

**From:** [Roger Peters](#)  
**To:** [PlanningAgency](#); [Caitlin Cornwall](#); [Pat Gilardi](#); [Jacquelyne Ocana](#); [Eric Koenigshofer](#); [Shaun McCaffery](#)  
**Cc:** [Hannah Spencer](#); [Tina Wallis](#); [Jennifer Klein](#)  
**Subject:** DRH21-0010: VOTMA comments in advance of 9/7/23 PC hearing on Appeal  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 6, 2023 11:06:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [DRH21-0010 Appeal VOTMA comment letterF .pdf](#)  
[Graywood Ranch New Fire Evac Road for KR project purposes.pdf](#)

---

## EXTERNAL

Dear Planning Commissioners,

Attached are VOTMA's comments on the Agenda item for tomorrow's hearing on VOTMA's appeal in the referenced matter. I apologize for the lateness of these comments. Regrettably, I am dealing with my first case of COVID and was hospitalized from last Friday into this Monday to address complications. That delayed this response. I will participate in the hearing remotely via Zoom.

Also attached is a map of the proposed new evacuation road winding through the Graywood Ranch property that the applicant Kenwood Ranch Winery proposes as an alternative means to evacuate customers, employees, visitors and the public from the Kenwood Ranch projects in the event of a wildfire risk. This is discussed in the comments.

Roger

THIS EMAIL ORIGINATED OUTSIDE OF THE SONOMA COUNTY EMAIL SYSTEM.

**Warning:** If you don't know this email sender or the email is unexpected, **do not** click any web links, attachments, and **never** give out your user ID or password.



filed via e-mail

September 6, 2023

Sonoma County Planning Commission  
575 Administration Drive Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
email: [PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org](mailto:PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org)

RE: DRH21-0010 VOTMA Appeal from DRC Action 05-31-23

Dear Commissioners,

The Valley of the Moon Alliance (VOTMA) submits these comments in response to Permit Sonoma's (PS) Staff Report dated September 7, 2023, and Applicant Kenwood Ranch Winery's counsel, Tina Wallis, by letter dated August 5, 2023, submitted on behalf of the Applicant.

The relevant background for VOTMA's appeal of the Design Review Commission's May 31, 2023 action approving the Applicant's proposed design for the Kenwood Ranch Winery (KR Winery) and Addendum #2 to the 2004 EIR certified for the KR Winery project and the interconnected Kenwood Ranch Inn/Spa/Restaurant project (KR ISR) uphill and adjacent to the winery site (together, the KR project), is the foreshadowing of dramatic wildfire and evacuation risk that is reflected in the fact that less than three years ago the KR ISR and Winery sites were directly and dramatically impacted by the wide spread and fast moving Glass Fire. The September 27, 2020 Glass Fire, first incinerated the forest surrounding the KR ISR site and then burned across the KR Winery project site down to Highway 12. One can't help but wonder where the fire would have stopped had the KR ISR and Winery projects already been build and were operational, and been in the direct path of that fire.

That fire, and its predecessor the Tubbs fire in 2017, forced mass evacuation in Sonoma Valley and in areas well beyond. In each case the evacuation experience created havoc on Highway 12, because it is the primary meaningful exit option out of the Valley. That experience has left scarred memories of stalled traffic, and fears of potentially failed future evacuations. As September rolls into October and red flag warnings increase, there is concern over when and where the next large fire will emerge, and how fast the daily acceleration rate will be.

That concern extends directly to whether and how the KR Winery/KR ISR project's evacuation mass could impair wildfire evacuation for those living close to it. Those concerns are the motivating factor in VOTMA's participation in this KR Winery design review proceeding.

VOTMA acknowledges and appreciates that the KR Winery project has addressed many wildfire issues from a design perspective, and that it has "voluntarily" developed an evacuation plan for the new winery/event center, and also, apparently, for use by the KR ISR. But the KR Winery is now seemingly unwilling to put that evacuation plan under scrutiny by the Planning Commission in this design review proceeding, even going so far as to state that the Planning Commission (PC) has no "authority" over CEQA wildfire issues, and associated evacuation plans, since that is not a covered issue under the County's Design Review Ordinance. (Wallis, at pg. 3). In the Applicant's view, the PC has "no ability to regulate" wildfire issues because the only jurisdictional issue before the PC is Design Review.

Applicants scorched earth blinders approach to limiting PC jurisdiction could be dismissed as just an exercise in over-advocacy. But the wildfire risk and evacuation issue is too important an issue to let that closure posture take hold. The questions that need to be assessed and answered to the satisfaction of the PC relating to for whom, how, when and where KR project's evacuation plan operational impacts will play out, and how they might otherwise impact the ability of KR's neighbors to successfully evacuate, do raise actual life or death issues for the Sonoma Valley communities affected by that plan. Accordingly, VOTMA asks the PC to engage, on a de novo basis, a rigorous questioning of KR Winery's fire evacuation experts to evaluate and test KR Winery's purported view that even a worst case scenario evacuation of the KR project would at most have a 15-30 minute impact on the otherwise applicable evacuation timing model for Sonoma Valley.

#### Questions the PC should Ask of KR Winery Evacuation Plan Experts

During the initial Design Review Committee (DRC) hearing on April 19, 2023, KR Winery provided several witness to address issues relating both to the design of the winery and matters covered in Addendum #2 to the 2004 EIR. That included testimony relating specifically to the proposed evacuation plan. VOTMA was afforded the opportunity to ask questions. Some were answered; some were not. The direction of the questions VOTMA posed at that time are equally applicable for the PC to consider.

1. Size of Evacuation Cohort: On a worst case basis, i.e., prime season Labor Day weekend late-afternoon (on a red flag day?), with a max event at the KR Winery and a full Inn Restaurant and Spa, including employees, how many persons would need to be evacuated?

RK Winery's Fehr & Peers "Winery Evacuation Travel Time assessment Report" (F&P Report), Appendix R to Vol 3 of the 2022 Kenwood Ranch Winery Project Initial Study by ESA has given the answer of 815. How many vehicles would be

needed to move that group is likely very situational and variable.

VOTMA has reviewed the 2016 Initial Referral for the KR ISR and believes the KR Winery's estimate likely understates the potential evacuation cohort. In VOTMA's view the following elements need to be considered:

*registered Inn guests* (all 52 beds occupied [note Type D buildings contain 3 bedrooms per unit]),

*main lodge Meeting Rooms 1 and 2* fully occupied with at least 112 seats filled,

*friends and family of Inn guests and public day guests present* at a) main pool (24 lounge chairs), b) pool bar and terrace (19 seats), Inn 2<sup>nd</sup> floor lounge seats fully occupied (23), c) 3<sup>rd</sup> floor roof top bar seats fully occupied (28), d) restaurant fully operational (125 seats), and

*full Spa operation open to the public* (treatment rooms, indoor and outdoor pools, yoga room, gym, (43 seats/treatment spaces))

Particularly with respect to the use status of Meeting Rooms 1 and 2 for peak weekend activities, the evacuation cohort could easily be off by 115 persons or more. The PC should request the applicant to respond to whether the use of Meeting Rooms 1 and 2 were included in its estimate, and what assumptions were made regarding friends and family of Inn guests being present, as well as the level of public customers present on site. If the individuals from those activity areas that were not included in the F&P Report census are added to that census, what effect would correction of that deviation have on the F&P Report results?

## 2. Use of Yet to be Developed New Ingress/Egress Road on Graywood Ranch Property for Evacuation Purposes

Up until its filing of DRH21-0010 all ingress and egress for the RK ISR and the RK Winery was understood to be exclusively via Campagna Lane. Only in connection with its fire expert's discussion of fire risk and evacuation at the November 12, 2022 Open House did the plan slip out for using a yet to be constructed road on the split parcel of Graywood Ranch west of the RK project that would directly exit on Highway 12 about 300 yard west of Campagna Lane.

VOTMA understands that pending Grading Permit GRD22-0174 depicts the outlines of the new road. A copy of the area map for that road is attached as Attachment 1 to this letter. As that map shows, the proposed new evacuation route is a circuitous one that seems both tenuous in location and design (and environmental impact). No such route was discussed or evaluated in the LLA03-0079 lot split proceeding that resulted in the Lot Split between the Graywood Ranch subdivision and the Kenwood Ranch project parcels. Indeed, the MND in MJS01-0002 that approved the lot split specifically assumed quite to the contrary as follows; "Given the improvement that will be carried out for the central access

[Campagna Lane] (left turn pocket on Highway 12, shoulder widening to allow for a deceleration lane, construction of a two-way roadway for the property [here referring to the Graywood Ranch Subdivision] as part of the Sonoma Country In project-no further improvements will be required for this project.” (MJS01-0002 a page 8 of 405, issue #8 of MND; search result as part of Historic Documents)

The PC should inquire whether proposed route has been appropriately evaluate for environmental and other associated impacts and is consistent with MJS01-0002. The PC should also consider whether the pinched one lane access point on to Highway 12 proposed as this second exit route for more than 1600 (40%) of the project vehicles during an evacuation, functionally means that route is much more likely to serve as simply an unsafe stacking zone for vehicles trying to exit the KR projects, as opposed to a potentially efficient evacuation route. The PC should ask the KR project to drop reliance on this new contorted exit route to accomplish approximately 40% of the total evacuation traffic, and instead return with a revised F&P Report that shows the expected evacuation times from the KR projects to the Highway 12 off site exit point based on 100% of the evacuation traffic exiting on Campagna Lane. The final report should then redo the exit time differential to a safe zone using that same single site exit approach.

VOTMA is not aware whether Cal Trans or County transportation has reviewed this new road plan. It does appear the issue of roads for ingress and egress from the Graywood Ranch lot split were considered under LLA03-0079. In that context it would appear from the records that the driveway opposite Frey Road that is the proposed exit for the new road had been abandoned many years, and was not proposed to be used for purposes of ingress or egress in LLA03-0079. It also appears that the location of the wetland in the area directly north of that access point made that access/exit point not a viable option and thus that the environmental review of the proposed road system options under LLA03-0079 did not include the proposed road connection as an option. Notably, it appears that the project proponent in LLA03-0079 had initially also proposed a road at the southwest corner of the parcel as a new ingress and egress to Highway 12 for the new lots in that subdivision. That road proposal was also dropped due to objection from CalTrans. In the end, based on this quick assessment of the historic file for LLA03-0079 and MJS01-0002, it appears that the outcome of LLA03-0079 was to confirm that the Campagna Lane road was intended to be the exclusive ingress and egress for the entire new Graywood subdivision.

The PC should evaluate LLA03-0079 to determine whether the circuitous loop road that KR Winery desires to use as a primary evacuation route is properly permitted and authorized for such construction and use.

In the event it is not, as VOTMA believes to be the case, the PC should request the KR Winery to have its consultants rerun the evacuation timing model with changes that reflect both the higher numbers of evacuation cohort from #1 above, and with the exclusive ingress and egress for such evacuation being Campagna Lane.

In the event that the proposed circuitous route is or was deemed potentially

viable, the PC should inquire whether the same sort of ingress/egress road way mitigations (turn lanes etc.) that were deemed necessary as applied to Campagna Lane should also apply to this new egress point and what approvals from CalTrans would be required.

### 3. Highway 12 traffic condition impacts on total evacuation timing

Once the right number of evacuation cohort is determined and once the available evacuation route for exiting the KR project have been determined, the PC should require the KR project experts to 1) address the likely traffic conditions that the existing evacuation cohort is likely to encounter based on known and probable project conditions in the immediate area, and 2) what affect those updated traffic condition would have on the total evacuation timing impact to reach safe status would be as a result of the KR project evacuation plan.

VOTMA acknowledges the leading edge conceptual approach on wildfire evacuation reflected in the Fehr & Peers' (F&P) "Kenwood Estates Winery Evacuation Travel Time Assessment." But F&P's traffic data set is inadequate for the travel time assessment exercise. As VOTMA reads the "Scenario Methodology" portion of that report (page 6 of 14) it appears that for its background analysis F&P used the 2019 SCTA travel demand model. Based on a recent confirmation from Chris Barney of SCTA, VOTMA understands that the current SCTA 2019 base model (the most recent available) does not include the large Hanna project and the SDC SP in its 2019 base year. That will not happen until next summer's update.

For the 2040 forward year it appears that F&P made an adjustment to catch the Alternative A (1000 unit) SDC SP and also included Elnoka. But Hanna remains missing from the F&S assessment, along with the various area projects identified in the house element recently adopted by the BOS.

It would be helpful if the PC were to ask F&P see if it is able to update its assessment to capture the massive Hanna SB 330 project, as well as the other Sonoma Valley projects identified in the Housing Element, and then report whether inclusion of those projects would change its Evacuation Travel Time Assessment.

### Summary

VOTMA requests that the Planning Commission evaluate the adequacy of the Kenwood Ranch Winery proposed evacuation plan from *five perspectives*:

Is there a fair reflection of the worst case no notice level of evacuation (persons/vehicles) required during fire critical periods in the F&P assessment?

Would use of the yet to be constructed proposed new evacuation road on the Graywood Ranch constitute an appropriate evacuation-only route authorized to be used by the Kenwood Ranch project despite the Highway 12 exit location

immediately (300 years) adjacent to Campagna Lane, and if so, what mitigation conditions are needed to make that a safe exit route? Will CalTrans approve that proposed improvement?

Does the failure to incorporate both the Hanna and the SDC SP traffic impacts on Highway 12 in the near term 2019 SCTA base case evacuation scenario assessment require a revision to that study before the attachment #2 to the 2004 EIR can be approved? Why is the KR Winery project exempt from the 2020 VMT CEQA requirement as applied to the 2018 wildfire CEQA checklist criteria that may have prompted the development of the proposed wildfire evacuation plan?

Is the KR ISR agreeable to committing to the PC that it will abide by the KR Winery Wildfire Evacuation Plan?

Will the implementation of the KR Wildfire Evacuation Plan impair or impede the ability of other evacuation plans imposed by governmental entities in the Sonoma Valley from efficient and effective evacuation in the face of wildfires and other climate-based emergencies?

Thank you for the considering VOTMA's appeal.

*Roger Peters*

Roger Peters  
Valley of the Moon Board

CC: Hannah Spencer, Chief Planner  
Tina Wallis, Applicant's counsel

