



DESOTO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

CASE INFORMATION

Application No.: LDR-0010-2025

Request: Privately Initiated Amendment to the Land Development Regulations (LDR) to allow commercial camping in the Agricultural 10 (A-10) zoning district.

Applicant: Joseph Minore
5587 NE River Ridge Ave.
Arcadia, FL 34266

Prepared by: G. Street/M. Servia

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW REPORT

The applicant requests changing LDR Sec. 20-126 (1).a. 14. to include for-profit / commercial primitive tent camping as well as free camping in the A-10 zoning district.

I. OVERVIEW

DeSoto County's Land Development Regulations (LDRs) provide for specific zoning in the unincorporated portions of the County. This includes various zoning districts that provide for specific permitted uses and those available by special exception application, which have additional criteria and regulations. Primitive tent camping is a permitted use in the Agricultural 10 (A-10) zoning district.

Specifically, included in the permitted uses listed in Section 20-126 (1) a.14 of the A-10 zoning district is

14. *Primitive tent camping for recreational, noncommercial purposes, that:*

- (i) *Is provided to the general public without a fee;*
- (ii) *Is provided to the general public without any associated water and/or sanitary facilities or improvements;*
- (iii) *Has a maximum of two primitive camping sites per acre; and*
- (iv) *Is limited to no more than seven days per calendar month per campsite.*

The requirements appear to restrict the size of primitive campgrounds to align with the intent of the A-10 zoning district by limiting the potential impacts to neighboring properties and helping to prevent incompatible uses.

The applicant is requesting to amend this language to allow commercial primitive tent camping (charge fees) on eligible properties within the A-10 zoning district.

II. DATA & ANALYSIS

The following are the applicants' proposed amendments to the DeSoto County Land Development Regulations and are shown in a strike-thru and underline format.

Sec. 20-126. - Agricultural 10 District (A-10).

The intent of the Agricultural 10 District (A-10) is primarily agricultural, pastoral, the extraction or processing of non-phosphate minerals, and low-density residential development. This district is designed to accommodate traditional agricultural uses and conservatory measures, where appropriate, while protecting the rural areas of the County. The regulations in this district are intended to permit a reasonable use of the property, at a gross density of one dwelling per ten acres. At the same time, the intent is to prevent the creation of conditions which would endanger damage or destroy the agricultural base of the County, the environmental resources of the County, the potable water supply and the wildlife resources. The first priority of this district is agricultural uses.

(1) Uses and structures. No building or structure, or part thereof, shall be erected, altered or used, or land used, in whole or in part, for other than the following:

a. Permitted uses and structures (allowable without the need for any other use or structure).

14. Primitive tent camping for recreational, noncommercial purposes, that:

(i) Is provided to the general public without a fee;

Is provided to the general public with a fee;

(ii) Is provided to the general public without any associated water and/or sanitary

facilities or improvements;

(iii) Has a maximum of two primitive camping sites per acre; ~~and~~

(iv) Is limited to no more than seven days per calendar month per campsite; -

(v) Is provided to the general public with a fee. Peace River Flood Plain Zone only. Proof of liability and property damage insurance required.

Definitions

The following are relevant definitions from the LDRs, which provide some background on how campgrounds and campsites are defined:

Campground means land containing two or more campsites which are located, established, or maintained for use or occupancy by people in temporary living quarters, such as tents, recreational vehicles, or cabins, for recreation, education, or vacation purposes, with water and/or sanitary facilities, and for which a fee may be charged for such use or occupancy.

Campsite means a plot of ground within a campground intended for the exclusive occupancy by a cabin, recreational vehicle, or tent but which is not intended for permanent living quarters.

Staff Recommendation

Whether or not to allow camping in these areas for pecuniary gain is a policy decision of the Board. Should the Board agree with the applicant's desire to collect a fee for camping, staff recommends the following language:

14. Primitive tent camping for recreational, commercial or noncommercial purposes, that:

(i) Is provided to the general public with or without a fee;

Any sanitary facilities needed will be regulated by the Florida Department of Health, and staff recommends the following:

(ii) Is provided to the general public ~~without any~~ meeting any associated water and/or sanitary facilities or improvements required by the Florida Department of Health;

(iii) Has a maximum of two primitive camping sites per acre; ~~and~~

(iv) Is limited to no more than seven days per calendar month per campsite;

The Applicant's proposed new language for Section 14.(v) suggests limiting all primitive tent camping in the A-10 district to the "Peace River Flood Plain Zone" only. It is staff's opinion that the focus should be on the safety of all campers and nearby residents, and recommends the following language:

(v) Must conform to all Federal, State, and County zoning, flood, environmental, and open burning (campfire) regulations.

Add the following definition to Chapter 20, Article XII, Section 20-1650 of the DeSoto County Code of Ordinances:

Primitive Camping means overnight occupancy of tents at designated primitive campsite facilities. Primitive campsite facilities are sites that are only accessible by non-motorized or minimally powered means, and contain only basic site improvements, such as fire rings, cleared tent pads, and picnic tables.

Other Jurisdictions

As a part of reviewing the application, staff compared primitive camping regulations in other jurisdictions; however, it was challenging assessing an apples-to-apples comparison:

- Charlotte County
 - Campgrounds allowed in Ag zoning by Special Exception and Concept Plan via Board of Zoning Appeals (hearing)
 - Campgrounds are considered 2 or more tent sites
 - Clarifies these are for profit businesses
 - Defines primitive campground to include office, general storage (convenience food store) and central bathhouse with utilities
- Hardee County
 - 5 or more tent sites must be in RV Park district
 - RV Park / Campground not permitted in Agriculture zoning district
- Hendry County
 - Hunting camp permitted in Ag zoning
 - RV parks are considered commercial uses and include camping
 - Camping not clearly defined as a recreational use
- Highlands County
 - No campsites in Agriculture zoning
- Hillsborough County
 - Camps allowed in Agriculture zoning district

- 10 campers = one dwelling unit; must be large enough parcel to meet the density requirements of the Comprehensive Plan for the equivalent number of dwelling units or the minimum requirements of the Zoning District in which it is located.
- Manatee
 - Campgrounds are considered commercial uses (includes RV parks in definition)
 - Allowed in Agricultural zoning but must be located on thoroughfare road within 1,500 feet of intersection of another thoroughfare road
 - Passive recreation includes low impact camping and is allowed in Ag zoning.
 - More than twenty-five (25) spaces for park trailers, recreational vehicles, and/or camping sites require the provision of an emergency storm shelter building.

Development Review Process for a Campground

It is also important to note the development review process for any proposed campgrounds.

Any proposed campground today is required to receive Board of County Commissioners development plan approval in addition to any specific permits (e.g., ROW, fire, building, FEMA Floodplain, etc.). Approval of the LDR amendment will not change this procedure.

If the subject amendment is adopted to allow for commercial primitive camping in the A-10 district, approval of a Development Plan by the Board will be required followed by an administratively approved Improvement Plan. Both applications will be reviewed by the staff at the county and applicable state departments, including the County Engineer, Utilities Dept., Planning & Zoning Division, Public Safety, Building Dept., Code Enforcement, FDOT, County Floodplain Manager, and the Health Dept.

If the property is located within the Conservation Overlay District or has onsite wetlands, an Environmental Report will be required which includes wetland delineation and a listed species analysis.

III. MOTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Motion to adopt the Land Development Regulations amendment, as requested by the applicant.

2. Motion to adopt the Land Development Regulations amendment, as recommended by staff.
3. Motion to deny the Land Development Regulations amendment.
4. Motion to Table the Land Development Regulations amendment.

IV. PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULE

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- Planning Commission: July 7, 2026
Recommendation of Approval by a vote of 3-1
- Board of County Commissioners: July 28, 2026