

From: [Sara Rathbun](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Cc: [district4](#); [Jenny Chamberlain](#)
Subject: Draft Ordinance on Winery Events - Comments
Date: Tuesday, February 15, 2022 4:51:29 PM
Attachments: [image004.png](#)
[2022 Letter to Planning Comm.pdf](#)

Dear Planning Commissioners,

The Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley (WDCV) represents hundreds of wineries and grape growers in northern Sonoma County. Since the beginning of the discussions around the events ordinance, the WDCV has been actively involved in finding common ground between our winery partners and the Dry Creek community. As a result of these discussions, there are several key points that we would like to address:

1. Despite the attention that is given to them, winery events are not a widespread problem in Sonoma County. Several Supervisors and Code Enforcement have directly stated that they receive virtually no complaints about events. If there is an issue, it is easily resolved with minimal communication.
2. Many of the entities that the WDCV represents are small family farms that lack the resources necessary to hire consultants, attorneys, and engineers in pursuit of a use permit. Adding layers of complexity and stipulations to an already difficult process hurts these family farmers. Additional regulation will change the core of Sonoma County from small agriculture to large international corporations.
3. Consolidation within wine distribution has led to an increased importance on meeting consumers directly. Wineries are increasingly unable to attract national wine distributors to sell their wine. This has led to more of a focus on marketing directly to consumers. To exist in the future, wineries need the flexibility to adapt to an ever-changing marketplace. Use permits that are overly restrictive with respect to consumer focused activities will impede their ability to do so.
4. The general plan and zoning code already addresses key issues such as hours of operation, traffic, parking, and noise. To add additional regulations to one singular type of business is unfair to a group that provides thousands of jobs, tax dollars, and philanthropic activities to the local community.

We respectfully request that you either vote No on the current Draft or ask staff to come back with a draft that is consistent with the guidance provided by the Board of Supervisors in their resolution of October 11, 2016.

Sincerely,
Sara Rathbun, WDCV President
On behalf of the Board of Directors

Sara Rathbun

Director of Marketing & Communications

707.433.1000 ext. 128 | office

707.322.8001 | mobile

SaraR@drycreekvineyard.com

3770 Lambert Bridge Rd.

Healdsburg, CA 95448



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February 14th, 2022

Permit Sonoma
2550 Ventura Ave.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

RE: Proposed Winery Events Ordinance

Dear Planning Commissioners,

The Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley (WDCV) represents hundreds of wineries and grape growers in northern Sonoma County. Since the beginning of the discussions around the events ordinance, the WDCV has been actively involved in finding common ground between our winery partners and the Dry Creek community. As a result of these discussions, there are several key points that we would like to address:

1. Despite the attention that is given to them, winery events are not a widespread problem in Sonoma County. Several Supervisors and Code Enforcement have directly stated that they receive virtually no complaints about events. If there is an issue, it is easily resolved with minimal communication.
2. Many of the entities that the WDCV represents are small family farms that lack the resources necessary to hire consultants, attorneys, and engineers in pursuit of a use permit. Adding layers of complexity and stipulations to an already difficult process hurts these family farmers. Additional regulation will change the core of Sonoma County from small agriculture to large international corporations.
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4. The general plan and zoning code already addresses key issues such as hours of operation, traffic, parking, and noise. To add additional regulations to one singular type of business is unfair to a group that provides thousands of jobs, tax dollars, and philanthropic activities to the local community.

We respectfully request that you either vote No on the current Draft or ask staff to come back with a draft that is consistent with the guidance provided by the Board of Supervisors in their resolution of October 11, 2016.

Sincerely,

Sara Rathbun, President
On behalf of the Board of Directors

From: [Andriana Duckworth](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Comment for Sonoma County Winery Events Ordinance Hearing 2/17
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 10:11:48 AM
Attachments: [image001.emz](#)
[image002.png](#)
[SVVGA Letter_FINAL.pdf](#)
Importance: High

February 15, 2022

Commissioners, Planning Division
County of Sonoma
Permit and Resource Management Department
2550 Ventura Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

RE: Sonoma County Winery Events Ordinance

Dear Commissioners Carr, Gilardi, McCaffery, Koenigshofer, Chair Ocana and Staff;

Four decades after being formed, and now more than 250 wineries and growers strong, the Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance (SVVGA) carries on the vision of its founders to promote and protect – as well as enhance – the Sonoma Valley region and its six American Viticultural Area (AVA), as a premier winegrowing region. Sonoma Valley’s vintner and grower members are deeply committed to driving our local economy, conservation and sustainable farming efforts, and to supporting our local communities through advocacy and charitable work. The Sonoma Valley wine industry thrives on a strong culture of collaboration and is deeply rooted in agricultural heritage, community, and appellation; we are the birthplace of California wine.

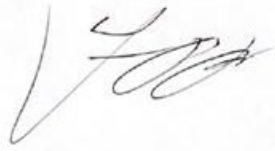
On behalf of the Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance Board of Directors, we are writing to request that the Winery Guidance and Definitions developed by our organization, in collaboration with other Sonoma County wine organizations, be incorporated into any draft recommendation or ordinance that is presented and considered by the Board of Supervisors.

Like many businesses and industries, our wine and agricultural community has faced the challenges of wildfires, smoke exposure, floods, power shutoffs, diminished tourism and continued pandemic impacts. Our Valley remains in a state of recovery, that will continue well into the next few years. With ingenuity, creativity, flexibility and effort, our wine community has survived to this point; however, regulation of our industry that is neither warranted nor necessary is certain to upset the delicate balancing act that we have been able to achieve under historically adverse circumstances. Our wineries rely on marketing directly to consumers in order to sell our wines, especially given the fragile state of the restaurant industry that is expected to persist for years to come. Impacts, as mentioned above, pose an obvious threat to our industry and survival.

We strongly feel that the current draft ordinance is incomplete, and we ask that the commissioners review, consider, and implement the guidelines the Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance have developed and written. The working group guidelines that were rewritten by an “ad hoc” committee were not inclusive of anyone from the wine or agricultural industry.

The Sonoma Valley region, and furthermore the County of Sonoma - its wineries and producers - continue to demonstrate the highest-level of responsibility and commitment to developing and adhering to agricultural and environmental best practices, and working faithfully to maintain transparency and communicate with the community at-large on matters that require resolution. Sonoma County Code Enforcement reports extremely minimal complaints related to winery activities in our region and those few have been easily resolved with proactive communication. The winery guidance and definitions we have developed in partnership with County Officials for nearly a decade now, best integrate practices that will help mitigate any risk to our communities, while continuing to allow our producers the unhindered ability to drive and boost our local economy.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the SVVGA Board of Directors,



Tom Rouse, Landmark Vineyards
Board President, Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance



Andriana Duckworth, Interim Executive Director
Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance

Andriana Duckworth
Interim Executive Director

Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance
P.O. Box 1698, Sonoma, Ca 95476
C: (707) 490-8171 | O: (707) 935-2162

andriana@sonomavalleywine.com

Check out Sonoma Valley At Home: [Virtual Tastings & Experiences](#), [Special Offers](#), and the [Virtual Video Library](#).

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From: bross@sonic.net
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: ORD16-001 Winery Events Ordinance
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 1:03:35 PM

Re: ORD16-0001
Winery Events Ordinance

As an (almost) lifelong resident of Sonoma County, I have witnessed firsthand the wine industry's significant contributions to and important role in the economy of Sonoma County. The wine industry's influence on Sonoma County is far reaching, as a major employer in its own right, as an industry that supports and partners with many other businesses and industries in the County, and as a crucial participant of the philanthropic community in Sonoma County. The presence of family-owned wineries and vineyards in Sonoma County has played a role in maintaining our County's rural feel. And, during a time when wildfires are a challenge and a threat, vineyards function as fire breaks throughout the County.

Sadly, wineries and their important contributions to the quality of life in Sonoma County are now under threat. Wineries need your support. The consolidation of wine distribution channels has made the ability to market directly to consumers crucial to the survival of small family-owned wineries in particular. The wine industry, like many local industries has been hard hit by the myriad challenges of wildfires, including smoke exposure, power shutoffs, and diminished tourism. The Pandemic has added to the challenges we all face. The wine industry has reacted with ingenuity, creativity, flexibility, and the amazing efforts of our talented workforce to overcome these challenges.

The imposition of additional regulation during this crucial time as the wine industry works through these challenges could threaten the long-term viability of the industry, especially for family-owned wineries.

Further regulation is not warranted nor necessary. Sonoma County Code Enforcement reports extremely minimal complaints related to winery activities, and those few have been easily resolved with communication. PRMD should focus on compliance with planning documents and mitigation of impacts. Wineries are already subject to the general plan and zoning code which clearly identify the facility capacity to address hours of operation, traffic, parking, sanitation, and noise.

I urge the Board of Supervisors to consider the wine industries contributions to the health of our economy, as well as to the quality of life we all enjoy. Any winery event draft recommendation or ordinance considered by the Board should incorporate the Winery Guidance and Definitions developed by Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. The health of the wine industry, as a

significant contributor to the economy of Sonoma County, hangs in the balance.

Rebecca Ross

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From: [Steven Lande](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Re: ORD16-0001
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 1:26:43 PM

Re: ORD16-0001
Winery Events Ordinance

I own a home here in Northern California and have worked in both restaurants and wineries.

Sonoma needs more visitors driving up from the Bay Area as well as from around the Country to keep our Hotels, Restaurants, Retail Stores and Bars full. These clients are mainly attracted to visit our area due to the World Class Wines we produce.

By restricting business for a Winery in reality this really restricts jobs and potential revenue for all employees in the food, beverage and hospitality industry.

The more creative we let individual winery's attract clients the more it will positively impact Jobs and Salaries for the entire business community that serves these visitors.

Steven Lande

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From: [Audrey Green](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Re: ORD16-0001 Winery Events Ordinance
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 2:23:06 PM

As a resident and winery employee I am well aware of the industry's contribution to the economy of Sonoma County and the vitality our communities. Not only do wineries want to attract visitors to help bolster the economy, the wineries are a source of employment as well as support for local businesses with whom they work.

The presence of family-owned wineries and vineyards in Sonoma County has played a role in maintaining our County's rural feel. In a time when wildfires are a challenge and a threat, vineyards function as fire breaks throughout the County.

Sadly, wineries and their important contributions to the quality of life in Sonoma County are now under threat. Wineries need your support.

The wine industry, like many local industries has been hard hit by the myriad challenges of wildfires, including smoke exposure, power shutoffs, and diminished tourism. The Pandemic has added to the challenges we all face. The wine industry has reacted with ingenuity, creativity, flexibility, and the amazing efforts of our talented workforce to overcome these challenges.

The imposition of additional regulation during this crucial time as the wine industry works through these challenges could threaten the long-term viability of the industry, especially for family-owned wineries.

Further regulation is not warranted nor necessary.

Thank you for your consideration!

Regards,
Audrey Green

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From: [Melina Acuros](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: ORD16-0001 Winery Events Ordinance
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 2:26:31 PM

RE: ORD16-0001
Winery Events Ordinance

I was born and raised in Sonoma County, primarily in Kenwood, but I have also lived in Sonoma and Santa Rosa. The natural beauty of the area is greatly enhanced and protected by the many wineries and vineyards that grace our county. Like the many residents of Sonoma County, it was only natural to seek employment at a winery at a young age. I fell in love with the industry, not only for the high quality product it produced, but also for the social aspect and the diversity it brings to our county. In my 30+ years working for Sonoma County wineries I have never personally observed a negative impact on the land or county's residents and have only seen the joy it brings to tourists and those who work in the industry. Without the wineries and their ability hold events and draw in tourists, the local restaurants and hotels would take a huge hit. I understand there are rules we must all follow to be considerate of our neighbors and make this work for all who live in the county. Putting further restrictions on wineries while we are all still attempting to recover from the pandemic and keep our county healthy and prosperous would be seriously detrimental to the economic health Sonoma County.

Thanks you for your consideration and the ability to weigh in on this important topic.

Best Regards,
Melina Acuros



MELINA ACUROS
Accounting Manager
707.933.2808 direct
707.239.2894 mobile
melina@ifwinery.com

1 VINTAGELANE, GLEN ELLEN, CA 95442
TEL: 707.933.2800 FAX: 707.933.2801
LASSETERFAMILYWINERY.COM

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From: [Jeremy Kreck](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#); [district4](#); [Jenny Chamberlain](#)
Subject: Winery Events Ordinance Hearing Comments
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 2:30:05 PM
Attachments: [WineryEventsOrdinance.docx](#)

EXTERNAL

Hi,

Please find attached comments from the Winegrowers of Westside Road related to the Winery Events Ordinance Hearing on 2/17.

Thank you,
Jeremy Kreck

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WINEGROWERS *of* WESTSIDE ROAD

Dear Planning Commissioners,

The Winegrowers of Westside Road (WoWR) represents over a dozen wineries and grape growers in supervisorial districts 4 and 5. Our board members have been very involved with both the formation of the Dry Creek Valley CAC and the meetings of the Westside Road Advisory/Stakeholders Committee. Throughout these discussions, there are a couple of key issues that we would like to address with respect to the proposed winery event ordinance:

1. We live here too. Wineries work hard to be good neighbors. Every WoWR board member lives within Sonoma County and most reside on Westside Road. We have every desire to maintain the area as the bucolic setting that it is.
2. Additional regulation hurts small farms. While larger corporate entities have the resources to hire consultants, attorneys, and engineers to navigate the already complicated use permit process, small family farms do not. Adding additional restrictions and regulations favors the shift from small agriculture to large corporations.
3. Winery events are not a significant issue within the county. Sonoma County Code Enforcement has reported that there are virtually no complaints about winery events. This sentiment is echoed by multiple county Supervisors. This ordinance is an unnecessary solution in search of a problem.
4. Our family farms need the flexibility and Use Permit latitude to quickly adapt to a changing marketplace. For example, the consolidation of wine distributors led to wineries needing to market directly to consumers and bring consumers on-site, because it has become nearly impossible for small brands to attract meaningful national sales. It is essential that the County Use Permit structure embraces the need to adapt: put boundaries around the things that impact neighbors and the community, but within those constraints allow the permit holder flexibility, rather than baking in a particular business model.
5. The Sonoma County Wine Industry is the gold standard of agriculture. As a high value product, the industry is able to employ thousands of people within the county, contribute millions of dollars annually to charity, and generate a significant amount of tax revenue to support the County overall.

Sincerely,

The Winegrowers of Westside Road

Pam Bacigalupi, Board President
Claire Ramey, Board Treasurer and Secretary
Ridge Evers, Board Member
John Bucher, Board Member
Jeremy Kreck, Board Member

From: [Yael Bernier](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Draft Winery Ordinance
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 5:07:16 PM

February 16, 2022

To Sonoma County PRMD and BZA:

In 2016 the 4 members of the Dry Creek Valley Citizens Advisory Council (DCV CAC0 and board members from both the Dry Creek Valley Association and Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley collaborated to craft a guidance document for the County to use when considering applications for use permits that include visitor serving uses in agriculture zones in the Dry Creek Valley.

The document was approved in 2017 and slight changes were added in 2018. This document has been in effect in Dry Creek Valley for the last five years and it has served the community of Dry Creek, both wineries and rural residents well. We appreciated the opportunity have input and we have seen that the guidelines work well. These guidelines were crafted by our local folks and people involved in the ag industry who know the Valley well. We support this document and recommend the continued use of the Guideline Document as originally crafted in evaluating new use permit applications that request visitor serving agricultural uses (e.g. tasting rooms promotional activities or events)and for modifications to add visitor serving uses to existing permits that were approved for agricultural processing only.

Respectfully,

Yael Bernier/President of the Dry Creek Valley Association

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From: [Yael Bernier](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Attachment regarding the Draft Winery Event Ordinance tomorrow
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 5:47:58 PM
Attachments: [Draft Winery Event Ordinance Feb 16.docx](#)

Respectfully submitted for the record. Yael Bernier

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DRY CREEK VALLEY ASSOCIATION

CULTIVATING VALLEY LIVES & LIVELIHOODS

February 16, 2022

To Sonoma County PRMD and BZA:

In 2016 the 4 members of the Dry Creek Valley Citizens Advisory Council (DCV CAC) and board members from both the Dry Creek Valley Association and Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley collaborated to craft a guidance document for the County to use when considering applications for use permits that include visitor serving uses in agriculture zones in the Dry Creek Valley.

The document was approved in 2017 and slight changes were added in 2018. This document has been in effect in Dry Creek Valley for the last five years and it has served the community of Dry Creek, both wineries and rural residents well. We appreciated the opportunity have input and we have seen that the guidelines work well. These guidelines were crafted by our local folks and people involved in the ag industry who know the Valley well. We support this document and recommend the continued use of the Guideline Document as originally crafted in evaluating new use permit applications that request visitor serving agricultural uses (e.g. tasting rooms promotional activities or events) and for modifications to add visitor serving uses to existing permits that were approved for agricultural processing only.

Respectfully,

Yael Bernier/President

From: [Melanie Schafer](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Gloria Ferrer
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 10:02:42 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

To Whom It May Concern,

As a wine community we have all been faced with unforeseen challenges between wildfires, months of poor air quality because of outlying fires, power outages and an ongoing pandemic and employee shortages. With each challenge we've had to adjust and redefine how we do business. Some of these changes have been needed and are good business practices, some have been more challenging. Whatever the challenges, we are all large contributors to the Sonoma County economy.

Gloria Ferrer has always done our best to work with the community we are a part of. We work in cooperation with our neighbors and have always been extremely conscious of the footprint we leave in the county as a business and neighbor. We are part of the IWCA and are committed to sustainability and a regenerative business model. We farm to the best of our ability, and we are proud to employ some of what we think are the best vineyard workers in the valley.

Our tasting room gives the consumer the opportunity to taste what has been labored over in the vineyard. Since the onset of Covid many changes had to be made to offer wine tasting to consumers. We have elevated the experiences we offer while at the same time see fewer people than pre-pandemic. Our customers enjoy wine and food experiences which is the responsible way to offer wine tasting. We see fewer guests now than before COVID. The events we have are smaller than prior years and adhere to all ordinances.

Overall, Gloria Ferrer and all the Sonoma County wineries employ our residents and bring business to our community, our hotels, restaurants, tour companies, etc. Changes to the current permitting will ill effect business, community and people, please consider this in your decision.

Thank you!

Melanie Schafer

Vice President of DTC & Marketing



23555 Arnold Drive, Sonoma CA 95476

Cell 510-872-3199

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From: [Julie Pedroncelli St John](#)
To: [PRMD-WineryEvents](#)
Subject: Comments for the Winery Events Ordinance
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 3:29:34 PM

February 16, 2022

To The Planning Commission.

I would like to address some of the issues surrounding the ordinance being discussed at the Planning Commission's meeting on February 17.

I am from a longtime grape growing and winemaking family winery. We have farmed in Sonoma County and have proudly included the Sonoma County name on our wines since the 1950s. We are located in the Dry Creek Valley where it is considered an 'area of concentration'. One of the ways this has been addressed is the formation of the Dry Creek Valley CAC (Citizens Advisory Council). It adds an advisory layer for projects and are made up of local DCV residents, vintners and/or grape growers. At this level it is key for wine related projects to be reviewed by those it would affect and then sent to be approved at the next level.

I think we can all agree there have been some challenges to our wine community whether it was fire, flood or PSPS (we were shut down for a week during one of the longest shut offs). The pandemic didn't help and has curtailed the number of visitors that we depend on, in part, to buy our wine- which in turn affects our bottom line as well as our future. With an ordinance I feel we don't need more regulation when we have the general plan and zoning codes which clearly identify everything from facility capacity to hours of operation, traffic, parking, noise and sanitation. Not to mention the DCVCAC which is in place to advise and direct these types of projects.

Lastly, I would ask you to include the Winery Guidance and Definitions developed by the Sonoma County Vintners in to any draft recommendation or ordinance to be presented and considered by the Board of Supervisors. These guidelines and definitions were already approved and used by the DCVCAC to determine the best course when considering wine related projects.

Thank you for your time.

Julie Pedroncelli St. John
3rd Generation Family Owner
Pedroncelli Winery

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From: [Maureen Davison](#)
To: [PRMD-WineryEvents](#)
Subject: Proposed Winery Events Ordinance
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 3:54:33 PM

Dear Planning Commission-

I am concerned by the increased regulations that the Ordinance places on wineries. I am from a family winery that has been in operation for over 90 years and has been able to co-exist with my neighbors (and continues to).

When residents choose to live in wine country they must accept that there will be wineries. It is like someone who chooses to live near an airport or the fly zone and then complains that the airplanes are too noisy. (In all likelihood was the resident's choice to live here a result of visiting a winery?)

Wineries are a major mainstay of the county. In order for wineries to thrive they need to sell their product. The market place for sales is changing. Direct to consumer sales is a key to winery success.

The last 2 years have been a big game changer. As such the traffic and other studies may be outdated.

General plan and zoning code already exists for wineries which clearly identify the facility capacity to address hours of operation, traffic, parking, sanitation and noise. Planning and permitting should focus on compliance with existing planning documents and the mitigation of impacts. **We don't need an ordinance to further define something that is already in place.**

Dry Creek Valley has successfully created a plan within their community through the DCVCAC. Westside Road area needs to do the same. They need to work it out instead of having the County create code that does not work for other communities. Sonoma County Code Enforcement reports extremely minimal complaints related to winery activities and those few have been easily resolved with communication.

If the Ordinance is kept I request that the Winery Guidance and Definitions developed by Sonoma County Vintners be incorporated into any draft recommendation or ordinance to be presented and considered by the Board of Supervisors. The suggested Ordinance definitions between events and parties and dinners, etc. is mind boggling and shows that the County does not fully understand the vast differences between one winery and the next and there are site specific differences in capacity and how wineries operate.

Thank your consideration to the above points.

Maureen Davison
6905 Geysers Road

Geyserville, Ca 95441
707.857.3741 (h)
707.292.5096 (c)
maureen@avispmail.com

Maureen Davison
Epperson Associates, LLC
Bothwell & Swaner Company
6905 Geysers Road
Geyserville, Ca 95441
707.857.3741 (h)
707.292.5096 (c)
maureen@avispmail.com

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From: raymond.willmers@gmail.com
To: [PRMD-WineryEvents](#)
Subject: FW: Winery Events
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 4:19:02 PM

Thank you for the opportunity to speak out.

We, the county seem to never want to discuss the cumulative impact of winery events and events in general. I live in Kenwood and pre-Covid, every weekend night in June, you can hear 2 to 4 bands playing simultaneously. July and August seem to slow down to one night per weekend.

This data does not include non-permitted, non-winery events that are also occurring simultaneously.

I believe Chateau St. Jean has a permit for 100 or more events...that is why Foley Family Wines just purchased them. Years ago, prior to the 2017 fire, we tried hard to get the commission to NOT pass Chateau St. Jean/Treasury Wine Estates request...the county managers gave the winery exactly what they wanted without listening to the public at the open meeting....I wish Dick Fogg was still with us.

We all know about outdoor amplified music...10 p.m. rule, etc., etc....but it is ignored most weekends. And the poor Sheriff's department has more important issues to deal with on summer weekends.

Chateau St. Jean plays their music indoors with one wall completely open to the outdoors. Hence, the sound travels as if it is outside...check it out.

Lastly, with the new hotel, spa, restaurant and winery on the old Greywood Ranch property here in Kenwood currently going up...sleepy Sonoma Valley will continue to see an increase in noise, light and traffic pollution.

Thank you,

Raymond Willmers

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From: [Kim Stare Wallace](#)
To: [PRMD-WineryEvents](#)
Subject: Comments for Proposed Winery Events Ordinance
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 4:20:06 PM
Attachments: [image004.png](#)
[Letter to Permit Sonoma Kim Stare Wallace.pdf](#)

Please see my attached letter and comments regarding the proposed Winery Events Ordinance.

Kim Stare Wallace

President

707.433.1000 ext. 130

Kim@drycreekvineyard.com

3770 Lambert Bridge Rd.

Healdsburg, CA 95448

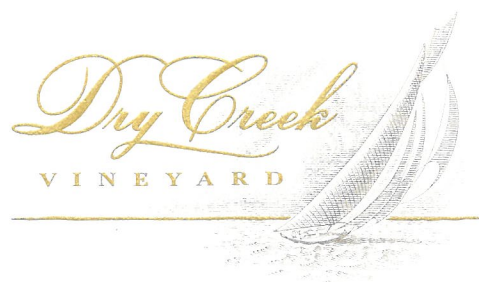


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February 16, 2022

Permit Sonoma
2550 Ventura Ave.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403



RE: Proposed Winery Events Ordinance

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I am the President and second-generation owner of Dry Creek Vineyard, our family winery celebrating our 50th Anniversary this year. Our winery was founded by my father and was the first new winery in the Dry Creek Valley following Prohibition. Having grown up in the Dry Creek Valley, I have seen the vast changes in our County and witnessed our quiet farming community turn into a thriving tourist destination.

Over the last few years, our community has experienced wildfires, floods, smoke exposure, diminished tourism and the impacts of a global pandemic. Many local businesses have shut down, but those that are left standing need your support so that those businesses and wineries that remain, can continue to employ a large portion of our community. In addition, it is imperative that we are still able to play the crucial role in the success of our local economy by giving back to our local community through contributions and charitable giving.

Having served on the Sonoma County Vintners (SCV) Board for the last 8 years and still involved with the SCV Government Relations Committee, it is very clear how important these critical business activities are that help gain and retain wine club members. I have been very active in ensuring that the voices of winery operators and grape growers in Sonoma County are being heard. Several events ordinance discussions have taken place and my hope is that the Sonoma County Planning Commissioners can determine the new standards for winery events/business activities while taking into account the perspectives of those whose livelihood is operating a winery as well consider the concerns of the community.

As you may know, the changing landscape of distributor consolidation has greatly affected the wine industry and most wineries have a very difficult time selling their wines in the wholesale system. It is absolutely essential for our survival that we are able to continue to build consumer relationships, as well as market and sell wine through the Direct-to-Consumer channels (tasting room, wine club and e-commerce). In order to be a successful winery business, we need to have the ability to engage directly with our consumers through wine club functions, educational events and tasting room visits in order to sell our product. This is particularly true for the hundreds of family-owned wineries upon which the Sonoma County wine industry was built, and it is what led to the revitalization of our County's economic base, which contributes \$13 billion each year. Adapting to the ever-changing marketplace is something we do well, but in order to exist in the future, we need flexibility in marketing directly to our customers.

ESTABLISHED 1972
DRY CREEK VALLEY
SONOMA COUNTY

POST OFFICE BOX T
3770 LAMBERT BRIDGE RD
HEALDSBURG, CA 95448

TELEPHONE 707.433.1000
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It is important to recognize that the vast majority of wineries in Sonoma County are extremely conscientious small business owners, running their wineries with a high degree of integrity and ethics. Most business owners are considerate neighbors and play by the rules. In fact, there are minimal complaints related to winery activities and those that have occurred, were handled with simple communication. As you can see, unnecessary regulation is not the solution and with it we cannot survive. Key issues such as noise, parking, traffic, sanitation and hours of operation are already addressed through the general plan and zoning code.

Many of our wineries have partnered with regional organizations to create thoughtful and realistic approaches to the definitions behind the distinction between “activities” and “events” for the benefit of both the wineries and the surrounding neighbors. The Winery Guidance and Definitions, developed by Sonoma County Vintners, is an example of this collaboration, and should be incorporated into any draft recommendation or ordinance to be presented and considered by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors so that all stakeholders are involved. It’s important that these terms are universally agreed upon by all stakeholders.

I urge you — please do not make the dire situation that is the revitalization of our local businesses into an impossible one. Let’s enforce the rules, and accept that Direct to Consumer business practices that allow us personal interaction with our customers and sell our product are essential to our survival in this ever-increasing competitive world of wine. Sonoma County is dependent on the health, economic impact and vibrancy of our wine and grape industries. We can do better than a one-size-fits-all approach in this “new normal” of unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Stare Wallace". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "K".

Kim Stare Wallace
President

From: [Robert Conard](#)
To: [PRMD-WineryEvents](#)
Subject: PRMD - Winery Events
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 4:45:18 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[Winery Events - PRMD - 2-16-2022.pdf](#)

February 16, 2022

Dear Planning Commission,

Regarding the proposed Winery Events Ordinance, it is extremely important that the differences between winery “Events” and the daily “Activities” that wineries do to conduct business are addressed. Over the past few years Sonoma County Code Enforcement has reported extremely minimal complaints relating to winery activities. These would be things like Wine Club Pick-Up’s, Vineyard Tours, Winemaker Luncheons, Dinners, and other ancillary activities that directly relate to the education and sale of our product. These types of activities are crucial to small agricultural businesses like ours to survive.

Over the past five years, wine wholesale and distribution consolidation and bulk wine “brands” taking up the majority of retail store shelf space has diminished the ability for small to midsize wineries to get representation in the three-tier market and get our products distributed. Family-owned businesses like ours are now, more than ever, required to market directly to our consumers and sell directly to them to simply keep our people employed and stay in business.

Viticulture has been a part of Sonoma County culture since 1812 and Sonoma County Vintners has been representing agricultural businesses like ours since 1944. I would strongly urge the Planning Commission to incorporate the “Winery Guidance and Definitions” developed by Sonoma County Vintners be incorporated into any draft recommendation or ordinance to be presented and considered by the Board of Supervisors.

The Sonoma County Wine industry and the community of businesses that support them are major employers in this county and as such these businesses contribute greatly to the Sonoma County economy. As we as a community push our way through this pandemic, please help us to keep our Sonoma County economy thriving.

Sincerely,

Robert Conard
Director of Hospitality & Retail Sales
Dry Creek Vineyard
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Healdsburg, CA 95448

(707) 473-4724

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Sincerely,

Robert Conard

Director of Hospitality

Dry Creek Vineyard

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From: Protect San Antonio Valley <admin@protectsav.org>

Sent: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 4:58 PM

To: Greg Carr; Pat Gilardi; Jacquelynne Ocana; Shaun McCaffery; Eric Koenigshofer

Subject: Winery Event Ordinance Hearing February 17, 2022

EXTERNAL

Dear Commissioners Carr, Gilardi, Ocana, McCaffery, and Koenigshofer

Protect San Antonio Valley ("PSAV") appreciates the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed Winery Event Ordinance. While there are few wineries in our local area it is our understanding that the Ordinance, once adopted, will inform permitted uses on agricultural properties generally. For that reason, we think it is important to share our perspective.

We concur with the position laid out by Protect Rural Sonoma County in its letter to the commissioners. In addition, we would like to highlight the following concerns.

- 1) **All parties should be considered "Events."** The proposed ordinance appropriately defines winemaker lunches, dinners, release parties & club parties as "Events." This is consistent with past practices and in line with common understanding. However, designation of harvest parties and pickup parties as "Activities" would be inappropriate and inconsistent. It falsely differentiates between gatherings depending on how and to whom they are promoted, rather than on the nature of what is actually taking place. This is confusing and would create an opportunity for significant abuse.
- 2) **All visitor gatherings including "Trade Partners" held outside of normal business hours (10-am - 5pm) should be considered Events.** Wineries, just like retail stores, manufacturers, and professional service firms, have regular hours of operation. Visitor gatherings that occur outside of normal business hours are not ordinary operations and should be considered Events.
- 3) **Outdoor amplified sound should not be permitted.** Outdoor amplified sound is not essential to the production and sale of agricultural products. It has significant negative impacts on neighbors and the community in general, especially in valleys where sound travels easily and far.
- 4) **Siting criteria should include:** 20 Acre minimum parcel size, 18 ft minimum access road, and a density standard of no more than 2 facilities per half mile.
- 5) **Tasting rooms and event spaces in city and town centers should be encouraged.** These tasting rooms and event spaces reduce impacts on rural agricultural areas, provide access to accommodations, and are linked to

transportation corridors. They significantly improve safety by limiting potentially impaired driving on rural roads.

The wine industry's push to expand visitor serving uses is designed to promote new hospitality "experiences" rather than activities related to the production and sale of their products. It would put pressure on Sonoma County's restaurant industry and blur the line between agricultural production and a hospitality or event center. Wineries are zoned as agricultural businesses. To preserve and enjoy the benefits of that designation, they should operate as agricultural businesses and not hospitality venues.

Thank you for your consideration,

Protect San Antonio Valley



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