

STAFF REPORT

HEARINGS: Planning & Zoning Commission: November 10, 2025
Board of County Commission: January 6, 2026
Board of County Commission: March 3, 2026

APPLICANT: Steven Berry and Christina Berry

FILE NUMBER: SE-25-14

REQUEST: Special Exception Use Permit for a Place of Public Assembly, namely, a Venue for Special Events

GENERAL LOCATION: East side of Culbreath Road, approximately one (1) mile east along Mizelle Road

PARCEL KEY NUMBER: 1497213

APPLICANT'S REQUEST:

The petitioner is requesting approval of a Special Exception Use Permit to allow for a Place of Public Assembly, specifically to operate a venue for special events.

The subject property consists of 19.6 acres. The applicant proposes utilizing approximately 5 acres of the site to host weddings during the fall and spring months. It is anticipated that approximately 10 to 15 events per year will be conducted.

An existing wooden pole barn, located on the west side of the property, will serve as the primary event structure. The barn is equipped with running water, one restroom/apartment area, fire extinguishers mounted throughout, and three garage doors to function as fire exits. The applicant further proposes the use of the surrounding grounds for event-related activities, including canopies/tents and mobile restroom facilities.

Access & Parking:

Access to the site is provided from Culbreath Road and via the private paved roadway, Mizell Road, which serves as the parcel's address. Parking will be accommodated within a designated grass area adjacent to Mizell Road, measuring approximately 50 feet by 80 feet, with capacity for 20 - 30 vehicles. Additional capacity may be provided within adjacent unused portions of the parcel, if necessary. Paved asphalt spaces adjacent to the barn will provide accessible/handicap parking. The applicant estimates that no more than 30 trips per event will be generated.

Operations:

Events will operate seasonally during the fall and spring months, with activities permitted between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Setup and site tours will occur during the week, while events will primarily take place on weekends. A maximum of 50 attendees per event is proposed. No staff will be employed, as the property owners intend to personally manage the events. Event services such as catering, photography, and music will be provided by third-party vendors contracted directly by event clients.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS:

Site Size:	19.6 acres
Surrounding Zoning & Land Uses:	North: AG (Agricultural); Mobile Home South: AG (Agricultural); Undeveloped East: AG (Agricultural); Single Family West: AG (Agricultural); Single Family
Current Zoning:	AG (Agricultural)
Future Land Use Map Designation:	Rural

UTILITIES REVIEW:

The Hernando County Utilities Department (HCUD) has indicated that the County does not currently supply water or sewer service to this parcel. Water and sewer service are not available to this parcel. HCUD has no objection to the requested special exception to host 10 to 15 weddings a year on a portion of the 20-acre parcel.

ENGINEERING & TRANSPORTATION REVIEW:

The subject site is located on the east side of Culbreath Road, approximately one (1) mile east along Mizelle Road. Access to the site is proposed via Culbreath Road, and the private paved roadway, Mizelle Road. The County Engineer has reviewed the request and has no comments, provided that the traffic generation remains below thirty (30) vehicles per event.

LAND USE REVIEW:**Setbacks**

Existing Building Setbacks:

Front: 75'
Side: 35'
Rear: 50'

Comments: The proposed tent and any other amenities related to the special events must meet the minimum setback requirements of the Agricultural District.

The petitioner has not proposed any additional structures at the present time. Any future expansions related to the special events must meet the minimum building setbacks and will require an amendment to the Special Exception Use Permit.

Parking

County LDRs require minimum off-street parking ratios based on the type of use and/or overall square footage.

Comment: The required parking ratio for Public Assembly and Recreation uses is 0.3 spaces per seat/person. The petitioner has proposed that attendance will be limited to 50 guests, a minimum of 15 parking spaces is required. The petitioner has proposed accommodation for 20 to 30 vehicles, exceeding the minimum requirement. Parking is proposed within an existing grass pasture area, with capacity for expansion if warranted. Additional paved asphalt spaces located adjacent to the barn have been designated for handicapped-accessible parking. The petitioner shall ensure that attendance does not exceed the property's available parking capacity. Parking within the public right-of-way is prohibited.

Lighting

County LDRs require lighting that enhances the visual impact of the project on the community and to specifically address lighting intensity levels and glare accordingly. Commercial buildings and projects shall be designed to provide safe, convenient, and efficient lighting for pedestrians and vehicles.

Comments: The petitioner has indicated the use of portable light towers for the subject property. If approved, lighting should be designed with cutoff fixtures in order to retain all light on-site and prevent any light spillage onto neighboring properties.

A Special Exception Use Permit is an additional use which may be granted by the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) in accordance with the LDRs. As part of the review, the P&Z must determine that the tract of land is suitable for the type of special exception use proposed by virtue of its location, shape, topography, and nature of surrounding development. The P&Z has the ability to assign reasonable conditions to the approval.

The Special Exception Use Permit is a land use determination only. All applicable development rules would have to be met if the permit is approved. Furthermore, the Special Exception Use Permit shall be in compliance with the minimum Special Exception Use General Standards, Appendix A, Article V, Section 8(B) of the Hernando County Code.

If a developer fails to obtain a building permit for the vertical construction of the principal or primary building or the special exception use is not established within a period of not more than two (2) years from the approval date, then the Special Exception Use Permit shall be null and void.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW:

The subject property is located within the Rural land use classification on the adopted Future Land Use Map and is characterized by agricultural lots.

Rural Category

Objective 1.04C: The Rural Category allows agriculture, agricultural commercial, agri-industrial, recreation, agritourism and residential land uses of a rural character. Certain neighborhood commercial uses may be allowed subject to locational criteria and performance standards. Residential density is 0.1 dwelling units per gross acre (1 unit per ten gross acres) except where otherwise indicated by the strategies listed herein and incorporated into the land development regulations.

Agricultural Lands Retention Strategies

Objective 1.04E: Agricultural pursuits are recognized as an important part of the economy and culture of Hernando County. The retention of agriculture will be pursued through multiple strategies in order to support traditional agriculture and changes in agricultural trends.

Strategy 1.04E(3): The review of development proposals in rural lands may include identification of productive farmland and agricultural operations in close proximity to the proposed development to ensure the compatibility of the proposed development with existing and potential agricultural operations and to minimize potential land use conflicts.

Comments: The subject property is situated in a rural area characterized by large agricultural tracts, on the east side of Culbreath Road. The petitioner proposes to host 10 to 15 events annually. The proposed use is compatible with the surrounding area, provided it is subject to appropriate performance conditions.

FINDING OF FACTS:

The request for Special Exception Use Permit for a Place of Public Assembly, a venue for Special Events, is appropriate based on the following conclusions:

1. The request is consistent with the County's adopted Comprehensive Plan and is compatible with the surrounding land uses.
2. The proposed use is compatible with the area and not adverse to the public interest subject to compliance with all performance conditions

NOTICE OF APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITY:

The special exception process is a land use determination and does not constitute a permit for either construction on, or use of, the property, or a Certificate of Concurrency. Prior to use of, or construction on, the property, the petitioner must receive approval from the appropriate County department(s) for the proposed use.

The granting of this land use determination does not protect the owner from civil liability for recorded deed restrictions which may exceed any county land use ordinances. Homeowner associations or architectural review committees require submission of plans for review and approval. The applicant for this land use request should contact the local association or the Public Records for all restrictions applicable to this property.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Planning and Zoning Commission approve the petitioner's request for a Special Exception Use Permit for a Place of Public Assembly, namely, a venue for special events, with the following performance conditions:

1. The petitioner must obtain all permits from Hernando County and other applicable agencies and meet all applicable land development regulations, for either construction or use of the property, and complete all applicable development review processes.
2. Minimum Building Setbacks:
Front: 75'
Side: 35'
Rear: 50'
3. The petitioner shall designate on-site areas for parking. Parking areas may include alternative paving techniques as approved by the Zoning Administrator.
4. Full cutoff fixtures shall be used so that all light is retained on-site and spillage onto neighboring residential uses is avoided.
5. The number of events shall not exceed fifteen (15) per calendar year.
6. Weddings shall be limited to Saturday and Sunday between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 pm.
7. Customer setup and tours shall be limited to Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
8. Any future expansions or changes related to the special events, or the construction of any new buildings shall require an amendment to the special exception use permit.
9. Adequate restroom facilities in accordance with the requirements of the Health Department shall be provided for all events.

10. The trip generation associated with each event shall not exceed thirty (30) vehicle trips per event.
11. Attendance for each event shall be limited to a maximum of fifty (50) persons.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION ACTION

On November 10, 2025, the Planning and Zoning Commission voted 3-2 to deny the petitioner's request for a Special Exception Permit for a Place of Public Assembly, namely, a Venue for Special Events.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ACTION

On January 6, 2026, the Board of County Commissioners voted 5-0 to rehear the petitioner's request for a Special Exception Permit for a Place of Public Assembly, namely, a Venue for Special Events.