



SANTA BARBARA VINTNERS

October 28, 2016

Dear Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors,

On behalf of the Santa Barbara County Vintners Association we strongly urge you to vote against the Draft Santa Barbara County Winery Ordinance as written on Tuesday, November 1st.

We can't support the draft winery ordinance as written because there has been a lack of collaborative dialogue on the formation of the regulations and the resulting ordinance is overly restrictive. This ordinance does not streamline or provide clarity to the winery permit process, and only further restricts agriculture and the selling of wine. We have been active participants in the winery ordinance draft process meeting with Santa Barbara County Planning and Development staff numerous times, providing requested information, and attending all the public workshops and Planning Commission Hearings.

Below are many of our concerns that remain with the draft winery ordinance as written.

1. There is a lack of legal understanding of the impacts on grandfathered wineries (prior to the 2004 creation of the current winery ordinance) and existing wineries (after 2004.) What "substantial" changes to a winery development plan will trigger compliance with the new, more restrictive regulations? County staff has simply responded "that what is substantial can only be determined on a project-by-project basis." This will negatively affect winery property values and disincentive structural investments like upgrades to wine production facilities and tasting rooms.
2. The draft winery ordinance is a much more restrictive special events ordinance that discriminately affects the winery industry. Winery special events can only be held with a conditional use permit, making them not allowed in Tier A and B.
3. Vineyards without wineries, and other agriculture parcels, are not subject to the new restrictions. Vineyards are able to host up to 300 people with a one day special event permit. We request that special events be pulled out of the winery ordinance and create a fair and equitable special events ordinance for all agriculture parcels in Santa Barbara County.
4. The EIR is based on flawed data from the number of stated wineries to traffic study counts.

5. Planted acreage requirements doubles in two out of three winery tiers with no justification. This change will require significant more investment in vineyard development before the winery is approved and built. It also negatively impacts small growers that sell their grapes to wineries.

6. Winery visitor numbers are arbitrary and not based on known/stated benchmarks including Fire Code Regulations and are unrelated to the acreage of the property.

7. The Santa Barbara County Planning and Development staff has not provided a side-by-side comparison of the differences between the existing and the draft winery ordinance in table format.

8. There has been a lack of communication and transparency in the scheduling of the Draft Winery Ordinance Board of Supervisors Hearing.

9. The SBC Planning Commission approved the Draft Winery Ordinance (with changes) on September 19th. On October 5th at the Agriculture Advisory Committee (AAC) hearing Dr. Glenn Russell gave a winery ordinance update that included the date of the SBC Board of Supervisor Hearing on November 1st. There was no time to ask the AAC for a letter of support because the AAC meets only once a month. It was only at Morgen McLaughlin's request to Dr. Russell that the Interested Parties email was sent out on October 6th giving less than 30 days to prepare for the November 1st hearing.

10. The Draft Winery Ordinance (with updates from the SBC Planning Commission Hearing) was not available for easy viewing on the SBC website as of October 25th (was buried in the October 18th Board of Supervisors agenda), giving less than 7 days to prepare. A call to Dr. Glenn Russell on October 25th got document links added to the Winery Ordinance Website page.

11. Note the timeline difference in the communications regarding Short-Term-Rentals (STRs). The STR Ordinance was approved the SBC Planning Commission on August 10th. Terry Rodriguez's Interested Parties email went out on October 4th more than two months in advance of the December 6th Board of Supervisors Hearing.

The wine industry in California and around the world has changed considerably in the last five years. There has been a significant positive sales trend toward premium wines, like those crafted in Santa Barbara County. More people are traveling to wine regions to meet the wine makers and learn the history and culture of these unique places. For many wineries, the vast majority of their wine sales come from visitors coming directly to the winery, rather than purchasing the wines elsewhere.

Santa Barbara County wineries already face more land-use restrictions than our neighbors to the North in Sonoma, Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties. We are at a competitive disadvantage in attracting wine country visitors and need the support of our County government to build successful and sustainable agriculture businesses here in Santa Barbara County.

The Santa Barbara County wine industry provides more than 9,000 full-time equivalent jobs, generates more than \$93,000,000 annually in local and states taxes, and contributes millions of dollars to Santa Barbara County-based charities. To keep the Santa Barbara County wine industry sustainable, we need land-use laws that help support our local, family-owned businesses.

We urge you to vote NO on the Draft Winery Ordinance as written and create an industry taskforce to develop an ordinance that helps foster and preserve sustainable agriculture in Santa Barbara County.

Sincerely,

Morgen McLaughlin

Morgen McLaughlin
Executive Director, Santa Barbara Vintners