



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 11/1/2022

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Board of Supervisors

Staff Name and Phone Number: Supervisor Susan Gorin, 707-565-2241

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): First

Title:

Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission Winery Guidelines

Recommended Action:

Receive the Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission Winery Guidelines (First District)

Executive Summary:

This item presents the Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission's (SVCAC) Sonoma Valley Winery Guidelines (Attachment 1), which the SVCAC Advisory body will use to make recommendations to the Permit Sonoma staff, City of Sonoma, Board of Zoning Adjustments, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors regarding future winery projects within the jurisdiction of the Commission.

The intention of these Guidelines is to protect Agricultural Zones by advising how much winery-related activity is allowed on land that is zoned Agricultural, and by managing these uses in a way that minimizes cumulative impacts. Also, the Guidelines are also intended to advise applicants on the design of their projects.

Finally, Attachment 1 includes SVCAC suggestions provided to Permit Sonoma staff to inform the County's Ordinance amendments to the Sonoma County Code Chapter 26 (Zoning Regulations) to add winery definitions and standards for new winery visitor serving uses on lands zoned Land Intensive Agriculture, Land Extensive Agriculture, and Diverse Agriculture (outside of the coastal zone). Under a separate action (2022-0867) on today's agenda, the Board will be conducting a public hearing to consider ordinance changes.

Discussion:

Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission Authority and History

The County of Sonoma and the City of Sonoma first established the Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission (SVCAC) in 1993 pursuant to Government Code section 65101 as a joint advisory agency to provide a regular forum for citizen participation in the formation of public policy, to consider local planning issues concerning the Sonoma Valley, to evaluate solutions to these issues, to advise elected officials and other decision makers, and to form a bridge for communication between the various governmental agencies and the general public. Most recently the Commission was extended for five additional years, with the term ending December 31, 2023.

County and City share responsibility for local planning in the Sonoma Valley. The County and City continue to be faced with the potential for unprecedented population growth and development extending into the future.

be faced with the potential for unprecedented population growth and development extending into the future. The Sonoma Valley, in particular, with its beautiful landscape, historic buildings, and growing industries producing wine, dairy, and other agricultural products, is an attractive location for development. Well planned communities are beneficial to the public interest and are promoted when the County and City coordinate their local planning activities.

The SVCAC provides advisory recommendations on project and policy referrals to the Sonoma County Planning Commission, City of Sonoma Planning Commission, or other hearing body as applicable. They also more broadly consider local planning issues concerning the Sonoma Valley, evaluate solutions to these issues, advise elected officials and other decision makers, and form a bridge for communication between the various governmental agencies and the general public.

Winery Guidelines Background, Development, and Purpose

In 2016, during discussion of a Countywide Winery Events ordinance update, the Board of Supervisors directed Permit Sonoma to work with the community to develop guidelines in three areas of concentration in Sonoma County: Dry Creek, Westside Road, and Sonoma Valley. While all three of these areas share a concentration of wineries and associated uses, each area differs in important ways, thus the need for separate guidelines. For example, in the Sonoma Valley, wineries are concentrated along the main transit corridor of Highway 12, which cannot be expanded to accommodate additional traffic. The Sonoma Valley is also a hot spot for wine tourism, which brings both economic benefits to the region and disruption and difficulties for residents living in areas of concentration, especially along the Highway 12 corridor.

Permit Sonoma staff worked with Sonoma Valley stakeholders (the Sonoma Valley Stakeholders Group) on the creation of standards and criteria to inform a set of local guidelines for the Sonoma Valley. The Sonoma Valley Stakeholders Group included rural residents, agricultural operators, and wine business representatives. The guidelines were to be presented to SVCAC for recommendations and adoption. This work began in September 2017, but was interrupted by the Sonoma Complex Fires. Work resumed in 2019, though was again interrupted by the 2019 power shutoffs, Kincade Fire, and the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The Stakeholder Group's recommendations were presented to SVCAC on November 18, 2020.

Recognizing that more work was needed on these guidelines, the SVCAC appointed an Ad Hoc to continue to refine the guidelines at the December 2, 2020 meeting. The Ad Hoc returned on May 25, 2021 and presented revised guidelines, along with an Introduction document. The Introduction documents is a primer on the main points contained in the Guidelines, and contains additional recommendations on the topic of Wineries and Winery Events for the County more generally. The Introduction and Guidelines were unanimously approved by the Commission at the May 25 meeting. The approved updated most significant changes are:

1. Identify the entirety of the Sonoma Valley Planning Area as over-concentrated
2. Limit the total number of events to 12 per year per winery.
3. Limit the concentration of wineries to two per half mile of roadway.
4. Increase the minimum parcel size for tasting rooms from 10 acres to 20 acres.
5. Limit the percentage of permanent structures to 20% for hospitality uses and to 10% for administrative uses.
6. Require events to be cancelled when a red flag warning has been declared in the subject area.

These Sonoma Valley Winery Guidelines do not carry the weight of an ordinance, and do not apply Countywide. The Guidelines will be used by the SVCAC to shape and facilitate deliberations and advisory recommendations on winery project referrals received. Each project will continue to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with the Guidelines providing consistent definitions and identifying project elements that may be of particular interest and concern to the Commission. The Guidelines will be shared with applicants during their submittal process, and included in the SVCAC Blue Book.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Prior Board Actions:

- December 11, 2019: Resolution #18-0510, Resolution Of The Board Of Supervisors Of The County Of Sonoma, State Of California, Authorizing The Chair To Execute A Joint Powers Agreement With The City Of Sonoma Continuing The Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission For A Period Of Five (5) Years From January 1, 2019, To December 31, 2023
- March 11, 2014: Resolution #14-0086, Resolution Of The Board Of Supervisors Of The County Of Sonoma, State Of California, Authorizing The Chair To Execute A Joint Powers Agreement With The City Of Sonoma Continuing The Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission For A Period Of Five (5) Years From January 1, 2014, To December 31, 2018.
- February 3, 2009: Resolution #09-0097, Resolution Of The Board Of Supervisors Of The County Of Sonoma, State Of California, Authorizing The Chair To Execute A Joint Powers Agreement With The City Of Sonoma Continuing The Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission For A Period Of Five (5) Years From January 1, 2009, To December 31, 2013.
- January 6, 2004: Resolution # 04-0026: Resolution Of The Board Of Supervisors Of The County Of Sonoma, State Of California, Authorizing The Chair To Execute A Joint Powers Agreement With The City Of Sonoma Continuing The Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission For A Period Of Five (5) Years From January 1, 2004, To December 31, 2008.
- October 6, 1998: Resolution # 98-1281: Resolution of the Board of Supervisors, County of Sonoma, State of California, Approving the Amendments to the Sonoma Valley Citizen's Advisory Commission Joint Powers Agreement.
- October 12, 1993: Resolution # 93-1552: Resolution of the Board of Supervisors, County of Sonoma, State of California, Approving and Authorizing the Chair to Execute a Joint Powers Agreement with the City of Sonoma Establishing the Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission.

FISCAL SUMMARY**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

N/A

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Winery Guidelines Introduction and Winery Guidelines

Attachment 2: SVCAC Boundary Map

Agenda Date: 11/1/2022

Attachment 3: JPA 2019-2023

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A