

Greetings Supervisor/Commissioner _____:

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 non-profit 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.