**Open letter to the Park County Board of County Commissioners**

We on the Board of Directors of Apogaea, Inc. would like to take this opportunity to provide some background on our event and address some of the suggested changes in the event permitting process that have been proposed during and after the recent stakeholder meetings.

Apogaea is a collaborative arts and music festival that has been held near Bailey for the last four years, and near Lake George from 2005 through 2010.

We are a fully volunteer-run 501c3 non-profit organization, and many of us work year-round to ensure that we are sufficiently organized, staffed, and otherwise resourced to deliver a low-impact event. We provide our own full medical, fire and safety staff on site though out the event. These staff positions are filled with professionals who are fully accredited and experienced in their respective specialties. We also work proactively with local public safety and other agencies to manage any and all of their concerns; and we have enjoyed many positive interactions over the last 10 years with the Park County sheriff and fire departments. Additionally, we invest significant effort in acculturating our community in safety practices. As a result, Apogaea has a strong track record of producing safe events that do not have a negative impact on local public safety resources.

Since its inception in 2004, the Board has managed the growth of Apogaea carefully to ensure that our population does not exceed the capacity of our available land, that our traffic ingress and egress do not impact public roads, and that we are fully able to implement our Leave No Trace policy. Our parking and shuttle system have been developed and refined over the years to keep our traffic moving smoothly, and our event site is always left cleaner than we find it. We provide more than enough porta-potties for our population. They are equipped with hand-sanitizer and our participants leave them exceptionally clean. Because our community is very well versed in self-reliance, every attendee brings with them more than enough water and food to last the duration of the event.

All the proceeds from our ticket sales go back in to the event and to giving back to the local community that hosts Apogaea. Examples of the latter include our support for ILYG Foundation / Emily’s Run (via donations and volunteer staffing), our food drive for the Mountain Resource Center, and support for the Platte Canyon Fire District.

We take great pride in welcoming children at our event, and we have a strong community of parents that work to create the “Kidsville” area of the event with activities specifically geared towards youth. We even have a staff position called the Parent and Family Advocate, dedicated to developing policies and practices that ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for our younger participants.

While our event does allow outdoor sound systems, we have a sound monitoring program in place to regularly measure decibel levels before and during the event, and to then adjust volumes as needed to remain in compliance with sound limitation requirements.

Apogaea includes an evening during which we celebrate the temporary nature of our art by burning a wooden structure. This fire is conducted under full observation, cooperation with, and approval by the Park County fire department. We follow extremely rigorous safety protocols in the development of our burn plan, and actually adhere to higher standards than current regulations require. This fire does not happen if our staff, the land owner, or the fire department feel that conditions are not safe.

With these points in mind, we would like to address some of the specific proposals that have been made that we feel are unnecessary:

* Apogaea is a 5-day event, which allows our participants to enjoy the event without being there for the entire time. Many of them arrive a day or two after the event starts or leave before the last day, which has the positive effect of spreading out traffic over greater spans of time. Limiting large events to a 48 hour window will actually increase traffic congestion and other negative impacts to the local community.
* Reducing the hours of sound at events will dramatically impact the unique character of Apogaea. Responsible events such as Apogaea can and do manage sound impacts to neighbors and the surrounding communities. Rather than changing the rules, we encourage the enforcement of existing rules regarding allowable decibel levels at property boundaries.
* Demanding a $5000 cash payment prior to a permit in order to ensure performance is onerous, whereas a similar level Bond would provide appropriate guarantees.
* Events like Apogaea that have a proven track record should be subjected to appropriate permitting processes that do not create onerous burdens and threaten the viability of these events.

We would like to thank you for taking the time to hear our perspectives. We sincerely hope that the final set of permitting requirements will allow us to hold Apogaea in Park County in the future and continue the mutually beneficial relationship that we have developed with the local community over the last eight years.

Sincerely,

The Apogaea Board of Directors