

Public Comments

May 3, 2022
to
May 18, 2022

From: Brian Ball <brian@skipstonewines.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 3, 2022 12:23 PM
To: Greg Carr <Greg.Carr@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: Winery Activities Request

EXTERNAL

Hello Commissioner Carr,

I am writing to express my concerns for the Planning Commission's indication of their intentions to proceed with harmful restrictions on winery activities, in light of the February 17th, 2022 Sonoma County Planning Commission's meeting.

Skipstone is a small, family owned winery here in Alexander Valley. Over the past decade, the wine industry has seen unprecedented consolidation in the wholesale market, making market penetration and promotion all but impossible outside of the growing Direct to Consumer channel. We, like so many of our fellow vintners in Sonoma County, must rely on the DtC channel for almost 100% of our business, and the proposed restrictions by the Planning Commission would be crippling, at a time of immense challenges already heaped onto our industry by challenging market conditions, wildfires, a worldwide pandemic, and competition from other wine regions. The evolution of consumer's preferences towards direct engagement with the businesses they choose to support necessitates a regulatory environment that supports a modern business engaging with their customers in person. Sonoma County's existing process of issuing Use Permits that outline permitted and non-permitted activities is already sufficient for covering what the county has deemed appropriate for winery business, and the proposed structure of the Winery Events Ordinance feels like an arbitrary limitation of activities that support local business, fulfills consumers' desires, and falls within existing permitted activities through the Use Permit process and other existing regulations.

I strongly support the following positions:

1. Support of the Current Sonoma County General Plan that states: Policy AR-4a: The primary use of any parcel within the three agricultural land use categories shall be agricultural production and related processing, support services, and visitor serving uses. Residential uses in these areas shall recognize that the primary use of the land may create traffic and agricultural nuisance situations, such as flies, noise, odors, and spraying of chemicals. **Policy AR-4d:** Apply the provisions of the Right to Farm Ordinance to all lands designated within agricultural land use categories. **Policy AR-8b:** Encourage programs for promotion and marketing of agricultural products grown in the County.

2. Planning and permitting should focus on compliance with planning documents and the mitigation of impacts. Wineries are subject to the general plan and the zoning code, which clearly identify the facility capacity to address hours of operation, traffic, parking, sanitation, and noise. THESE parameters already guide wineries as it relates to events/business activities.

3. The operation of a winery in any agricultural Land Use Designation requires a Use Permit. Use Permit conditions are required to address the impacts of that operation. The conditions are not to direct how the applicant operates the business. For example, a church needs to provide parking, ADAcompliant access and restrooms, however, limitations are not made on the number of weddings they may perform or the number of services offered.

4. Sonoma County Code Enforcement reports extremely minimal complaints related to winery events/business activities and those few have been easily resolved with communication. While our winery community is resilient and has worked hard to manage the challenges of the past few years, it has also worked hard to be an excellent neighbor, steward of our lands and ambassador for our beautiful county. I appreciate you taking a moment to consider my thoughts and assist our vital winery community and multigenerational wine families as they work to make our county a wonderful place to live, work and thrive.

I hope you please take our industry's plea for consideration of the significant impacts the proposed restrictions will have on the flourishing local community, and actively work with the Sonoma County wine community to incorporate our requests into the proposed regulations. What we are requesting is not carte blanche to "do whatever we want with our business." We simply ask that the Planning Commission engage with our business and others to have a real discussion to address potential concerns of others that might be driving this push for regulation while providing the flexibility to act responsibly to cater towards a changing set of demands of the modern consumer.

I would sincerely welcome an opportunity to connect, discuss our viewpoint, and provide an inside view into the realities of a small winery business and how devastating moving forward with these regulations would be to the small business community, our employees, and customers.

Sincerely,

Brian Ball

General Manager - Skipstone

Cell: 703.505.7722 | Direct: 707.857.2558 | Skipstone Office: 707.433.9124

2505 Geysers Rd. Geyserville, CA 95441

www.skipstonewines.com

S K I P S T O N E

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Dear Commissioner Carr

In response to the February 17, 2022 Sonoma County Planning Commission's meeting on winery events/business activities, I wanted to reach out to you directly to express my concerns for the Planning Commission's actions and support for my outlined positions related to winery events/business activities. Our wine community has faced the challenges of wildfires, smoke exposure, floods, power shutoffs, diminished tourism and many catastrophic pandemic impacts. With ingenuity, creativity, flexibility and amazing effort, our wine community has survived; however, we cannot survive more regulation that is not warranted and cripples our ability to engage with consumers.

Our Sonoma County wine community is a major employer and crucial contributor to the Sonoma County economy. Wineries also support significant philanthropic activities, including hundreds of local nonprofit charitable organizations throughout the county.

Over the past five years, national representation for our wineries has greatly diminished because of wine wholesale and distribution consolidation, making it even more difficult for local wineries to gain wholesale distribution across the country. Wineries are required to market and fulfill wine sales directly to consumers in order to survive. It is critical to our wine community's future that business activities like wine pickup days, winemaker lunches/dinners, trade business visits, and similar activities, be allowed and not arbitrarily limited. Also, wineries are subject to the general plan and the zoning code, which clearly identify the facility capacity to address hours of operation, traffic, parking, sanitation and noise. These legal parameters ALREADY guide wineries as it relates to events/business activities.

I strongly support the following positions:

1. **Support of the Current Sonoma County General Plan that states: Policy AR-4a:** The primary use of any parcel within the three agricultural land use categories shall be agricultural production and related processing, support services, and visitor serving uses. Residential uses in these areas shall recognize that the primary use of the land may create traffic and agricultural nuisance situations, such as flies, noise, odors, and spraying of chemicals. Policy AR-4d: Apply the provisions of the Right to Farm Ordinance to all lands designated within agricultural land use categories. Policy AR-8b: Encourage programs for promotion and marketing of agricultural products grown in the County.
2. **Planning and permitting should focus on compliance with planning documents and the mitigation of impacts.** Wineries are subject to the general plan and the zoning code, which clearly identify the facility capacity to address hours of operation, traffic, parking, sanitation, and noise. THESE parameters already guide wineries as it relates to events/business activities.
3. **The operation of a winery in any agricultural Land Use Designation requires a Use Permit.** Use Permit conditions are required to address the impacts of that operation. The conditions are not to direct how the applicant operates the business. For example, a church needs to provide parking, ADA compliant access and restrooms, however, limitations are not made on the number of weddings they may perform or the number of services offered.
4. **Sonoma County Code Enforcement reports extremely minimal complaints related to winery events/business activities and those few have been easily resolved with communication.**

While our winery community is resilient and has worked hard to manage the challenges of the past few years, it has also worked hard to be an excellent neighbor, steward of our lands and ambassador for our beautiful county. I appreciate you taking a moment to consider my thoughts and assist our vital winery community and multigenerational wine families as they work to make our county a wonderful place to live, work and thrive.

Thank you.

Sincerely

Adam Sbragia

Sbragia Family Vineyards

Dear Commissioner Carr:

May 8, 2022

In response to the February 17, 2022, Sonoma County Planning Commission's meeting on winery events/business activities, I wanted to reach out to you directly to express my concerns for the Planning Commission's actions and support for my outlined positions related to winery events/business activities.

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Karen Maley, General Manager

Robert Young Estate Winery, Geyserville, CA.

May 13, 2022



Dear Commissioner Carr:

In response to the February 17, 2022, Sonoma County Planning Commission's meeting on winery events/business activities, I wanted to reach out to you directly to express my concerns for the Planning Commission's actions and support for my outlined positions related to winery events/business activities.

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ESTABLISHED 1972

DRY CREEK VALLEY

SONOMA COUNTY

POST OFFICE BOX T

3770 LAMBERT BRIDGE RD

HEALDSBURG, CA 95448

TELEPHONE 707.433.1000

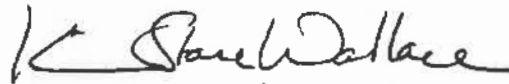
FAXSIMILE 707.433.5329

WWW.DRYCREEKVINEYARD.COM

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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



May 12, 2022

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
575 Administration Drive
Room 100 A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
bos@sonoma-county.org

Sonoma County Planning Commission
2550 Ventura Ave
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
planningagency@sonoma-county.org

RE: Sonoma County Winery Events and Business Activities

Dear Sonoma County:

Landmark Vineyards is concerned with the recent Sonoma County Planning Commission proposal to restrict permitting for certain events and business activities, and respectfully requests that the County continue to use the existing County General Plan and permitting rules pertaining to wineries.

Landmark Vineyards has been a staple of the community since 1974. We are dedicated to creating rich, balanced, handcrafted, wine that tells the robust history of this particular wine region. We pride ourselves in offering unparalleled experiences for our guests and bringing unique opportunities for the public to learn and engage in the Sonoma County wine industry. One way we do this is through offering a diverse range of programming at our vineyard location, including wine pick up days, winemaker lunches, trade business visits, and offering facilities for local non-profit events. Considering the multitude of challenges facing the Sonoma County wine community these days – from wildfires to impacts from the pandemic – the future of the industry hinges on our ability to bring awareness to the region. As such, it is critically important that these events continue to be allowed.

Landmark Vineyards supports the continued use of the current Sonoma County General Plan provisions regulating events (e.g., Policy AR-4a, Policy AR-4d, and Policy AR-8b), and urges the County to focus on compliance with the existing planning and land use rules that already provide a sufficient structure for the safe and respectful hosting of events in the region.

Sincerely,

Tom LeClair
Associate Vice President, Hospitality

May 13, 2022



Dear Commissioner McCaffery:

In response to the February 17, 2022, Sonoma County Planning Commission's meeting on winery events/business activities, I wanted to reach out to you directly to express my concerns for the Planning Commission's actions and support for my outlined positions related to winery events/business activities.

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SONOMA COUNTY

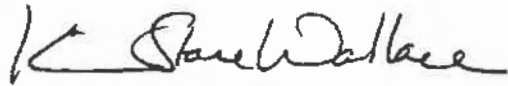
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TELEPHONE 707-433-1000
FACSIMILE 707-433-5329
WWW.DRYCREEKVINEYARD.COM

3. The operation of a winery in any agricultural Land Use Designation requires a Use Permit. Use Permit conditions are required to address the impacts of that operation. The conditions are not to direct how the applicant operates the business. For example, a church needs to provide parking, ADA compliant access and restrooms, however, limitations are not made on the number of weddings they may perform, or the number of services offered.

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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: Christina Meyer <cmeyer1106@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, May 16, 2022 10:31 PM

To: Greg Carr <Greg.Carr@sonoma-county.org>; Pat Gilardi <Pat.Gilardi@sonoma-county.org>; Jacquelynne Ocana <Jacquelynne.Ocana@sonoma-county.org>

Cc: Shaun McCaffery <Shaun.McCaffery@sonoma-county.org>; ErickKoenigshofer@sonoma-county.org <ErickKoenigshofer@sonoma-county.org>

Subject: Wine Event Ordinance

Thank you for all the work you have done on the Winery Event Ordinance.

When you meet on May 19 to review the current draft of the Winery Event Ordinance, please continue to tighten existing loopholes and ambiguities to strengthen the Ordinance: in these areas:

- **Please** clarify that Agricultural Promotional Events do not include private parties, weddings or political, charitable or other non-ag related events

- Please add **IMPORTANT** siting criteria as follows:
 - a. 20-acre minimum parcel size
 - b. 20-foot minimum access roads
 - c. No outdoor amplified sound
 - d. Density standard of no more than 2 facilities in 1/2 mile
 - e. Include other criteria for limiting the size and number of events in such concentrated areas.

THANK YOU SO MUCH. Christina Meyer

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From: Laura Morgan <thesquig@yahoo.com>

Sent: Monday, May 16, 2022 10:51 AM

To: Greg Carr <Greg.Carr@sonoma-county.org>; Pat Gilardi <Pat.Gilardi@sonoma-county.org>; Shaun.McAferly@sonoma-county.edu <Shaun.McAferly@sonoma-county.edu>; Jacquelynne Ocana <Jacquelynne.Ocana@sonoma-county.org>; Eric Koenigshofer <Eric.Koenigshofer@sonoma-county.org>

Subject: Winery Event Ordinance Hearing this Thursday

EXTERNAL

Dear Esteemed Planning Commissioners,

When you meet on May 19 to review the current draft of the Winery Event Ordinance, we ask that you please consider tightening existing loopholes and ambiguities to strengthen the Ordinance:

- **Please** Clarify that Agricultural Promotional Events do not include private parties, weddings or political, charitable or other non-ag related events

- **Please** add **IMPORTANT** siting criteria as follows:
 - a. 20-acre minimum parcel size
 - b. 20-foot minimum access roads
 - c. No outdoor amplified sound
 - d. Density standard of no more than 2 facilities in 1/2 mile
 - e. Include other criteria for limiting the size and number of events in such concentrated areas.

Thank you,

Laura Morgan and Jim Seward
2821 Dyer Ave
Sebastopol

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From: [Anna Ransome](#)
To: [PRMD-WineryEvents](#)
Subject: Winery Event Ordinance
Date: Monday, May 16, 2022 8:05:47 PM

Thank you for your work on the Winery Event Ordinance. Missing from the current draft however, is siting criteria. The Board of Supervisors directed the Staff to develop these standards, not the wine industry or concerned neighbors. The October 2016 Board resolution stated:

“The Board of Supervisors further directs staff to develop standards and siting criteria for events in areas of local concentration, for adoption either as part of the Zoning Code or as separate guidelines (emphasis added).”

Please add siting criteria to the Winery Event Ordinance, including criteria for areas of concentration as directed by the Board. We support the PRSC recommendations, previously suggested:

- a. 20-acre minimum parcel size
- b. 20-foot minimum access roads
- c. No outdoor amplified sound
- d. Density standard of no more than 2 facilities in 1/2 mile

The ordinance should also include other criteria for limiting the size and number of events in such concentrated areas.

Thank you,
Anna Ransome

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From: [Padi Selwyn](#)
To: [PRMD-WineryEvents](#); [Pat Gilardi](#); [Jacquelynn Ocana](#); [Shaun McCaffery](#); [Eric Koenigshofer](#); [Greg Carr](#)
Subject: Comments regarding the Winery Event Ordinance
Date: Monday, May 16, 2022 12:32:50 PM

Dear Staff and Planning Commissioners:

As you put the finishing touches on the Winery Event Ordinance, we are respectfully requesting that you consider the following elements be added. We have been advocating for these two critical categories for the past six years after much study and participation in the Winery Working Group as well as numerous study groups.

1. Clarify that Agricultural Promotional Events do not include private parties, weddings or political, charitable or other non-ag related events

Agricultural Promotional Events should be directly related to the education of consumers where the primary focus of the event is the direct marketing and tasting of wine produced on the premises. Absent this clarification, non-agricultural, commercial uses might be included, simply because wine from the winery is served.

Consistent with the County's current practice, events such as private parties, charitable and political events that do not meet the requirements of an Agricultural Promotional Event should be handled as "cultural" or "special" event through a zoning permit process and not defined as a subset of Winery Events. Such events would not be included in use permits, that create entitlements that run with the land.

2. Include siting criteria, in addition to criteria for areas of concentration as directed by the Board

In October 2016, the Board directed staff to develop siting criteria for areas of concentration. The resolution by the Board in October 2016 states:

"The Board of Supervisors further directs staff to develop standards and siting criteria for events in areas of local concentration, for adoption either as part of the Zoning Code or as separate guidelines (emphasis added)."

The Commission should include siting criteria for Areas of Concentration and for the County as a whole in the creation of the Winery Event Ordinance.

As previously requested, PRSC requests the County include the following criteria:

- a. 20-acre minimum parcel size
- b. 20-foot minimum access roads
- c. No outdoor amplified sound
- d. Density standard of no more than 2 facilities in 1/2 mile

Please include other criteria for limiting the size and number of events in such concentrated areas.

Respectfully submitted,

Padi Selwyn, Co-chair

(707) 569-6876

PRESERVE RURAL SONOMA COUNTY

Visit our website at - <http://www.preserveruralsonomacounty.org>

Like us on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/preserveruralsonomacountyg>

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From: [Dee Swanhuysen](#)
To: [PRMD-WineryEvents](#); [Greg Carr](#); [Pat Gilardi](#); [Jacquelynn Ocana](#); [Shaun McCaffery](#); [Eric Koenigshofer](#)
Subject: Draft Winery Events Ordinance Comments from Dee Swanhuysen
Date: Monday, May 16, 2022 11:33:50 AM



Please consider the comments below in your deliberations on Thursday May 19th.
Thank you, Dee Swanhuysen - 1800 Jonive Rd, Sebastopol, CA 95472 — phone 707-823-3236

Comment #1 and #2 refer to: Attachment 2: “Winery Events Policy – Standards Comparison” spreadsheet below:

Local Focus/Source of Wine Grapes	None. <i>June 2021 Staff Comment: Zoning Code requires 1) agricultural processing to consist of agricultural products grown or produced primarily on-site or in the local area; and 2) tasting rooms to serve agricultural products grown or processed in the county – pursuant to Sec. 26-18-030 (Agricultural Processing) and Sec. 26-18-210 (Tasting Rooms) of the Zoning Code.</i>		
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1. Local Focus/Source of Wine Grapes — what % of ag products must be grown on-site or locally grown to comply with this ordinance? What is definition of “locally grown?”
2. How are the following allowed food services, which are mandated to be “local,” to be enforced or monitored?

“Prepared meals featuring **local foods and food products** is allowed in conjunction with wine events.”

“Food and Wine Pairing means providing samples or tastes of **site-grown or locally-grown food products** that are showcased with different wines.”

Below comment refers to 26-18-260 – Winery Standards D6:

Recommend adding "during regular tasting room hours" after the word "time" in the first sentence below:

Winery Events means a gathering of people at a pre-scheduled date and time. Some events last for two or three days. In these cases, each day is counted as a separate event.

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From: [Marc Bommersbach](#)
To: [PRMD-WineryEvents](#); [Pat Gilardi](#); [Greg Carr](#); [Eric Koenigshofer](#); [Jacquelynne Ocana](#); [Shaun McCaffery](#); [Brian Oh](#); [Georgia McDaniel](#)
Subject: Winery Event Ordinance May 19 hearing
Date: Tuesday, May 17, 2022 2:30:50 AM

Commissioners,

Ag Promotion

I appreciate the concern expressed by several Commissioners that Ag promotion should only allow visitor uses in ag zones where the primary focus and the reason for attendance is the sampling and direct marketing of wine produced on the premises. There are already examples where, if the only requirement to be considered an ag promotion event is the serving of a glass of wine, we have seen yoga classes and regular movie showings held at wineries. Such uses are not allowed in Ag zones and belong in commercially zoned areas.

Private parties, charitable and political events clearly do not meet the requirements of an Agricultural Promotional Event, and should not be defined as a subset of Winery Events, and not be included in use permits that create entitlements that run with the land. As been the County's practice, such uses should be handled as a "cultural" or "special" event through a zoning permit process.

Siting Criteria

It is time for Staff to develop siting criteria for Areas of Concentration as directed by the Board of Supervisors in their October 2016 resolution.

"The Board of Supervisors further directs staff to develop standards and siting criteria for events in areas of local concentration, for adoption either as part of the Zoning Code or as separate guidelines (emphasis added)."

Community groups have spent considerable time and effort working with stakeholder groups and made numerous proposals to Staff for definitive siting criteria for areas of concentration and for areas of the County that are not yet concentrated. While it is important for Staff to get input from community groups and the wine industry, at the end of the day, it is the County's responsibility to draft and secure approval for such standards.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Marc Bommersbach

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www.winewaterwatch.org

May 17, 2022

RE: Winery Event Ordinance

Wine and Water Watch is a local organization of over 250 citizens concerned with the overdevelopment of the wine tourism industry and promotes ethical land and water use. We oppose the industrialization of agricultural lands not growing food, medicine fiber or silage.

We appreciate the effort to create balance of impacts from winery events in Sonoma County, however a few details overlooked will have huge impacts in the community. Agricultural events are not weddings or parties and need to be clearly defined as not part of agricultural promotion at our wineries.

There is clearly an over concentration of winery events that have caused traffic and safety concerns. Parameters should be clearly addressed for not only residents but winery owners who need to know before time and money are spent to seek approval. Access and parcel size should be used for that evaluation. We suggest 20 acre minimum and no conflicting events within a minimum of 1/2 mile.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

Janus Holt Matthes for

Wine & Water Watch Board

From: [Mercy Sidbury](#)
To: [PRMD-WineryEvents](#)
Subject: Re: Winery Event Ordinance
Date: Tuesday, May 17, 2022 11:45:22 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for your work on the Winery Event Ordinance. Missing from the current draft however, is siting criteria. The Board of Supervisors directed the Staff to develop these standards, not the wine industry or concerned neighbors. The October 2016 Board resolution stated:

“The Board of Supervisors further directs staff to develop standards and siting criteria for events in areas of local concentration, for adoption either as part of the Zoning Code or as separate guidelines (emphasis added).”

Please add siting criteria to the Winery Event Ordinance, including criteria for areas of concentration as directed by the Board. We support the PRSC recommendations, previously suggested:

- a. 20-acre minimum parcel size
- b. 20-foot minimum access roads
- c. No outdoor amplified sound
- d. Density standard of no more than 2 facilities in 1/2 mile

The ordinance should also include other criteria for limiting the size and number of events in such concentrated areas.

Thank you,

Mercy Sidbury
District 5

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do not click any web links, attachments, and **never** give out your user ID or password.

From: Jill Rayna Lippitt <jennerjill@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, May 17, 2022 1:13 AM

To: Greg Carr <Greg.Carr@sonoma-county.org>; Pat Gilardi <Pat.Gilardi@sonoma-county.org>; Jacquelynne Ocana <Jacquelynne.Ocana@sonoma-county.org>; Shaun McCaffery <Shaun.McCaffery@sonoma-county.org>; Eric Koenigshofer <Eric.Koenigshofer@sonoma-county.org>

Subject: Winery Event Ordinance

When you meet on May 19 to review the current draft of the Winery Event Ordinance, please consider tightening existing loopholes and ambiguities to strengthen the Ordinance:

- **Please** clarify that Agricultural Promotional Events do not include private parties, weddings or political, charitable or other non-ag related events
- Please add **IMPORTANT** siting criteria as follows:
 - a. 20-acre minimum parcel size
 - b. 20-foot minimum access roads
 - c. No outdoor amplified sound
 - d. Density standard of no more than 2 facilities in 1/2 mile
 - e. Include other criteria for limiting the size and number of events in such concentrated areas.

Thank you,

Jill Lippitt
Jenner, CA

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From: [Deb Preston](#)
To: [PRMD-WineryEvents](#); [Greg Carr](#); [Pat Gilardi](#); [Jacquelyne Ocana](#); [Shaun McCaffery](#); [Eric Koenigshofer](#)
Subject: Re: Winery Event Ordinance
Date: Wednesday, May 18, 2022 7:36:01 AM

Thank you for your work on the Winery Event Ordinance.

The current draft would be greatly improved with the clarification that an Agricultural Promotional Event should be directly related to the education and development of consumers where the primary focus of the event and the reason for attendance is the sampling and direct marketing of wine produced on the premises. Without such clarification, non-agricultural, commercial uses might be included, simply because wine from the winery is served. Please clarify that Agricultural Promotional Events do not include private parties, weddings or political, charitable or other non-ag related events.

In addition, siting criteria is missing from the current draft.

The Board of Supervisors directed the Staff to develop these standards, not the wine industry or concerned neighbors. The October 2016 Board resolution stated:

“The Board of Supervisors further directs staff to develop standards and siting criteria for events in areas of local concentration, for adoption either as part of the Zoning Code or as separate guidelines (emphasis added).”

Please add siting criteria to the Winery Event Ordinance, including criteria for areas of concentration as directed by the Board. I support the PRSC recommendations, previously suggested:

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- b. 20-foot minimum access roads
- c. No outdoor amplified sound
- d. Density standard of no more than 2 facilities in 1/2 mile

The ordinance should also include other criteria for limiting the size and number of events in such concentrated areas.

Thank you.
Deborah Preston
5391 Lone Pine Rd
Sebastopol

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