

LABARGE

#3



March 10, 2020

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
RE: Santa Rita Valley Ag., Inc. Cannabis Cultivation Permit

Dear Chair and Supervisors of the Board,

I am the owner and winemaker of LaBarge Winery in Lompoc. Along with countless other vineyard and winery owners, farmers, neighbors and friends, I have grave concerns about the impacts of large scale cannabis grows in our county and the incompatibility with the legacy agriculture that has thrived here for decades.

A dear friend who owns a large vineyard management company in northern California informed me that “the entirety of the state’s wine industry is staring with mouth agape at the mess that has been created in Santa Barbara County” from the cannabis ordinance. The local wine industry has worked tirelessly to promote Santa Barbara County in the eyes of wine connoisseurs worldwide. We will not sit by idle and watch our investments in the local economy be destroyed by the mishandling of the cannabis ordinance. On top of that, we don’t want to see the cannabis industry piggy back on the marketing of the wine appellations and destroy our long fought efforts. When residents went to the polls to vote to legalize marijuana in the state, no one could have ever imagined what would be transpiring soon thereafter in our own back yard. The people didn’t vote to have a small number of officials and bureaucrats to destroy their livelihoods.

On a personal level, there is a cannabis project in the approval process next to my winery on Sweeney Road in Lompoc that will irreparably damage my vineyard and winery beyond reprieve. My worry is that I will be continually threatened with lawsuits due to spray drift even though we are certified organic, have marijuana terpenes that will taint my grapes and wines, and lose out on much needed winery visitors due to unsightly nature of the hoop houses and hideous smell of marijuana.

I urge your consideration to continue these appeals until the Planning Commission has time to make recommendations to the cannabis ordinance. The Planning Commission is pursuing amendments per your direction and will likely recommend amendments that could impact Santa Rita Valley Ag’s operation. I’m sure you’ve all received a lot of negative feedback about cannabis from your constituents, so let’s try and make this better for everyone and not worse. Setting a precedent in this case will be very worrying for everyone in this beautiful place we call home.

Thank you for your consideration,
Pierre LaBarge IV