



**Marion County
Board of County Commissioners**

Growth Services

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**PLANNING & ZONING SECTION
STAFF REPORT**

Hearing Dates	P&ZC Date: 5/27/2026	BCC Date: 6/16/2026
Case Number	260602SU	
Plan Number	PL SUP-000436-2026	
Type of Case	Special Use Permit: to allow two (2) miniature horses to reside with owners on a parcel zoned R-1	
Owner	Stefan Mehrl and Cathy Mehrl	
Applicant	Stefan Mehrl and Cathy Mehrl	
Street Address	12721 SW 73rd Street, Ocala, FL 34481	
Parcel Number	3493-090-003	
Property Size	±1.54 acres	
Future Land Use	Rural Land (RL)	
Zoning Classification	Single Family Dwelling (R-1)	
Overlay Zone	Secondary Springs Protection Zone	
Staff Recommendation	Approval with Conditions	
P&ZC Recommendation	Motion to Deny by Lourenco, Second by Bonner Vote Ends (2-2); No Recommendation	
Project Planner	Erik Kramer	
Related Case(s)	N/A	

I. ITEM SUMMARY

Additions to this staff report between the scheduled Planning & Zoning Commission and Board of County Commissioner Public Hearings are underlined in green text; whereas removals are denoted in red strikethroughs. Clean versions of amended conditions are provided in section VII of this staff report.

Applicants, Stefan Mehrl and Cathy Mehrl, filed a Special Use Permit (SUP) application to allow for two (2) miniature horses to be kept on their property. Parcel Identification Number is 3493-090-003 and the street address for the subject property is 12721 SW 73rd Street, Ocala, FL 34481. Figure 1 provides an aerial view of the subject property.

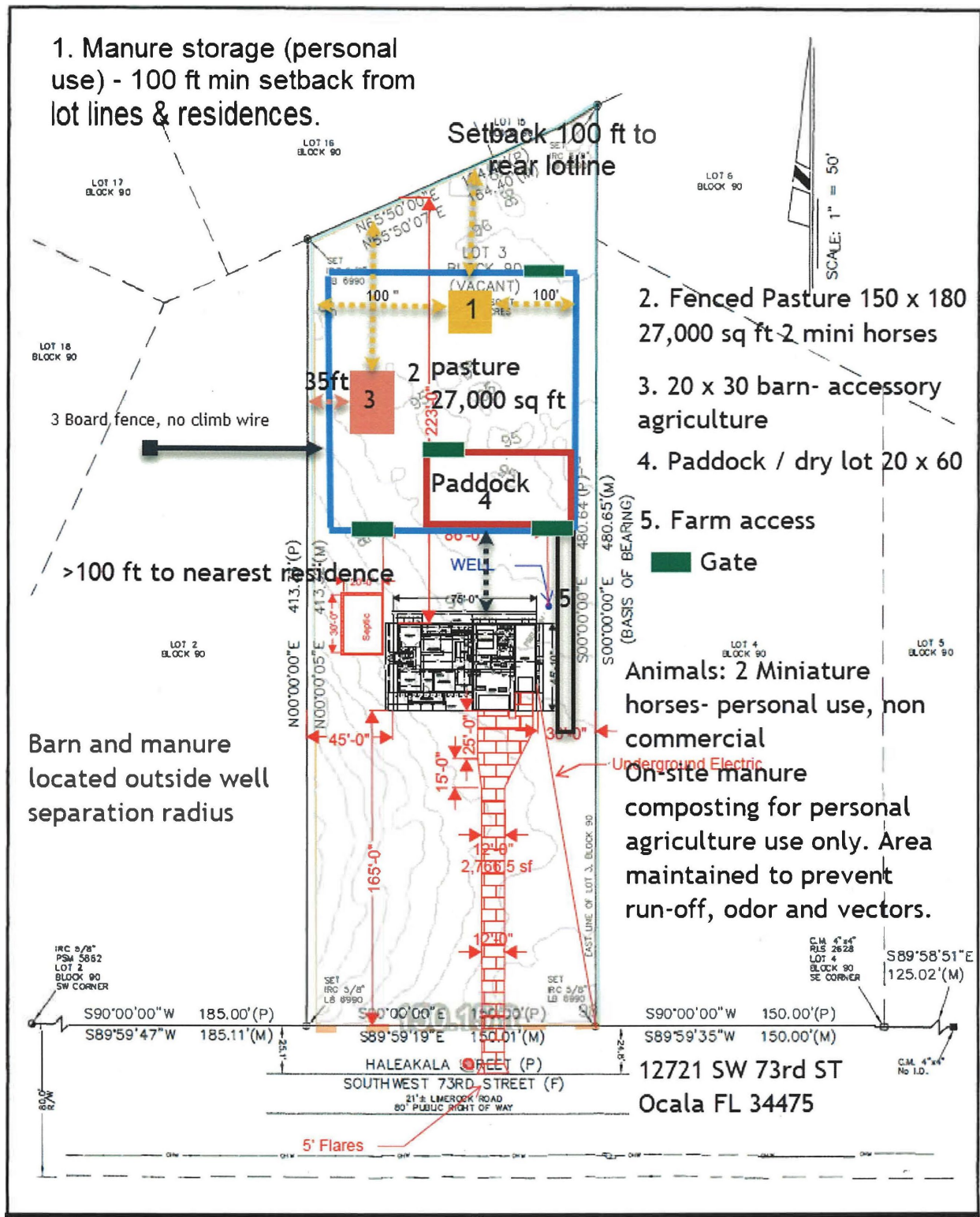
The legal description is displayed in the deed included in the application (See Attachment A). The subject property is a ± 1.54 -acre parcel located inside the Secondary Springs Protection Overlay Zone and outside of the Urban Growth Boundary and Farmland Preservation Area.

Figure 2 is the original Concept Plan received with the initial application package (Attachment A). Figure 3 is the revised Concept Plan from 4/24/26 ~~demonstrating compost placement that complies with staff's recommended conditions.~~ After the Planning & Zoning Commission hearing, the applicant indicated plans to compost manure are discontinued and manure would be stored on-site until removed as conditioned. On 6/3/26, the applicant provided details about equine-related diseases, revised findings of facts, and a revised concept plan (Attachment F; Figure 4).

Figure 1
Aerial Photograph of Subject Property



Figure 2
Original Concept Plan Submitted by Applicant (Received 03/17/2026)



II. STAFF SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **approval with conditions** as specified in Section VII of this Staff Report. The recommended conditions should be imposed to address compliance with the requirements in Land Development Code (LDC) Sections 2.8.2.D and 2.8.3.B.

III. NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Method	Format	Date	LDC Section(s)
Website Legal Notice	Display Ad	Ad Run: 5/11/2026	2.7.3.E. & 1.2.
Posted Sign	Sign for a SUP	Sign Posted: 5/6/2026	2.7.3.B. & 1.2.
300-foot Mail Notice	Letter to Surrounding Property Owners	17 Letters Mailed: 5/8/2026	2.7.3.C. & 1.2.

As of the initial distribution date of ~~this~~ the staff report for the Planning & Zoning Commission, no letters of opposition or support have been received. At the Planning & Zoning Commission hearing, one property owner (a husband and wife) submitted a letter of opposition. Evidence of the above-described public notices are on file with the Growth Services Department and are incorporated herein by reference.

IV. BACKGROUND/CHARACTER OF THE AREA

- A. *Existing site conditions.* The property is a vacant residential lot in the Rolling Hills Unit 3 subdivision. Aerial (2024) and street view imagery (2023) indicate that the subject property supports a variety of pine trees and underbrush vegetation. A site visit on May 6, 2026, revealed that a significant portion of the property was cleared and the applicant's single family home is under construction. Figure 5 shows that the property is currently listed as vacant residential by the Marion County Property Appraiser's Office. The subject property and the majority of the surrounding area is developed or vacant single family residential use. Figure 6 indicates that subject property has Candler soil. Further discussion of the soil conditions is provided under Section V.G. of this report.
- B. *Zoning classification map.* Figure 7 shows the subject property is zoned R-1 and R-1 is the dominant zoning classification throughout Rolling Hills Unit 3.
- C. *FLUMS designation.* Figure 8 is the Future Land Use Map Series, and it shows the subject property and abutting properties are all designated Rural Land (RL), which, according to the Marion County Comprehensive Plan, Policy 2.1.16, is intended to be used primarily for agricultural uses, associated housing related to farms and agricultural-related commercial and industrial uses. This designation allows a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres.

Figure 5
Existing Conditions Map

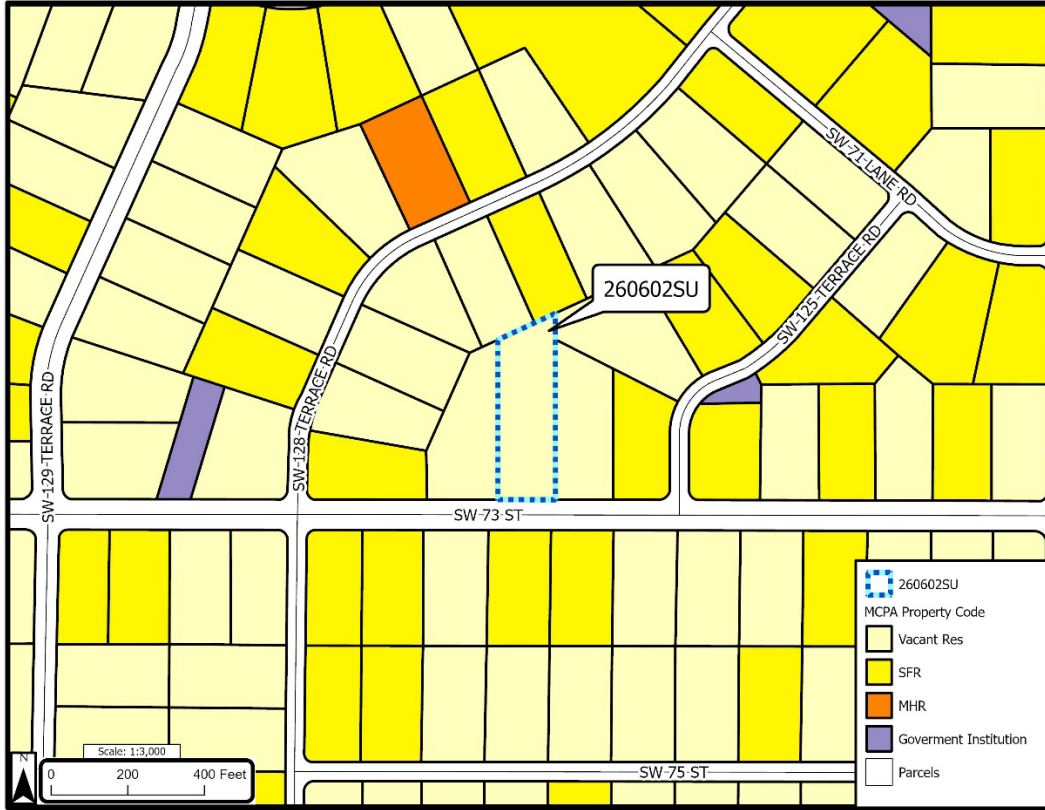


Figure 6
Soils Map

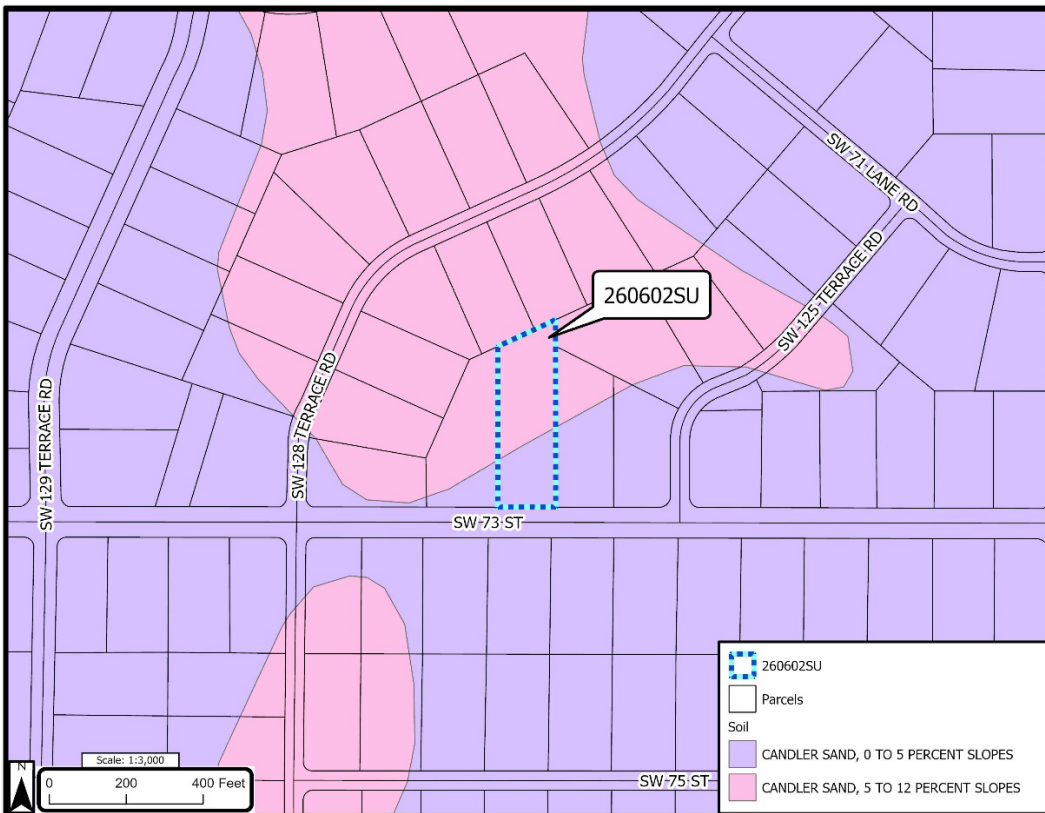


Figure 7 Zoning Classification



Figure 8 FLUMS Designations



V. ANALYSIS

LDC Section 2.8.2.D provides that in making a recommendation to the Board, the Planning and Zoning Commission shall make a written finding the SUP addresses nine (9) specific requirements. LDC Section 2.8.3.B requires Growth Services staff to review this application and make a recommendation on the consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Staff's analysis of compliance with these ten (10) requirements are addressed below.

- A. *Provision for **ingress and egress** to property and proposed structures thereon with particular reference to automotive and pedestrian safety and convenience, traffic flow and control, and access in case of fire or catastrophe.*

Analysis: The property fronts SW 73rd Street, a County-maintained two-lane local road without sidewalks. The original Concept Plan (received 3/17/26) shows a proposed driveway connection to SW 73rd Street and an unpaved path for pasture access running along the east side of the driveway that leads to the fenced pasture area.

- B. *Provision for **off-street parking and loading areas**, where required, with particular attention to the items in (1) above and the economic, noise, glare, or odor effects of the SUP on adjoining properties and properties generally in the surrounding area.*

Analysis: The Concept Plan (received 3/17/26) shows a 165-foot-long driveway with a minimum width of 12 feet until fanning out to near the house. The driveway provides enough space for residential parking and for horse-related needs, such as hay deliveries and veterinary visits, without blocking traffic on the public road.

- C. *Provisions for **refuse and service area**, with particular reference to the items in (1) and (2) above.*

Analysis: The applicant's [findings of facts \(Attachment A, page A-5\)](#) states that manure will be composted on site in a designated storage area located within 100 feet of all property lines and nearby homes. Excess or non-compostable waste would be removed by the owner or a private hauler. [Following the Planning & Zoning Commission hearing, the applicant indicated that plans to compost manure generated from the miniature horses has been discontinued and manure would only be stored on-site until removed as described in the applicant's findings of facts.](#)

Marion County Land Development Code Section 4.2.2 regulates manure storage for agricultural properties, but regulations for manure storage for residential properties do not exist unless conditions are added through a SUP.

Staff notes that the property is 150 feet wide, so the manure storage cannot meet the [originally](#) proposed 100-foot setback from side lot lines. [As such, staff recommend alternative setbacks to ensure the manure storage is located internal to the site and away from surrounding properties.](#)

Because this request involves keeping two miniature horses on a residential lot with limited space for manure storage, staff recommend the following conditions to address waste handling, protect nearby properties, and reduce environmental impacts:

- Manure must be managed at all times to prevent odors, pests, or any condition that could create a nuisance or pose a risk to the health, welfare, or safety of people or animals.
- Manure must be collected from the pasture at least twice per week.
- Manure must not be stored in open piles. All manure must be stored in sealed, leak-resistant containers. The leak-resistant containers must be stored on top of an asphalt or concrete surface and under a covered roof.
- Sealed manure storage containers must be located within the approved pasture area and set back at least sixty (60) feet from side property lines and one hundred (100) feet from the rear property line.
- ~~Manure may be kept on-site for composting, up to one cubic yard, but must remain in a sealed container until compost material is ready for land application.~~
- Manure ~~not used for composting~~ must be removed from the property at least once per week and disposed of at an approved waste disposal facility.

D. *Provision for **utilities**, with reference to locations, availability, and compatibility.*

Analysis: The Concept Plan (received 3/17/26) shows the proposed locations for a well and septic system. The Marion County Utilities Department states that the property is outside the service area for County utilities and that the proposed use will not affect utility service or connection distance (Attachment B).

E. *Provision for **screening and buffering** of dissimilar uses and of adjacent properties where necessary.*

Analysis: The applicant proposes a three-board fence with no-climb wire to enclose the pasture. Staff find that additional screening or buffers are not needed, provided the horses are kept on the property and cannot access neighboring properties. The proposed fencing is sufficient for containment. To ensure the pasture is properly enclosed ~~and of adequate size~~, staff recommend the following condition:

- The applicant must install a two-, three-, or four-board fence with no-climb wire around the pasture ~~shown on the Concept Plan (received 3/17/26). The pasture may be smaller than 27,000 square feet but must be at least 15,000 square feet.~~

- F. *Provision for **signs**, if any, **and exterior lighting** with consideration given to glare, traffic safety, economic effects, and compatibility and harmony with properties in the surrounding area.*

Analysis: The applicant states that no commercial signage is proposed and that any exterior lighting for the barn shown on the Concept Plan (received 3/17/26) would be directed downward and designed to prevent glare on nearby properties.

Staff note that LDC Section 6.19.6 does not require single-family homes to meet specific lighting standards for glare, light spill, brightness at property lines, fixture design, or mounting height.

Because this is primarily a single-family residential use on a lot of record ~~with a~~ and the request is to keep personal horses for accessory use, staff does not recommend additional lighting conditions.

- G. *Provision for **required yards and other green space**.*

Analysis: Staff reviewed three factors for required yards and green space: pasture area, grazing capability, and setbacks.

Regarding pasture area, the property is zoned R-1 and must follow LDC Section 4.2.6.F. This section requires at least 9,000 square feet for the first horse and 6,000 square feet for each additional horse, with a limit of four horses per acre. For two horses, as requested, the minimum required pasture area is 15,000 square feet.

The Concept Plan (received 3/17/26) shows a 150-by-180-foot pasture (27,000 square feet). It also includes a 20-by-30-foot barn and a 20-by-60-foot dry lot/paddock, totaling 1,800 square feet. This leaves 25,200 square feet of pasture, which meets the requirement. An adjacent property owner brought up concerns at the Planning & Zoning Commission hearing on May 27th, 2026 relating to horse urination and defecation near their property. To address the adjacent property owner's concern, staff proposes condition language to prohibit pasture use within 15 feet of property lines which would further reduce the available pasture area.

For grazing capability, the site has Candler soil (Figure 4), which is sandy and drains quickly. This soil has low natural fertility, so improvements like soil amendments, fertilizer, and irrigation will likely be needed to grow enough grass. Even with 25,200 square feet, two miniature horses may quickly consume the available grass.

For setbacks, the house and any future accessory structures must meet R-1 zoning setbacks under LDC Section 4.2.9.C.

Staff ~~do not~~ recommend conditions ~~for~~ to ensure adequate pasture area or setbacks. ~~However, staff recommend~~ and conditions to address the limits of the site's Candler soil for grazing:

- In the event the grass provided to the horses is depleted or not in abundance, the applicant will ensure that there is free-choice quality hay offered to the horses at all times unless otherwise directed by a veterinarian.
- The pasture may be larger or smaller than 24,000 square feet, as denoted on the Concept Plan (received 6/3/26), but must be at least 15,000 square feet.
- Pasture use is prohibited within fifteen (15) feet of side and rear subject property lines.

H. *Provision for general **compatibility** with adjacent properties and other properties in the surrounding area.*

Analysis: Compatibility is defined Chapter 163.3164(9) of the Florida Statutes, under the Community Planning Act, as “a condition in which land uses or conditions can coexist in relative proximity to each other in a stable fashion over time such that no use or condition is unduly negatively impacted directly or indirectly by another use or condition.”

The proposed SUP would allow two (2) miniature horses on this residentially zoned property. Staff find that keeping horses as an accessory use to a single-family home would not significantly increase traffic or substantially deviate from the built form of nearby R-1 properties.

Horses may create off-site impacts such as odors, unsightly views from animal waste, and groundwater impacts. However, staff proposes conditions to reasonably address these concerns.

Overall, staff finds that the use will not negatively affect nearby properties and recommends approval of the request, subject to the conditions listed in Section VII.A. of this report.

I. *Provision for meeting any **special requirements** required by the site analysis for the particular use involved.*

Analysis: This section addresses the applicability, enforcement, and renewal of the SUP.

First, staff notes that, unlike a variance, which runs with the land and is recorded in the public records, a SUP is not recorded. As a result, future property owners may not be aware of the resolution requirements. Proposed conditions are intended to ensure that any future property owner seeking to continue the use must proceed through the SUP process and be informed of County requirements and operational expectations.

Second, this application requests approval to keep two (2) miniature horses on the property. However, the applicant has expressed interest in purchasing adjacent property for possible pasture expansion. If expansion is proposed onto property not included in the legal description provided with the application (Attachment A),

a SUP amendment will be required to evaluate potential impacts on surrounding properties.

Third, the applicant will need to demonstrate that improvement requirements imposed by conditions are installed prior to commencement of horse-related activities on the subject property.

Lastly, to address long-term record-keeping and enforcement, limits on the number of miniature horses and procedures for reporting deceased/removed horses should be established.

Accordingly, staff recommend the following conditions:

- The Special Use Permit runs with the property owners, Stefan Mehrl and Cathy Mehrl and is only valid on the subject property. The Special Use Permit does not run with the land. The Special Use Permit automatically terminates upon (a) any sale, conveyance, assignment, or transfer of any ownership interest in the subject property; or (b) any subdivision, partition, or other division of the subject property.
- If Stefan Mehrl and/or Cathy Mehrl acquire any adjacent property for the purpose of expanding horse pasture or related equestrian use associated with the subject property, the property owners must apply for and obtain an amendment to this Special Use Permit before such expanded use occurs.
- Miniature horses are not allowed on the property until the required pasture fencing, barn, and covered manure storage area are installed.
- This Special Use Permit authorizes a maximum of two miniature horses on the subject property at any time. Replacement miniature horses are permitted, provided that the total number of miniature horses does not exceed two. Stefan Mehrl and Cathy Mehrl shall provide written notice to the Growth Services Department within ten (10) days after: (a) the death or permanent removal of a miniature horse from the property; and (b) the placement of a replacement miniature horse on the property.
- The Special Use Permit expires on June 16, 2031; however, it may be administratively renewed three (3) times for up to five (5) years each by written instrument signed and issued by the Growth Services Director (or a position equivalent to the Growth Services Director at that time), unless:
 - There have been unresolved violations of the County Land Development Code, the County Code of Ordinances, and/or the conditions of the Permit,
 - Neighboring property owners within 300' of the subject property have complained to the County Code Enforcement, Zoning, or equivalent/similar Departments/Divisions about the uses of the subject property by this Permit, or
 - The Growth Services Director determines that renewal should be considered directly by the Board of County Commissioners through

the Special Use Permit review process (or review process equivalent at that time).

J. *Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.*

1. Policy 2.1.5: **Permitted & Special Uses** – The county shall identify permitted and special uses for each land use designation and zoning classification, as further defined in the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning, and LDC.

Analysis: LDC Section 4.2.9.C. requires a SUP to allow horses for personal use in R-1 zoning as outlined in LDC Section 4.2.6.F. Thus, the application is **consistent** with FLUE Policy 2.1.5.

Based on the above findings, Staff concludes the SUP is **consistent** with LDC Sections 2.8.2.D and 2.8.3.B, because it complies with the nine (9) specific requirements of Section 2.8.2.D and it is **consistent** with the Comprehensive Plan as is required under 2.8.3.B.

VI. ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, adopt the findings and conclusions contained herein, and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to **DENY** the SUP application.
- B. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, amend the findings and conclusions contained herein so as to support the approval of the Ordinance with amended conditions, and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to adopt a proposed Ordinance to **APPROVE WITH AMENDED CONDITIONS** the SUP application.
- C. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, identify any additional data and analysis needed to support a recommendation on the proposed Ordinance, and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to **TABLE** the SUP application for up to two months in order to provide the identified data and analysis needed to make an informed recommendation on the proposed Ordinance.

VII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- A. Staff recommends the Board enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing and **APPROVE** the SUP with the following proposed conditions:
 1. Manure must be managed at all times to prevent odors, pests, or any condition that could create a nuisance or pose a risk to the health, welfare, or safety of people or animals.

2. Manure must be collected from the pasture at least twice per week.
3. Manure must not be stored in open piles. All manure must be stored in sealed, leak-resistant containers. The leak-resistant containers must be stored on top of an asphalt or concrete surface and under a covered roof.
4. Sealed manure storage containers must be located within the approved pasture area and set back at least sixty (60) feet from side property lines and one hundred (100) feet from the rear property line.
5. Manure must be removed from the property at least once per week and disposed of at an approved waste disposal facility.
6. The applicant must install a two-, three-, or four-board fence with no-climb wire around the pasture.
7. In the event the grass provided to the horses is depleted or not in abundance, the applicant will ensure that there is free-choice quality hay offered to the horses at all times unless otherwise directed by a veterinarian.
8. The pasture may be larger or smaller than 24,000 square feet, as denoted on the Concept Plan (received 6/3/26), but must be at least 15,000 square feet.
9. Pasture use is prohibited within fifteen (15) feet of side and rear subject property lines.
10. The Special Use Permit runs with the property owners, Stefan Mehrl and Cathy Mehrl and is only valid on the subject property. The Special Use Permit does not run with the land. The Special Use Permit automatically terminates upon (a) any sale, conveyance, assignment, or transfer of any ownership interest in the subject property; or (b) any subdivision, partition, or other division of the subject property.
11. If Stefan Mehrl and/or Cathy Mehrl acquire any adjacent property for the purpose of expanding horse pasture or related equestrian use associated with the subject property, the property owners must apply for and obtain an amendment to this Special Use Permit before such expanded use occurs.
12. Miniature horses are not allowed on the property until the required pasture fencing, barn, and covered manure storage area are installed.
13. This Special Use Permit authorizes a maximum of two miniature horses on the subject property at any time. Replacement miniature horses are permitted, provided that the total number of miniature horses does not exceed two. Stefan Mehrl and Cathy Mehrl shall provide written notice to the Growth Services Department within ten (10) days after: (a) the death or permanent removal of a miniature horse from the property; and (b) the placement of a replacement miniature horse on the property.
14. The Special Use Permit expires on June 16, 2031; however, it may be administratively renewed three (3) times for up to five (5) years each by written instrument signed and issued by the Growth Services Director (or a position equivalent to the Growth Services Director at that time), unless:

- a. There have been unresolved violations of the County Land Development Code, the County Code of Ordinances, and/or the conditions of the Permit,
- b. Neighboring property owners within 300' of the subject property have complained to the County Code Enforcement, Zoning, or equivalent/similar Departments/Divisions about the uses of the subject property by this Permit, or
- c. The Growth Services Director determines that renewal should be considered directly by the Board of County Commissioners through the Special Use Permit review process (or review process equivalent at that time).

VIII. PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Planning & Zoning Commissioner hearing was scheduled for, and took place on, May 27, 2026, at 5:30 PM. Donald Johnson moved to recommend approval subject to staff conditions, but the motion failed for lack of a second. Jerry Lourenco then moved to recommend denial, seconded by Andy Bonner. The motion resulted in a 2–2 tie vote; therefore, no recommendation was made.

IX. BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' ACTION

To be determined. Scheduled for June 16, 2026, at 2:00 PM.

X. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

- A. Application Package, received March 17, 2026.
- B. DRC Comments Letter.
- C. Site Photos.
- D. Applicant Correspondence, received April 24, 2026.
- E. Revised Concept Plan, received April 24, 2026.
- F. Revised Findings of Fact & Concept Plan, received June 3, 2026.