we kept

coming back. We wanted a place on the edge of downtown so that the students can connect and the facility could partner with local businesses. We wanted access to green space, water, and nature for health, well-being, and learning opportunities. We wanted to be able to walk to a nature trail, SUP on a river, or bike to a destination from our front doors. We wanted physical space to grow, space to be creative, and space to be flexible. We wanted our students to be able to walk to our wonderful public library or to an internship they have with the numerous and diverse group of local businesses. We wanted to create community within the school, but not exclusive of the school. We wanted to have a real business that the students could use as an on-going case study. We wanted to have break-out spaces where specialists could come in and teach daily lessons or intensive seminars in mindful movement, music, art, theater, performance, dance, etc. to the students and the community at large. The more we looked at the Springhouse Cellars building, the more it became the perfect solution to all of these desires....and much, much more.

In December of 2017, I got the property under contract to purchase and began the journey down this path. Our idea and concept had grown. We were not just going to create a new, independent middle school; we are going to create a new *community center* in this little corner of the City of Hood River. We realized that having a community center that houses a school, an event center, and a host of other all-ages education, health, and fitness classes work very well together. There will be multiple entrances and acoustical separations so that numerous activities can happen at the same time. We will continue the tradition of Tuesday Nights at the Ruins, with the added ability to include a place for kids to go in the 'Down Under' spaces, while the adults enjoy live music, food, beer and wine. We envision increasing the early evening offerings in the event center to include educational lectures, family game nights, open mic nights, teen nights, etc. We intend on improving the landscaping (mainly through deferred maintenance) and functionality of the Ruins for weddings and other outdoor summer parties. Best of all, our original vision of Wildwood Academy will have a home, complete with synergistic partners and spaces all under the same roof.

We anticipate Wildwood Academy having 2 full-time instructors with 2 or 3 part-time (a few hours per week) specialists. The school will operate during typical Hood River County middle school hours and days. Peak traffic times for the school will be during drop off (between 7:45 and 8:30 am) and pickup (between 3:15 and 3:45). School will actually start at 8:25am, however our early drop off option for parents that need to be at work by 8:00am will help to spread this peak drop off time out. Similarly, our after school activities and classes in the basement (Wildwood Down Under) will help to spread out the peak pickup times. Further, our multiple site access points (State street sidewalk and Railroad Street), our proximity to Hood River neighborhoods and the excellent walk ability of downtown Hood River will all help to mitigate these peak times and allow and encourage kids to walk, bike, and/or carpool to and from school. For an alternate, more academic view, please see our attached Traffic Analysis Letter (Exhibit 'A').

Wildwood Events will employ (1) full-time General Manager and up to 4 part-time employees depending on the needs of a particular event. Peak times will mostly be in the evenings and

weekends. Small events will continue year round, typically in the evenings. These would include private parties, hosted events, and activities put on by the school. Small events anticipate 10 to 30 vehicles. Medium sized events, like fundraisers, farmer's markets, craft fairs, etc., will continue and typically span a longer periods of time often with vehicles coming and going throughout. Medium events anticipate 30 to 100 vehicles). Large events are very seasonal and will take place during the summer months mainly. These will include weddings on Saturdays and Sundays and music events on Tuesdays and Fridays primarily. These large events will continue to be coordinated with the Railroad to ensure that there is enough parking available and that they do not conflict with scheduled Railroad events (typically only around the winter holidays, where there is no impact or conflict). Large events can have up to 160 vehicles, which can be fully accommodated within the Railroad parking facility.

Wildwood Down Under will have up to 7 contract employees, however it is unlikely that all 7 educational spaces will be used simultaneously. There will certainly be opportunities for community classes to be happening during school hours, but we anticipate that the peak hours of operation will be from after school from about 3:30 until 6:30. Many kids will simply stay after school to attend these classes and activities. We anticipate 5 to 10 vehicles at any one time being parked for these activities, as most classes will be geared towards middle school children and will be drop off and/or pick up mainly.

### **Conditional Use Approval Criteria**

#### *Impact:*

The future Wildwood Community Center (currently Springhouse Cellars) is located in a relatively remote NE corner of the City of Hood River at the East end of Railroad Street and 50' or so below State Street to the North. There is very minimal pedestrian or vehicle activity around the existing building or site, except for that brought in by an event hosted within the Springhouse Cellars facility, from railroad employees and workers, or the occasional large railroad event (only about 15 per year). With the tasting room and winery in Springhouse Cellar being replaced by a school and community education/activity rooms, we anticipate a more consistent traffic pattern, as opposed to the existing seasonal and tourist driven traffic pattern. The event component of the building will operate very similar to the way it has been in the past few years. We expect no additional noise, pollutants, or other disruptions of any kind.

Wildwood Academy anticipates about 30 to 35 students initially with a max of 48 in the current plan. Wildwood Events will have extremely varied attendees/occupants depending on the event scheduled. Minimum events of small parties of 12 or so, maximum events would include a large wedding (160 occupant max) or a hosted music event (350 occupant max).

Direct neighbors surrounding the future Wildwood Community Center include the following:

- **Railroad Parking lots** to the North, East, and Northwest. We have been in constant communication with Ron Kaufman, Railroad General Manager, about the impacts that

Wildwood will have on the railroad. We believe that we have significantly improved this neighborly relationship and are happily partnering with the railroad on many parking lot improvements. We maintain an easement from the railroad for access. We have successfully negotiated an on-going parking lease and space-share relationship (addressed in more detail in a later section). We will contribute towards the design, permitting, and hopeful eventual addition of added safety and security measures surrounding the parking lots in the form of addition fencing along the railroad tracks, additional lighting, improved landscaping and maintenance, re-engineering of space planning, and potential metering.

- **Big Winds** to the West. We have also been in on-going communication with Steve Gates and Mark Ames, both owners of Big Winds, about the positive impacts Wildwood Community Center will have on their business. Big Winds is the easternmost retail business in the downtown Hood River area. They have commented that they routinely see tourists and potential customers stop walking East along Oak street close to Ground Coffee and where The Kayak Shed used to be, pause, look to see what else is to see, then turn around and head back West. By having another destination to the East, foot traffic will undoubtedly increase. The further encourage additional foot traffic by Big Winds, we are proposing to put a stairwell from State Street down to the back of the new Wildwood Community Center for easier pedestrian access. This would bring people right by Big Winds front door when walking to an evening event, a lesson of some sort, or the daily route to school.
- **State Street**, maintained by ODOT, to the South. We see no negative impact to State Street or the sidewalk that runs parallel to State Street on the North side. It is our hope that there will be slightly increased traffic along that sidewalk, as students and patrons will have the ability to walk directly from the Eastern end of downtown to Wildwood Community Center. There exists a city parking lot directly adjacent to this proposed sidewalk addition (as depicted on the included survey sheet) and another city lot diagonally across State Street to the southwest. These parking lots could be used for a fee by the hour or for free after 6:00pm. In telephone and email discussions with an ODOT representative, it was determined that a permit will not be required to make this perpendicular connection to the State Street sidewalk (see Exhibit 'E')

In summary, the approval criteria mainly discusses impacts in a negative light and asks for a description of how this conditional use approval will negatively impact abutting properties. On the contrary, we feel that the addition of Wildwood Community Center will add value, positive pedestrian traffic, and increase good neighbor relations.

*Nuisance:*

As discussed above, we anticipate no negative impacts or off-site nuisance conditions in any way, including, but not limited to, noise, glare, odor, or vibrations. We will not increase noise in any way from how the events are currently operated. We will be adding skylights to the roof of the building to increase natural light and ventilation, but these skylights will be well shaded from view by the existing trees, which we fully intend to preserve, thereby eliminating the

concern of glare. We will decrease odors by eliminating the wine making business, which employ fermentation processes and generate organic byproducts that decompose and stink. There will be no vibrations generated from within the building or on the site.

*Plan Consistency:*

We firmly believe that the Wildwood Community Center is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Hood River and adheres to the requirements of the zoning ordinance. Specifically, as related to the Comprehensive Plan:

Goal 2:

- Maintain the quality of air, water, and land resources of the planning area.
- Conserve and protect resources.
- Diversity and improve the economy.
- Develop public facilities and services.
- Satisfy recreational needs.

Goal 5:

- To conserve historic and scenic resources.
- To establish trails, greenways and wildlife corridors that are interconnected.
- To encourage environmental awareness so that citizens will become stewards of our natural resources.
- Provide (or maintain) vegetation and woody debris that serve as habitat and nesting areas for a variety of aquatic animals, birds and mammals.

Goal 8:

- To satisfy the recreational needs of the citizens of the community and visitors to the area.

Goal 9:

- To diversify and improve the economy of the Hood River planning areas.
- To preserve and promote a livable community.
- To accommodate the need for expansion of new and existing businesses.

Goal 13:

- To conserve energy and encourage the use of renewable energy resources.
- Commercial development in clusters near residential areas and along arterials is encouraged.
- Multiple uses of public buildings shall be encouraged.

Goal 14:

- Preserve farm land and open space resources outside the UGB.

- Make more efficient use of local tax dollars and maximize energy savings in locating facilities and providing services within the Urban Growth Area.
- Preserve and enhance the livability of the area.

*Scale:*

The scale of the buildings in relation to the site will be virtually unchanged. Minor improvements will be made to the exterior of the building and surrounding site (mainly deferred maintenance), but nothing drastic enough to jeopardize the physical capability of the site.

*Transportation:*

This proposal will not require additional transportation facilities as it will not create a significant impact on existing facilities.

*Landscaping:*

There will be very minimal change to the natural landscape that exists primarily on the South and East sides of the existing building. We intend on pruning all of the deadwood from the existing trees (primarily maple and oak), removing debris, and generally cleaning the area up along the North and East sides of the existing building. In an effort to create easier access to the building from downtown Hood River, we intend on putting a sidewalk path with associated stairs extending from the point where our property touches State Street sidewalk and winding down through the forest to the building's existing back door. While design and permitting is not yet complete, our intention is for this path to seem more like a small nature trail or walk through the woods, than an urban city sidewalk.

**Site Plan Review Criteria**

*Natural Features:*

As mentioned above, we will put forth every effort to not only preserve the natural features that currently exist on the property, but we will be improving the health and viability of the site and creating more accessible and less impactful access to these natural resources by the general public by creating a trail through the woods as a secondary means of ingress/egress. We have the utmost respect for the abundance of natural features that we are inheriting with the purchase of the site and will strive to protect and improve them at every step. As a community and learning center, we make efforts to educate and celebrate these resources at every opportunity. The lush vegetative buffer that currently exists between the building and State Street, as well as the building and our neighbor to the West (Big Winds) is an asset to be valued indeed.

*Air Quality:*

Our use of the building and surrounding site will have no adverse impact on air quality. Conversely, with the abundance on trees currently existing and intending to be preserved, this site has a positive impact to the air quality.

*Grading:*

The minimal grading and earth moving that we intend on undertaking will have no adverse effect on neighboring properties, public rights-of-way, or the public storm drainage system. We only intend on minimal regarding of a small area outside of the new basement entry to accommodate ADA accessibility and a more inviting courtyard entry area, as well as the before mentioned pathway through the forest from the back of the existing building up to and meeting the State Street sidewalk. Both of these grading projects will utilize appropriate erosion control measures and be constructed during the dry summer months to eliminate the concern of erosion.

*Public Facilities:*

No change to the current uses or adequate capacities of public facilities for water, sanitary sewers, storm drainage, fire protection, streets, and sidewalks is anticipated.

*Traffic and Circulation:*

Please see attached Traffic Assessment Letter (Exhibit A) prepared by Ferguson & Associates, Inc., an Oregon licensed Traffic Engineer, as well as sheet A0.5 in the plan set.

*Storage:*

There will be no outdoor storage areas or garbage collection areas. Normal weekly garbage service to the building will be via a 90 gallon trash roll cart kept in the basement storage area and a 60 gallon recycle bin kept in the school copy room. Janitorial service will collect garbage throughout the building daily and transport to the appropriate roll cart. Roll carts will be put out for weekly pickup as scheduled by the local garbage service. Garbage generated by events held will be hauled off site by the appropriate caterer or food vendor.

*Equipment Storage:*

The current plan and intent is to add no additional outdoor mechanical units to the building. We will utilize the existing units in place and add indoor furnaces and HRVs for addition heating and ventilation requirements and needs.

*Compatibility:*

There will be no significant changes to the exterior of the building or expansion plans associated with this proposal, outside of deferred maintenance.

*Design:*

There will be very minimal changes to the exterior of the building or expansion plans associated with this proposal, outside of deferred maintenance. The exception to this statement is the addition of a second means of egress from 'The Ruins' courtyard via a new set of stairs in the SW corner of The Ruins and pathway leading around the back and West sides of the existing building out to the parking lot. These items are still under design, but will have minimal impact on the exterior appearance of the building. The second means of egress from The Ruins was actually a requirement that was brought to my attention by the fire marshal during our Pre-application meeting. We do not intend on adding any additional exterior lighting to the building. We do not intend to add any additional signage to the building, with the exception of changing the name on the front (North) façade of the building from the existing "Springhouse Cellar Winery & Tasting Room" to "Wildwood Events & Academy", similar to that depicted on sheet A2.1 in the plan set.

*Orientation:*

There will be no changes to the exterior of the building or expansion plans associated with this proposal. The existing building faces north, towards the existing parking lot.

*Parking:*

The site currently enjoys 6 parking spots on the property. The intent is to add one additional, paved (permeable asphalt) parking stall adjacent to the new basement entry. The rest of the parking for Wildwood Community Center's needs will come via shared use of the large parking lot currently owned by the Mt. Hood Railroad Co. While an executed and signed lease has not yet been obtained, a verbal agreement of terms and conditions has been reached and outlined on sheet A0.5 of the plan set. We will be leasing approximately 35 parking spaces for exclusive use and shared use (overflow as needed and scheduled) of the entire parking lot from the Railroad.

*Easements:*

A perpetual, non-exclusive ingress and egress easement granted by Mt. Hood Railroad has been included with the purchase of the subject property. This easement is attached to this proposal, as backup documentation (Exhibit B).

A new easement for emergency egress around the West side of our building has been successfully negotiated with our neighbors immediately to the West, Big Winds (Exhibit 'D').

This easement is currently in the process of being drafted by a surveyor and attorney and will be executed and presented prior to final approval of this Conditional Use Proposal.

*Neighborhood Meeting:*

In compliance with the requirement of the Planning Director, we held a Neighborhood Meeting on March 22, 2018 in an effort to further inform and present to adjacent property owners and neighborhood representatives our intent in transforming the existing Springhouse Cellars business into Wildwood Community Center. While I have already been in consistent and on-going contact with all three of our immediate neighbors, the opportunity to share our vision with other immediate neighbors and receive feedback was successful and fun. Please see a copy of the mailed out neighborhood meeting letter. I gathered neighboring property owner addresses from the Planning Department, mailed all invitations required, submitted the Neighborhood Meeting Affidavit of Mailing, held the meeting, and submitted the attendance roster per requirements (all included in Exhibit C). No negative comments were received.

*Conclusion:*

We believe that the benefits of issuing a Conditional Use Permit for Wildwood Community Center, complete with a new school, community spaces for classes and activities, and the on-going successes of the current event center will be far greater than any potentially negative impacts or eventualities. We also believe that the Wildwood Community Center will further the purpose and intent of the City's Comprehensive Plan.