

Summary of Comments

Winery Ordinance Update Community Meeting #3 – Special Events at a Winery

January 10, 2013 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Santa Barbara County Public Works Conference Room

620 West Foster Road

Santa Maria, CA

Dear Interested Persons,

Below is a summary of the public comments received during the Winery Ordinance Update community meeting held on January 10, 2013. Thank you to everyone that participated; your comments will be considered as we move through the process. The comments were either sent by email, written on a comment card, or spoken at the meeting. Please keep in mind the following as you read through the comments:

- Some of the comments pertain to more than one category. If you do not see your comment in one category, look in the other categories.
- If a comment was made more than once, it may have been recorded only once.
- All comments are weighted equally regardless of who made the comment or how the comment was made (email, comment card, or spoken).
- When necessary, comments were edited for grammar, punctuation, brevity, etc. but the original intent of the comment was retained.
- The comments are opinions expressed by the citizens and do not necessarily reflect County positions or policies.
- Comments that report a “fact” have not been checked for accuracy.

Comments are organized into the following questions:

- What are the issues and perspectives regarding Special Events at wineries?
- What parameters should we consider for Special Events at a winery?
- What are some tools for managing Special Events at a winery?
- How can we balance Special Events with maintaining the principal use of the land for agriculture?

Comments that pertain to special events but do not fit into the above categories were included under “Other comments”.

What are the issues and perspectives regarding Special Events at wineries?

1. Special Events will happen. Some are going to San Luis Obispo County, causing us to lose money.
2. The Special Events baseline is not zero. They are essential and a conduit to the industry.
3. The cities may not cooperate.
4. What are the rules regarding commercial events at a residential house?

5. The Valley doesn't want changes regarding special events.
6. What is the cost of Winery Ordinance update?
7. Zoning of agriculture is an issue—it introduces non-agriculture.
8. Some special events are about education regarding farming; and they must comply with the Williamson Act.
9. Agricultural tourism supports farmers.
10. What happens when conditions are not met?
11. Neighbors are reluctant to file complaints.
12. Noise from special events can be heard up to 5 miles away.
13. Noise mitigation needs to be effective.
14. Non-profits have difficulty finding sites; don't count these as special events.
15. Special events support small businesses and the economy.
16. Special events need to be available for non-profits.
17. Special events are a gateway experience to agriculture and tourism.
18. Special events provide jobs and tax revenues.
19. Neighbors are upset because these special event activities are being classified as agricultural when they are by definition commercial.
20. Neighbors' rights and protection should come first.
21. Because of the "Disclosure Law," homeowners now need to disclose to perspective buyers if they live close to a winery which holds special events and has a tasting room. This can be a hardship on homeowners trying to sell their property.
22. The negative impact is the same on neighbors whether it's a non-profit event or a wedding- neighbors' rights must be taken into consideration.
23. Having events shouldn't be an objective of a winery.
24. We should include wine industry representatives in the committee creating the new ordinance.
25. Anyone living in the area should be willing to tolerate a day or night of noisiness; they are still left with 340 or so days, each year, of blissful quiet, little to no traffic, great beauty, delightful climate, and good friends and neighbors.
26. It is ridiculous that a minuscule minority can strong-arm an entire county and have such a major financial impact.
27. Ballard Canyon Rd is an undersized County road not built for this amount or type of traffic. The County has no funds to improve the roads, yet we are making decisions on increasing traffic in this area first, before improvements will be made.
28. There is no definition of 'gatherings' in the ordinance. However, it seems that the County is now considering regulations of those as well, which further hampers the economic viability of the wineries.
29. Including fundraisers in a winery's allotted events will reduce the number of fundraisers the wine industry can provide nonprofits. This is a detriment to the entire community.
30. It is not fair to disturb and endanger large groups of homeowners just to give a business permission for a special event when they could do this in a commercial venue.
31. Special events at wineries further the connection between food, family, and friends.

32. Special event activities can be an integral component to a marketing plan by allowing an additional income stream to support farming operations.
33. Special events provide community-wide benefits to charitable organizations, local trade organizations, cultural events/ceremonies, hospitality, wedding vendors, and music and entertainment industries.
34. The wine industry benefits the state economy: \$61.5 billion in State Economic Impact, 330,000 jobs in CA, \$12.3 billion in state wages, \$101.5 million given in annual charitable contributions from CA wineries, \$14.7 billion paid in state and federal taxes.
35. Strawberry farmers, row crop farmers, and cattle ranchers are a driving force in our agricultural economy, and they are not asking for special privileges to supplement income.
36. It is not the County's responsibility to employ a caterer from Ventura or an event planner from Santa Barbara.
37. All vintners are not alike, and they should not be lumped together.
38. You would not allow a cocktail lounge, a restaurant, or a banquet hall to be built in the middle of a residential neighborhood. This is what some vintners in the Santa Ynez valley are requesting.
39. Limiting the amount of winery events will limit the ability of public charities to hold a fundraiser and will further reduce revenue opportunities.

What parameters should we consider for Special Events at a winery?

40. Jobs are provided by Special Events.
41. Cumulative impacts need consideration.
42. Special events create loyal customers.
43. It is not a good idea to allow unlimited charitable events at wineries on agriculturally zoned land.
44. Direct sales are a necessity for many wineries.
45. Special events are more important to the community than wineries.
46. Unintended consequences are not considered in the ordinance.
47. Noise impacts are subjective.
48. Consider regulating the wine facilities outside the Santa Ynez Valley differently.
49. Special events have become important, e.g. direct sales.
50. The 200-person limit should have exceptions.
51. Special events are not automatically approved with a winery permit.
52. Frequency of special events should not be limited; they are not as profitable as wine classes.
53. Frequency of Special Events has to be regulated.
54. Lighting impacts from special events should be considered as well.
55. Acreage should be considered.
56. Roblar/Hwy 154 is a dangerous intersection; events will just make it more dangerous.
57. Special events have less traffic than peak commutes.
58. Agriculture should be supported or it will be developed.
59. All special events are not the same; if they are truly charitable, it is not a problem.
60. Agricultural events (like a pumpkin patch) are different from commercial special events.

61. Concern about buzzed drivers and rural, narrow roads—especially when sharing them with bikes.
62. Napa set up agricultural pressure. The identity of Napa is not due to neighborhood proximity.
63. There are long-time residents concerned with proliferation and cumulative impacts. We need to address compatibility of existing special events, both on and off agricultural land.
64. The ordinance includes a 20-acre minimum reduced by “review authority.” What was the process for this? Clarify ordinance language regarding this to make it black and white.
65. The impacts are critical, not the number of people or number of events.
66. Neighborhood impacts are considered—some places work, some places don’t.
67. The new ordinance ought to take into consideration a property’s size and location when determining allowed Special Events, as well as headcount restrictions—not its case production as it is irrelevant to the event’s impact.

What are some tools for managing Special Events at a winery?

68. Use Good Neighbor Policy as a template (presented to County staff by Santa Barbara County Cattlemens Association Representative).
69. Standards are already in the Ordinance.
70. Profit is problematic as a standard.
71. There is no effective county ordinance enforcement in place for rural wine tasting.
72. There needs to be at least a 600-ft setback of processing from neighboring property lines.
73. “Winery Special Event” definition should remain intact by excluding gatherings of less than 80 people.
74. There should be a process to ensure impacts are mitigated.
75. Have a simple permitting process to inform applicants prior to submitting an application.
76. Application process and mitigation is already strenuous, and appeals can drag out the process.
77. Create specific standards to provide to the industry.
78. Inspections are essential to assure compliance.
79. Traffic control is critical.
80. Any kind of outdoor music, amplified or not, should be prohibited. There is no effective mitigation for outdoor music.
81. Use Napa city as an example: “no” to parties, “yes” to marketing.
82. Adopt the Napa ordinance as is.
83. We can’t rely on neighborhood complaints regarding “commercial” event enforcement.
84. If impacts are addressed, don’t regulate numbers.
85. The wording needs to be more cut and dry in the ordinance.
86. Create Clearance Zones that are much wider than what is currently adopted.
87. Why can’t permits be revoked for multiple violations?
88. A similar ordinance could be drafted to protect the existing neighbors from new winery development within the established “Clearance Zone.”
89. One option is to remove special events from the Winery Ordinance and have it as a separate permit process.

90. Wineries should apply for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) every time if they want a special event permit, 30 days in advance, and the cost of that CUP would help mitigate the impacts.
91. The concept of an area-specific ordinance should be considered.
92. Consider turning the regulatory framework around so that permits are issued based on timing and location, which controls the impacts area-wide and allows management of cumulative impacts. Create special events zones bounded by constraints; wineries would apply to qualify for Special Event permit by meeting criteria similar to existing Tier I-III approach. Permits would be issued in advance of the coming year, or quarterly, or semi-annually. Most wineries know in advance what dates they are holding special events; to book and sell weddings, they can request dates in the lottery that they can offer for later booking. The community could check the County Event Permit Calendar on the Website to see when things are scheduled in their District in advance of the event, and plan accordingly to cope with impacts.
93. Code and zoning enforcement must be a priority.
94. There could be one set of regulations for Vintners in outlying areas of Santa Maria, Lompoc and Los Alamos, who are farming on 100 acres or more, and are not in residential neighborhoods. Having events at these locations would not create a nuisance or have a negative environmental impact on the community.

How can we balance Special Events with maintaining the principal use of the land for agriculture?

95. The industry prides itself as a good neighbor.
96. Fines will assure compliance and compatibility.
97. Compatible with agriculture, not residences.
98. Maintain agricultural use as principal and incorporate knowledge/information into special events.
99. Commercial vs. non-commercial: zoning and rules address this.
100. Regulate impacts: levels, thresholds, noise, dust, parking traffic and lights; don't count people or number of events.
101. Renting out your Ag-zoned property for monetary gain is commercial and should not be allowed.
102. Do not allow "Hospitality Buildings."
103. There should be no amplified music, and no event should be allowed to take place after 6pm.
104. There is support for an ordinance that is fair, balanced, and impact based.
105. We have a designated tourist corridor. This corridor was designed to allow the commercial areas of our community to have a thriving tourist industry. It was also designed to keep tourism from leaking out into rural neighborhoods. It has been fair and balanced for many years.