

# Re-working of special event review gets “green light”

Friday, August 10, 2012 *The Valley Springs News*

By Nick Baptista

Calaveras County ordinances dealing with special events will undergo revisions as the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and public weighed in on the issue at a special meeting Thursday.

Special events should receive the “right incentives for doing good and the right disincentives for screwing up,” District 2 Supervisor Steve Wilensky said as the county planning department received the green light to tweak the zoning code.

Recent events such as the Wood Whomp festival near Mountain Ranch and the Bump concert at Lake Tulloch have drawn the wrath of residents and prompted the county to take a look at the ordinance.

In addition, county Planning Director Rebecca Willis said some of the county codes are overly bureaucratic for simple events and charities.

She outlined a three-tiered approach to better distinguish simple events from complex events.

A simple event was defined as a Christmas tree lot or fireworks stand. It would include a 15-minute over the counter review and a fee of \$25 or less.

Medium events were characterized as car shows, festivals, carnivals, bike races or live music. They would go to staff for a 30-day Administrative Use Permit review and subject to a \$100 fee.

Large-scale events, such as major concerts, would need a conditional use permit with a four- to six-month process, public hearing and \$4,764 in fees.

County officials and the public said adoption of a noise ordinance is a key component in dealing with special events. The proposed noise ordinance is being worked on at the staff level before coming back to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

There was also discussion to waive fees and reviews of the county’s traditional events, such as Kid’s Day in Valley Springs or Lumberjack Day in West Point.

The board and planning commission heard about tales of 72 hours of continuous music and drum beating, drug use, public intoxication, trespassing and health issues stemming from the Wood Whomp, which the county and sheriff’s department were unable to address because of the lack of enforceable ordinances.

In addition to heavy fines, Wilensky suggested the sheriff’s department and other public agencies should also have the power to charge organizers of such an events for expenses in the form of staff time and materials.

Planning staff was encouraged to work with community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau, business associations, agricultural coalition to develop special event criteria that will enhance business opportunities and economic growth.