



October 9, 2009

*Santa Ynez  
Valley Alliance*

Honorable Joseph Centeno, Chair  
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors  
105 East Anapamu Street, 4th Floor  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

**Re: Crossroads Special Events and Rezone**

Dear Chairman Centeno and Board Members:

On October 13, you will consider a request to allow a large number of so-called “special events”, year after year, on rural, agriculturally zoned property on Foxen Canyon Road in the Santa Ynez Valley.

If approved, this request will set a terrible precedent, and it should, therefore, be denied by the Board.

The County’s AGII zoning clearly states:

*“The intent is to preserve these lands for **long term** agricultural use”* (emphasis added)

In order to ensure this preservation, land use codes require that approval of non-agricultural uses must be found to be “incidental” to the agricultural use of the property. Otherwise, the addition of non agricultural uses effectively becomes a de facto rezoning of the property to commercial zoning.

The relationship of a proposed event to the agricultural use of the property is critical in determining whether or not such an event should or should not be allowed. Santa Barbara County land use policies and zoning ordinances have been crafted with this principle in mind.

Important tests must be met prior to approval of requests for non-agricultural uses of agricultural zoned properties. For example, there is an obvious agricultural benefit to an annual Pumpkin Festival on a pumpkin farm, or a Christmas event at a Christmas tree farm. Visitor serving uses like vegetable stands, pick-your-own fruit, and wine tasting have clear relationships to agriculture.

In contrast, the majority of the “special events” being requested by this application are simply “parties for profit” — such as weddings, conventions and concerts — that have nothing to do with the agricultural use of the property.

Economically, the events business is ten to twenty times more lucrative than the agricultural use of the property. No rational argument can be made that the number and type of events being requested for the Crossroads property are “incidental” to the agricultural use of that property.

Approval of this request would set a bad precedent for other agricultural zoned lands. If it is acceptable in this case, then why not any other agricultural zoned property in the Santa Ynez Valley? Why not on agricultural zoned land on the Gaviota Coast or in the Carpinteria Foothills?

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Finally, the County needs to undertake a comprehensive study of the nature and impacts of tourist related activities on agricultural zoned properties before any proposals of this nature are considered.

The Santa Ynez Valley Alliance was formed to work collaboratively with individuals, groups and governments to protect the rural character of the Santa Ynez Valley and support good stewardship of natural and agricultural resources through education, comprehensive planning and public participation.

Consistent with our mission, the Santa Ynez Valley Alliance strongly urges you to deny the Crossroads Special Events and Rezone on October 13th.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Oliver', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mark Oliver, President  
MO:cdf