

SONOMA VALLEY CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION
Minutes of the Virtual Meeting
December 28, 2022

1. Call to Order 6:30pm

Chair Freeman

Roll Call: Secretary Spaulding

Present: Pulvirenti, Dickey, Vella, Crisler, Dambach, Brown, Hermosillo, Kokkonen, Iturri

City of Sonoma: Rouse, Lowe

County Ex-Officio: Cornwall, Carr

Excused Absences: Truesdell, Bramfitt

Present: First District Director for Supervisor Gorin, Arielle Kubu-Jones (Admin/DD)

Chair Freeman - announcements:

Chat and Q&A turned off to avoid violation of Brown Act & any Public Comments made outside of Public Comment time.

2. Approval of Minutes of Special Meeting November 30, 2022

Commissioner Hermosillo moved to approve Minutes of November 30, 2022. Commissioner Crisler Seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comment limited to 2 minutes (Items not on agenda)

None. Public Comment closed.

4. File Number: UPE16-0052

Additional Document: [Final CEQA Addendum](#)

Applicant Name: Steve Martin Associates, Inc.

Owner Name: Dennis Rippey

Site Address: 4202 Stage Gulch Road, Petaluma

APN: 142-051-031

Zoning: Land Extensive Agriculture (allowed density: 100 acres per dwelling unit) and combining zones for Accessory Unit Exclusion, Riparian Corridor with 50-foot setbacks, and Scenic Resources

Project Description: Carneros Vintners received an approved Use Permit in April 2007 (PLP02-0085) with an annual production capacity of 250,000 cases, public tastings, a 52,000 SF winery facility, a 4,200 SF hospitality building (existing barn reconstruction) and 1,260 SF office/tasting building (existing house conversion).

The 52,000 SF winery building was constructed in 2009 and is currently producing 250,000 cases of wine for custom crush customers. The Phase II public tasting has never been implemented.

This proposed Use Permit Modification seeks to allow additional grape crushing and wine production as a bulk wine/custom crush service of up to 2.5 million cases and eliminate the public tours and tastings uses approved with the current winery Use Permit.

The type of custom crush operations that Carneros Vintners is currently providing is in high demand in Sonoma County. Many wineries currently ship Sonoma County fruit to custom crush facilities outside of the County. Therefore, the increase in production capacity of this facility in Sonoma County would be extremely beneficial to the needs of the local wine grape industry, keeping Sonoma County processing within the County.

The increase in production would be accommodated within the existing 52,000 SF winery building and within a proposed new 22,000 SF production building. Due to the elimination of public tours, the use of the existing 1,260 SF residence as an office/tasting room will be eliminated. The residence will continue as a residential use, not associated with the winery. The existing 4,250 SF barn will remain as winery storage, but will not have any hospitality use associated with it. The new production building will be situated adjacent to the existing winery buildings primarily utilizing the existing utility infrastructure and access roads. Access to the facility will continue to be from the recently improved entrance on Stage Gulch Road / Highway 116 (with left turn lane, deceleration & acceleration lanes).

Tammy Martin/Steve Martin Assoc. Inc. presenting w/ Nathan Rippey, Carneros Vintners, owner. (@6:49 You Tube)

Background: Applied some time ago for Use Permit Modification. Project approved 2002, facility opened 2008, began wine production 2009 under Existing Use Permit for 250,000 cases. Carneros Vintners - 95% wine produced for custom crush customers. 5% for Carneros Vintners. All facility employees work for Carneros Vintners. Customers have work order/request for their custom wine production.

- Request to increase case load to 2.5 million cases sounds like a large increase in wine production, i.e. a 10 fold increase. Clarified w/ additional info not in Project Description that - the "2.5 million cases" is not all full production. Only 55,000 cases will be full production; 289,000 cases would be crush & bulk juice. Approx. 1 million cases would have crush, fermentation & bulk. 300,000 cases would be lees wine. 800,000 cases bottling only.
- Increase in employees only doubled, not ten times.
- Amount of waste water produced 5Xs greater, not ten times greater than current production.
- Several reports done as part of Use Permit process: **Traffic Impact Study by W-Trans.** Conclusion: this project if approved as proposed will generate less traffic than currently permitted, due to voluntarily forgoing ability for public tours & tastings.
- **Groundwater Study, by O'Conner Engineering.** No impacts to neighbor wells. No imbalance in recharge to groundwater use. Has an aerated lagoon. 100% processed wastewater reclaimed for irrigation. No modifications to size of processed wastewater pond. Built as a single cell pond w/ addition of floating baffle, increased aeration. Existing pond would support production increase.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions analysis by Illingworth & Rodkin.** GHG Study found proposed emissions less than half of Bay Area Air Quality threshold.
- Believes project is good for community. Need for custom crush in Sonoma County. Due diligence done for environmentally sound proposal/project.

- Comparison between **SVCAC Guideline & Carneros Vintner's Project (@12:38)**
(See Chart at end of Minutes)

Guidelines Addressed:

Access
Setbacks
Noise Attenuation
Visual Impacts
Lighting
Maximum Winery size
Tasting Room
Minimum Parcel Size
Maximum Site Area for Other Accessory Uses
Onsite Parking
Separation Criteria
Source of Wine Grapes

Nate Rippey, Carneros Vintners (CV) (@16:34), local/family run business, also owners of Lodi Vintners.

Clarified “custom crush” – a facility to provide service for local wineries that need a place to crush own grapes or don't have capital to build their own winery. CV an efficient, affordable option for local grape growers & winemakers. Currently, if/when clientele bring grapes & CV unable to fulfill, will send grapes out of county or to sister facility in Lodi, or to competitors i.e. mostly large corporations or wineries outside of area.

2009 CV winery built. Use Permit designed to be this large back then. Been seeking modification about 7 years; have lost existing clientele & potential clients. Materials costs increased/doubled or more in today's market. Looking for recommendation from SVCAC; Permit Sonoma has recommended for approval.

Chair Freeman called for Commissioners' Questions (@19:25)

Secretary Spaulding, concerned re increase in truck traffic at ingress & egress of site. Did not see Traffic Analysis in submitted material; requested more details. Also, concerned re water supply - well on-site for groundwater – what about increased use of well water for additional cases? How can you know it won't affect neighbors' groundwater levels/wells? Also, who are neighbors - are they informed, any feedback? In particular negative? **Tammy Martin**, don't have Traffic Study in hand. **Re increased truck traffic:** W-Trans does a Passenger Car Equivalent calculation that is attributed & evaluated in terms of how much traffic on road for specific project. Yes, there will be more truck traffic if/when Use Permit Modification is approved, however, since the existing facility which is currently permitted for public tours & tastings has never implemented that option there will be much less passenger car traffic than if the allowable tours & tastings were implemented. CV choosing this Use Permit Modification instead. Could choose tours & tastings if they wanted now. Traffic Study focused on what is allowed. Total traffic will be a reduction. W-Trans does many, reliable studies.

Re water supply. Wastewater Feasibility Study done by Steve Martin Assoc. originally in 2016, updated 2018. Utilized values of water-use associated w/ different types of production i.e. full, crush & bulk, lees wine & bottling from Rippey's Lodi Facility. Had values for amount of water generated for different types of production. Those values utilized to put together Wastewater Feasibility Study, generation of processed wastewater based on 2.5 million cases. Result: 6 million gallons of processed wastewater produced per year. That value given to O'Connor Engineering/hydrogeologist; they did groundwater availability analysis for what this facility would need, based on neighbor well logs, projection of water-use equivalent to wastewater. Their conclusion of groundwater availability analysis - no negative impact on neighboring wells, or on groundwater recharge. Is a high groundwater region, recharge at a rate that groundwater usage will not impact.

Rippey, re neighbors. This is a reclaimed quarry site. Nearest main neighbors - Soils Plus, Waste Transfer Station, lots of vineyards. In January put up Waive Right for Public Hearing, no comments from neighbors. Is a good use for otherwise not sought-after site.

Secretary Spaulding, clarified estimate of 6 million gallons w/ new operation? Martin, correct. Secretary Spaulding, what is current water use? Martin, 1.2 million gallons per year. Secretary Spaulding, still concerned w/ large quantity of water use; if was in other parts of valley might not be approved.

Commissioner Hermosillo, clarification, 5% of production in Carneros? Martin, no, 95% comes from grapes grown within Sonoma County. Other 5% still within local area i.e. that area could expand to vineyards across county line but still local area. SVCAC Guidelines suggested 75%, CV exceeding recommendation.

Vice Chair Dickey, concerned re timing of construction of left-hand turn lane. Sometimes these projects can have Use Permit but lag behind actual facility construction. Public safety is involved - will turn lane be completed concurrently? Martin, already constructed, five years ago. Vice Chair Dickey, & will not to be expanded? Martin, no. Vice Chair Dickey, how to ensure Hospitality/Events Guidelines previously approved for events will not come back as expansion of newly constructed facility? Martin, project description & draft Conditions of Approval explicitly disallow public tours, tasting or events. Vice Chair Dickey, so as function of approval of production expansion, that's eliminated from Use Permit? Martin, correct, if Modification is not approved, the existing Use Permit allows tours/tasting today. But they are getting rid of that. Vice Chair Dickey, re traffic & events, etc. means a doubling of employees. Was that taken into account in Traffic Report? Martin, yes. Vice Chair Dickey, how many employees is that? Seasonal? Martin, yes, seasonal. Currently allowed/permitted up to 24 employees; but only have 10. Proposing to go up to 15 year round, increase to 20 during harvest. Total number proposed w/ Modification actually 4 less than allowed right now. Vice Chair Dickey, re water at old dump site - is water quality a question mark? Did hydrogeologist study quality & quantity? Martin, yes, in Conditions of Approval - well water quality must be sufficient to be approved for wine making & usage. Vice Chair Dickey, what if water quality doesn't pass testing? Martin, if it doesn't pass testing, county requires treatment, must have deed that runs w/ land that requires that water treatment. But understanding is there are no issues whatsoever w/ water quality. Vice Chair Dickey, also, doesn't it defy logic that w/ amount of increased production

needed - & the hydrogeology report says 5 times water use, that in a water scarce environment it would not be impactful? Martin, yes, but 100% of water is reclaimed. All domestic wastewater goes into mound wastewater system, on site. Doesn't evaporate, goes into ground, recharges groundwater table. All processed wastewater generated by production e.g. washing equipment, goes into pond, aerated, reclaimed for irrigation. Hydrogeologist doing water analysis, studying life cycle of water, will be less groundwater use to irrigate vineyard when reclaiming wastewater from winery to irrigate. Might not seem logical because there is no issue w/ recharge of groundwater - is being reused for irrigation.

Vice Chair Dickey, but will still be pulling water out of the ground to utilize in production facility; guessing that irrigation needs are far less than amount of water used for processing. Still seems illogical. Assuming processing water exceeds irrigation needs. How many acres will be irrigated? Martin, 120 acres to irrigate. Vice Chair Dickey, ok, could be true. Rippey, also, every reclaimed gallon means less fresh well water used to irrigate same vineyard. Also, noted that Soils Plus uses thousands of gallons of fresh well water for dust control from same shared well. Working w/ them to change to reclaimed water for dust control. Vice Chair Dickey, good. And, expressed appreciation for use of SVCAC Guidelines for presentation.

Ex-Officio Carr, inquired re former quarry on location. Application Form says property still zoned Mineral Resource. Correct? Primary quarry property was Soils Plus. Is winery sitting on a portion of that? Martin, believes winery site was part of old quarry; mining was done there, re-utilized portion of quarry. Ex-Officio Carr, the back slope to north was reclaimed. Martin, correct. Ex-Officio Carr, suggested Applicants have county staff look into status of quarry, that it's signed off. Soils Plus technically still removing gravel, soil, sand from slopes on site. Eventually that operation will close down, be rezoned. If there is a Vested Right after closure, will need to be extinguished. Also, re traffic. CVs removal of tasting/events/tours will be a net traffic benefit. More concerned about cumulative truck traffic w/ Transfer Station. What are peaks w/ dump traffic that might overlap? Martin, don't have Traffic Study files at hand. Study did look at neighboring sites, including Transfer Station. Unsure of specific analysis. Clarified that the original Use Permit granted which is current, removed Mineral Resource; so not currently zoned Mineral Resource.

Ex-Officio Carr, ok. Also, is road leading from Stage Gulch Rd to winery 18' wide? Martin, believes it's 20'. Ex-Officio Carr, ok. Also, was driving there today, looking at site from different POV; county made effort to conceal construction impacts of Soils Plus & Dump Station. Will new two-story winery building peek up above level of current winery building? Ripper, they are similar heights; did a feasibility mock up. Martin, yes, it's in Study. Showed rendering page from packet, A2. Ex-Officio Carr, will be important for Board of Zoning Adjustments. Martin, total building height is 33'; this is considered an Ag Bldg. & can be 50'. Elevation to be at same height as existing building. Intention to be same agriculture/barn design; will further develop natural vegetation for screening. Ex-Officio Carr, yes, a well-screened site; but a few spots of concern. Also, re access/ingress into winery building. Adding new access road by barn below, by house, & old olive grove? New access to entire facility? What about current access from north? **Martin, showed UP1 Sheet/map. (@47:09)** Traffic will still use existing entrance at north end of Production Building as main entrance. Circulation around building will extend to new building. Will be connection from new building down to existing barn; will have case goods stored there

to allow easy access. Ex-Officio Carr, clarified, this will keep them off Stage Gulch & Dump Transfer road? Martin, correct.

Commissioner Kokkonen, re water process/irrigation plan, retention pond. On P 29 in Packet, noted maximum volume 2.099 million gallons, peaks in February. Noted mention of risk mitigation/management strategy for excess discharge to pond. What if high volume storms cause unexpected problems? Where does pond sit relative to grade, sees it is far away from Stage Gulch. Where would overflow peak run go? Are there other details on risk analysis, mitigations/procedures? **Martin**, there is a required 2' minimum freeboard i.e. water can never get any higher than 2' below rim. Rules set by regional Water Quality Control Board for enough pond storage for wastewater during storm event. Don't want to be irrigating & releasing water in storm event; would be run-off issues. Must be time before or after storm event to discharge. If winery ever produced more wastewater than expected, e.g. a spill, broken aerator - would go on to pump status. There are tanks where all processed wastewater goes first, a septic tank pumper - would pump, watch amount of flow. Never known of this happening, but could go on pump status.

Ex-Officio Cornwall, noted that Water Supply & Traffic Studies not in packet; stymied by this lack of info. Concern re traffic safety at intersection, already dangerous w/ accessing Transfer Station & enormous trucks on hill, hard to see. Is issue covered in Traffic Study i.e. safety to passenger vehicles as well as trucks? Concerned re increasing size & amount of traffic there. Recommended putting a signal there. **Rippey**, re left turn lane – Applicants wanted a traffic signal there for similar reasons, but Cal Trans said no. Re-emphasized that by having fewer passenger vehicles on road, especially those alcohol impaired, will be a net benefit vs truck traffic. It's seasonal, August – October will be most increase in trucks. Believes it is a fraction of Transfer Station truck traffic. Has heard some talk about Cal Trans doing something different on road there, perhaps straightening out corner to Petaluma. May be better line of site from that side.

Ex-Officio Cornwall, also, why has there been a 7 year delay on project? **Rippey**, first reason - shortly after proposal was filed, many planners left PRMD in 2016; Staff loss was felt countywide. Applicants fell by wayside, weren't enough of a squeaky wheel. Fires also appropriated resources. **Martin**, added, there was a major delay right away i.e. this lot was historically part of larger lot, w/ lot line adjustment done. Was under Williamson Act (WA) contract; lot line adjustment approved the 20 acres parcel, no longer eligible for WA contract, but county didn't remove it from WA. When applied for permit in 2016, first planner noticed error, took County Counsel over a year to correct their mistake & remove parcel from WA. Not typical delay for Use Permit applications. Other delays e.g. now on Planner #6. Been good planners & diligent, but project delayed when portioned out, then staff changed; applicants had to go over & over w/each planner making different demands. Delays always on part of County w/ staffing problems, not Applicants. [*The Williamson Act of the US state of California (officially, the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 is a California law that provides relief of property tax to owners of farmland and open-space land in exchange for a ten-year agreement that the land will not be developed or otherwise converted to another use.*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Williamson_Act *Williamson Act - Wikipedia*"]

Chair Freeman, is there solar attached to project? **Rippey**, not currently. Done couple feasibility studies, but location/position is foggy till 11am, not as conducive. Also, issues w/ Soils Plus being downwind, have to annually pressure wash buildings; would be costly to wash solar panels. Prepared if energy provisions could apply. Limited capital, solar expensive. Chair Freeman, also, re need for a crush facility. Presentation emphasizes a strong need for custom crush facility. Was it there at beginning of business in 2007, 2009 or have needs increased in valley w/ independent vineyards? From business perspective, who is involved? Rippey, building Carneros Vintners from start was a hope for “build it & they will come”. Had more business based in Lodi; saw similarities in Sonoma County. Napa has a lot of custom crush. Wine business is cyclical, hard to read. Takes 6-7 years to build, want to be ready, already missed opportunities. Also have to compete w/ larger custom crush facilities & corporate owned wineries. In a down year, corporate entities will take custom crush business just to fill their tanks.

Commissioner Vella, works for a grape grower, & this year first year people did not buy grapes - had nowhere to take them.

Chair Freeman called for Public Comment. None. Closed.

Chair Freeman thanked Applicants.

Chair Freeman called for Commissioners’ Comments (@1:06:08)

Commissioner Dambach, impressed w/ thorough application/preparation; good stewards of process.

Secretary Spaulding, informative presentation; made clear how after a permit is approved, an Applicant can choose to not act on full permitted activities. Believes current proposal better for community i.e. safer for traffic, ok re wastewater, but worse for water - don’t know how much. If current proposal not approved, Applicants can return to earlier conditions, which are less beneficial. Times have changed, become more conservative re recommendations for approval of winery activities on Ag land. Concerned there are already industrial & commercial activities on Ag land, what are limits? Sympathetic to Applicants; an unfortunate long delay, grateful they are maintaining civil attitude in spite of challenges. Favorable to Project, w/ grave concern about water situation & trucks’ access. But will probably vote in favor.

Ex-Officio Cornwall, also sympathetic to long delays. Concerned/stymied re lack of info from absent Water & Traffic Studies, primarily road safety. Unsure how to proceed. FYI Are a number of custom crush facilities in Sonoma County per internet; one listed on 8th Street.

City of Sonoma Commissioner Rouse, re custom crush facilities - believes there is a shortage in Sonoma County. Family member involved in business, people turned away constantly – ask “where to go?” but don’t know where. Agrees it varies by year. Also concerned about traffic. Applicants got permit that would allow more traffic for tours/tasting, but not such an attractive location. Acknowledged Applicants’ patience. Noted that if water use becomes a problem for

overall use, it could affect future of business. Counting on Studies, done due diligence. In favor of approval.

Commissioner Vella, re custom crush facilities. Her employer uses one in Windsor, one Coffee Lane/Santa Rosa & one across from Oakmont. All going to models of tasting rooms for each client ordering a custom crush. The current Applicants could have 10-15 people & large tasting facility to include clients. Admirable they are making trade-off away from that model.

Chair Freeman re water - since it's mostly being reused either in vineyards or recharged into ground (estimated) not as concerned as other Commissioners have expressed.

Ex-Officio Carr, re concern about info in absent Studies, understandable, & ok to express specific concerns to county. Also consider that Commission in position of seeing Application right out the door; sometimes see proposals before Studies are done. Ok to go ahead w/ approval if comfortable but also good to recommend e.g. "XYZ be addressed."

Secretary Spaulding made a **Motion to recommend approval of Project w/ serious reservations regarding availability of water for Project, & safety of more large trucks on & off Stage Gulch Road.**

Commissioner Rouse seconded.

Chair Freeman called for **Roll Call vote by hand or verbal Aye**

In favor: all

Opposed: none

Project Proposal unanimously approved as stated in Motion

5. Reports from MAC Liaisons (@1:17:33)

Springs MAC Liaison, Commissioner Iturri: Cal Trans Report - updates happening following previous recommendations. June, Hwy 12 walk/inspection w/ representatives resulted in progress. Delineators for Donald St Gap, enhancements being added to dangerous crosswalks. Also, held Springs Winter Celebration on "plaza area" Sunday Dec 18th. Partnered w/ Fairmont SMI, Sonoma Immigrant Services, County, SV Fire District. Plaza Proposal a hotly contested item; to be continued, see media coverage.

North Sonoma Valley MAC, Vice Chair Dickey, held a live-edit on final Letter re SDC to BoS. Discouraged use of live-editing process. Letter edited, approved, sent to BoS.

6. Chair Freeman acknowledged Pat Pulvirenti for her decade on Commission. Always exceptionally well prepared, made concise contributions, and was a model Commissioner. Commissioner Pulvirenti noted since her appointment in 2013 she has gained a broader perspective on impacts of projects to county & Sonoma Valley. Observed excellent commitment of all Commissioners in representing their geographical area/community. Chair Freeman expressed hope she will continue to participate in community.

7. Consideration of Future Agenda Items (@1:22:55)

Admin/DD Kubu-Jones:

- Special Meeting January 10th, Tuesday, re Winery Events Guidelines/Ordinance. Guidelines were declined by Board, changes made. Winery Events Guidelines Ad Hoc has strategy for going forward. Encouraged full Commission participation.
- Solar project, not quite ready.
- Executive Team elections/appointments, consider recommendations for Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary. At first regular meeting.

Chair Freeman called for other agenda items. None.

8. Adjourned 7:58pm

Sonoma TV You Tube SVCAC December 28, 2022

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbtWw3KXF8o&t=1s>

Susan Gorin's website for zoom video

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSawKIMzjbZNPDbpRMq26Tw>

Materials related to an item on this Agenda submitted to the Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission after distribution of the agenda packet are available for public inspection in the Board of Supervisors' Office located at 575 Administration Drive, Room 100-A1, Santa Rosa, CA, during normal business hours.

Note: Consideration of proposed development projects will proceed as follows:

1. Presentation by project applicant
2. Questions by Commissioners
3. Questions and comments from the public
4. Response by applicant, if required
5. Comments by Commissioners
6. Resolution, if indicated

Web Links:

County of Sonoma: www.sonoma-county.org select Boards and Commissions

City of Sonoma: www.sonomacity.org select Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission

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Logos below are direct links to websites for the County and First District Municipal Advisory Councils



Report potholes, code enforcement issues, traffic signal problems, and other hazards online with SoCo Connect
Make a report at the website or download the free app for Android and IOS

