

Winery Working Group Meeting Notes

July 8, 2015

Second Meeting

- Regulations must address cumulative impact from growing number of events.
- Consider Mitigation Measures in GP2020 to address cumulative impacts:
 - On rural character
 - Quantify impacts
 - Secondary and incidental uses
 - “Local area”
- Need meaningful enforcement
 - Consistency
 - Clear rules and follow them
- Emergency action plans for eventing/weekends (emergency)
- Equal Customer Service for applications and complaints (GJ report)
- Lack of definition of key terms and policies for visitor serving uses
- “Pseudo” policies, memos, staff report, and enforcement not well documented or communicated
- Definitions: “Industry-wide events” (why no permit process?)
- Define “Rural Character”
- Describe an enforcement program for all wineries (including UP where events are not specified)
- Agricultural zone lands are getting away from primary Ag use as visitor serving uses continue to increase.
- Over concentration of tasting/events in Sonoma Valley/Kenwood and HWY 121

- Current environmental impacts and over concentration unknown due to Administrative permit issuance and activities happening that are not approved
- Look back to GP2020 EIR Mitigation Measures
- The regulations are referring back to polices that are open to interpretation
- Need to define events and standards in the development code
- CEQA environmental studies are prepared by the applicant so interpretation is biased toward applicant (ex: Noise Studies)
- Need consistency, clarity, and certainty for applicant and neighbors make mitigation effective in implementation of GP
- Burden is on the neighbors to show lack of consistency with GP
- More fair, transparent balanced process
- Need to define what is allowed and not allowed in tasting rooms
 - Food service, commercial kitchen, kitchen, catering, and restaurant
 - Difference between “recognize industry group” vs. individual winerie
 - Lodging and “similar lodging” where is for marketing purposes – standards and limits
- Greater understanding of the current wine industry “seated tasting”
- When does State Law require a commercial kitchen?
- GP – visitor serving uses must be secondary to local Ag
 - What does this mean?
 - What is truly marketing of local products (what are not)
- Getting back to the primary land use purpose – growing crops
- Apply policies consistently
- Apply GP2020 Mitigation Measures consistently and same with Conditions of Approval
- Clarify sitting criteria (especially: roadway access/network) and groundwater sustainability

- Threshold based planning (see El Dorado County)
- Clarify standards for converting agricultural production land
- Develop Design guidelines per GP2020
- Heritage Roads
- Improve enforcement
- Scenic Corridors (approving developments in SC – it’s affecting rural character on Westside Road)
- Administrative Approvals of Use Permits. Re-look at what is appropriate for Administrative approval and what needs a public process. Who has authority to approve? Must document in file. Avoid “piece meal.”
- Slipping into a Land Use category “Commercial Ag” that was not contemplated in GP2020 (not growing and processing)
- Need more clarity on secondary and incidental
- Infrastructure and cumulative impact analysis needs to go beyond wineries to include growth/other recreation/roads/water/emergency response
- Interest in performance-based standards (focus on off-site impacts and less on the activities – number of people, etc.)
- Scenic Corridor/Historic Districts application in zoning seems out dated
- Important process – approach with care. There is a lot that is working; let’s not make it worse. Avoid one size fits all.
 - Opportunities for small family wineries decreasing. Too much process, studies, hearings, costs. Projects approved are not the ones wanted.
- Key issue – Impact to neighbors
 - West Dry Creek Road and Westside Road have increasing impacts
- Bicycle impacts
 - Is it safety or issues with slow traffic? Speed limit compliance bike/car conflicts.
- Audit and Enforcement Program (not just complaint driven)

- Event tracking of events
- Condition of compliance for many wineries – annual report (reporting on number of events) to the Director? Are these filed?
- No single inventory of permitted events so how can we evaluate cumulative impacts if we don't know how many are happening?
- Preserving Ag in a sustainable way that supports small farm. More info on economics of our Ag/wine grape/wine industry in Sonoma County.
- Check data in PowerPoint on amount produced
- Need flexibility for Direct to consumer activities
- Need to let people know many vineyards are irrigated with recycled water
- Need an on-going analysis of events and criteria for overconcentration (definition)
- Comprehensive Event coordinator in Sonoma Valley but more is needed. Centralize database and scheduling.
- Importance of public safety and our roads (emergency response)
 - Define/regulate/permit so we know when/where events are
- Concerned that regulations should be informed by the scale of and winery and events
- For CEQA checklist, need to consider on-site and off-site and cumulative public safety impacts
- Need to coordinate winery events with non-winery events
- Diverse Ag zone (lots of non-conforming DA parcels) – many of these parcels have dominate residential use. This effects noise policy interpretation. Parcel size is an issue.
- Need to evaluate real noise impacts (not just on paper) of impact at the property line, especially on small parcels
- A consistent planning process will reduce the need for enforcement
- Many small wineries rely more and more on wine sales to stay in business
- Few distributors support small winery products.

- Ratios – 3:2 to 11:1 (Distilleries:Wineries)
- Address production & Events in Industrial zones.
- Imbalance of grape production and processing capacity. How do we focus on Sonoma County grape processing in County (are these limits enforced?)
- Discuss legality of these limits
- Need to consider sustainability of diversified Ag (survey Sonoma County wine growers)
- Notification is limited to a few hundred feet (many don't know about project). Notice not sent out until late in process after expensive studies, making it harder to make changes.
- Standard CoA closing at 4:00 pm increases traffic. Consider a 6:00 pm closure.