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
  
  o Food service, commercial kitchen, kitchen, catering, and restaurant
  
  o Difference between “recognize industry group” vs. individual winerie
  
  o 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
  
  o What does this mean?
  
  o 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 mealing.”

- 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)
  
  o 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.