

October 4, 2016

Blaine County Planning & Zoning Commission
219 1st Ave S Ste. 208
Hailey, ID. 83333

Blaine County Planning & Zoning Commission:

There's a beautiful place in the heart of Idaho, and it is called Camp Rainbow Gold. It's a place where cancer does not rule, but being a child does. It's a place where children have an inner light, an incredible viewpoint of life and wisdom beyond their years. It's an oncology camp, a sibling camp and a family camp. It's a teen support group and a college scholarship program. It's a partnership with more than 400 volunteers who help run our programs. It's a partnership with St. Luke's Children's Hospital, including MSTI Pediatrics. It's a partnership with our Idaho community.

For the full 35-year history of our program, Camp Rainbow Gold has leased camps in Idaho in order to provide a retreat for Idaho's children diagnosed with cancer and their families. These year-to-year leases have led Camp Rainbow Gold to face a number of challenges and limitations due to non-ownership of the land and camp facilities. In addition, neither of our current camp properties are designed with medically fragile children in mind, leaving Camp Rainbow Gold to retro-fit them each year to accommodate most campers. Furthermore, currently leased properties require campers to leave site for activities, increasing liability. These elements have reached a level that our programs are now being designed by outside factors. There is opportunity to develop new programs, enhance current programs and reach more Idaho families. Our need to grow will not be in number of attendees each week but rather in more sessions. This can only be done with a permanent home.

Over a year ago, we began the search for land to build our forever home. After exploring and evaluating multiple properties, the property at 708 East Fork was identified – a property that fits our criteria for a permanent camp. Located in the Wood River Valley, this property is within a reasonable distance to St Luke's medical facilities that will provide the support needed as defined by our medical team. The size and quality of the property permits us to build and run a safe retreat. It is as secluded as it is accessible. It is as practical as it is peaceful.

For more than 15 years, citizens of the Wood River Valley have supported Camp Rainbow Gold, making it possible for us to fulfill our mission – to provide emotionally empowering experiences to Idaho's children diagnosed with cancer and their families. Camp Rainbow Gold brings community, love and hope into the tough, trying and painful world of childhood cancer. Our programming connects children and their families to one another through unique, inspiring experiences, enabling campers to heal emotionally so their lives are not burdened by illness but rather empowered by their experience overcoming it. The pristine beauty of the Wood River Valley is the perfect backdrop for the children and families to retreat from the stress of the cancer diagnosis and participate in activities that restore their mind, body and spirit.

Emily, a camper, captures it best: "The doctors healed my body. Camp Rainbow Gold healed my life."

With 35 years of risk-management experience, safety is a top priority for Camp Rainbow Gold. We have been an accredited member of the American Camp Association (ACA) since 2007, and our program manager is a trained site visitor on behalf of ACA, qualifying him to assess other camps' safety. We chose to personally reach out to our future neighbors by hosting two open meetings to receive feedback and encourage dialogue with neighboring East Fork Canyon residents. We addressed evacuation and fire safety concerns some residents expressed by creating a thorough evacuation plan and wildfire hazard reduction and mitigation plan for the retreat. We also learned through the meetings that traffic impact is a concern. In our application, you will see we submitted a traffic mitigation plan that demonstrates minimal impact.

Camp Rainbow Gold is not requesting a zoning change but instead a conditional-use permit as a retreat within the current zoning. We reviewed the other zoning districts in Blaine County and found that retreats are options for a conditional use in the RR-40, R-10, and R-5 Zoning Districts. There are no districts where they are straight permitted uses. We submit this application to you with confidence that we are able to meet the standards of evaluation required to obtain a conditional use permit.

We would like to request a special meeting for this project. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Lizberg, Executive Director

Camp Rainbow Gold