



TAC Meeting 09/29/21 @ 1 pm

2 messages

Daniel D'Agostini <daniel@dagostini.com>

Mon, Sep 27, 2021 at 12:00 PM

To: Amador County Planning Department <planning@amadorgov.org>

Hi Krista,

I have questions about the procedure of "environmental review". Is this a process of only looking at maps, formulas, and figures or is actual physical observation and actual visual analysis done on the property and neighboring properties. This proposed change in use permit directly impacts my property. My house is 42 feet from the new expanded parking lot that potentially will be in use seven days a week and possibly into the night.

My property was first Certified Organic by CCOF and Biodynamic® by Demeter-USA in 2015. My closest crops are 12 feet from the fence. My current tomato crop is 22 feet from the fence. The vehicles bumpers range from 4-6 feet from the other side of the fence as the parking lot is adjacent to the fence.

The prevailing wind is from the west. If one studies the weather here they know there is hardly a moment when there is stillness, a gentle breeze from the west is ever-present. Our fence line runs north and south. The other side of the fence is directly west. Will anyone from the Planning Commission come out here to observe that?

Will anyone come out to observe the darkness and quietness in the evening and night? If not, how does one justify changing the zoning so that darkness can be brightened with lights in the buildings and headlights moving through the parking lot and the quietness of the country, crickets and frogs, hooting of owls, can be drowned out by cars crunching on gravel and ambient music soothing wine drinking people?

If we're talking about the environment, I believe it does not end at the fence line. It includes the whole space where the air and sound moves within the ridge behind to the south and the crest of the hills to the north and the valley extending between appears to define this environment. One has to come here with boots on the ground to see and understand.

What puzzles me is how can one review the environmental impact without coming and inspecting? I wish to invite each voting member of this committee to my home and farm Abbondanza so they can make a real assessment of the environmental impact.

Thank you,

Daniel D'Agostini

2 attachments



Abbondanza Farms a brief history.docx

18K



4Ledger.pdf

1167K

Hello Daniel,

Your comments will be added to the project item and we can discuss our answers to your questions at the meeting. Our evaluation of environmental impacts is to determine if the project has significant impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Through this process, we are able to determine whether there need to be mitigation measures implemented or if there are other actions that need to be taken to reduce impacts to a less than significant impact under CEQA. This requires us to examine technical, quantifiable variables to objectively evaluate the impacts. Factors outside of those measured by CEQA may be separately addressed by the Planning Commission as determined necessary.

Thank you,

Krista Ruesel, Planner

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[Quoted text hidden]

A note from Daniel D'Agostini – Abbondanza Farms a brief history.

The property, approximately five acres, is situated on a gentle north slope of an east-west running ridge in the eastern end of the Shenandoah Valley of Amador County. My father's family settled in the Shenandoah Valley in 1911, and when my father returned from W.W.II in 1945, he purchased this piece of land from his father. My father passed away in 2006 and in 2008, I retired from teaching early to move home and help my mother who was in her mid-nineties. After her passing I have been given the privilege to be the steward over land known and loved since my earliest memories.

Aside from the winery and vineyards the family farmed like most everyone in the early days of this valley. Cattle, sheep, goats, chickens, orchards, big gardens. Here we had a smattering of everything including 13 walnut trees. We, through necessity, have dry farmed our vineyards and orchards for over a hundred years. A positive of the drought is that people are learning about that method once again. The walnut trees were planted fifty years ago and my sister and I had to help look after them as part of our 4-H projects. The fig tree, a wonderful mission, came from one of the trees my nonie planted in 1914. Over the years my mum and dad put in various trees and vines. The Meyer lemon that is so full and prolific was the eleventh my mum planted searching for the right location. This one survived against the eastern side of the house and is kept from freezing by the old fashion Christmas lights in winter. A lifetime of gardening and being around old time gardeners like my nonie, uncles, family friends, as well as paying attention to approaches such as permaculture, organic, and Biodynamic all factor into my methods here.

In November 2015, The farm became Demeter certified Biodynamic® and certified Organic by CCOF. In 2021, I did not apply for certification as I could not justify the expense in relation to the small scale of my operation and the community I serve. My methods are guided by an inquisitive mind that sees interconnections between everything. In public schools I taught ecology and attended early Eco-Farm Conferences at Asilomar during winter. (From the mid-1980's I included organic gardening into my classroom curriculum and established large organic gardens in the public schools.*)

Having said the above it should be clear that no synthetic petroleum based herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, or fertilizers are used on the property. I aim to build soil fertility . To do this I plant cover crops. I make several tons of compost each year. Initially I also amended some of my soils with products from Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply such as their Foothill mix, a blend of soft rock phosphate, gypsum, oyster shell lime, sulfate of potash and kelp meal. I also sprinkle Azomite. Increasingly it is my compost and mulch that go into the soil. I rotate crops and leave areas fallow with a cover crop to disrupt fungal and pest problems. I build diversity by trying to have as many flowers as non flowers as well as flowers blooming at different times. The more insects the better, then they control each other. The same for birds. I feed them and encourage them. I have blue bird houses and a barn owl house. I pay attention to the plants and in times of stress may folier feed them with any of a number of teas I prepare from various flowers

such as yarrow, chamomile, dandelion, valerian, oak bark and particularly nettles I grow as well as the Biodynamic preparations: 500, 501, cow pat, and horsetail (equisetum). A spray of milk or whey is fantastic for washing off mildew. Since 2008, the soil has been given the Biodynamic preps and all the compost I make receives the Pfeiffer preparations.

The fall of 2011 we created a cow manure concentrate using cowpat pit method used in India. We also buried cow horns here for the first time in an attempt to produce our own preparation 500. We have done this ever since. Controlling and living with weeds/excess growth is dealt with primarily by old fashioned hand pulling. I also do my share of weed whacking. Mulching is working well and on my gravel pathways and bricked areas I use a propane flamer. In June of 2011, I brought in 15 of one of my friend Ken Deaver's lambs to eat down the cover crop that was reaching shoulder height - they did a really good job and left me a lot of fertilizer in exchange. The spring, 2015, nine chickens were added to the property and they too assist in a bit of weed management and insect control. Currently for insect control I use netting, row covers, sticky barriers, pheromones, Safer soap, garlic & pepper sprays. During the winter of 2012, I purchased a Golden Mean top bar hive and aspire to have Abbondanza be a sanctuary as well as a local learning center for these precious creatures. My property is deer fenced and it seems the major four-legged pests are gophers and voles. For them I use barriers - wired basket for roots, hardware wire under raised beds, traps, a couple of amazing cats, owls, and at times even solar noise makers to drive them crazy.

Much of my water for the crops is supplied from an old spring equipped with a solar pump that sends it up to a high part of the hill to a holding tank. From there I send it back down to irrigate by drip and sprayers. I also have a deep well on the property for home and close to the house watering. Throughout the year, family, friends, WWOOF interns in exchange for great food, camaraderie, and lessons learned, all team together to maintain, create, and harvest. Abbondanza is the Italian word for abundance. Abundance of time, attention, and effort is spent here fostering healthy vital soil alive with microorganisms, mycorrhizal fungi, worms....LIFE. With that, one gains an abundance of good nutritious produce along with abundant joy and health just trying to keep up with the plants that grow in it.

*Aside from teaching many subjects in a thirty-year career Daniel D'Agostini taught organic gardening for over twenty-five years and was an innovative leader in the school garden programs. In 1996, he was commissioned by the State Department of Education to draft the vision statement to put a garden in every school.

Area of my property: 4.80 acres

Certified Organic:

Yes

Demeter-USA, Certified Biodynamic®

Organic/biological methods used on my property:

I teach and practice Biodynamic methods.

Methodologies:

Biodynamic®

Animals:

Bees, Cats, Chickens

Shenandoah Valley artist/farmer named 2013 UC Davis School of Education 'Distinguished Alumnus'

By JOHN TUTTLE
LEDGER DISPATCH CONTRIBUTOR

Native Amador County resident Daniel D'Agostini was honored this year as the 2013 UC Davis School of Education Distinguished Alumnus. Many may know D'Agostini for his photography and recent table-top book, "Into The Earth, A Wine Cave Renaissance," or for his organic farm in the Shenandoah Valley, which he has named, "Abbondanza," Italian for "abundance." However, there is much more to his story.

D'Agostini received his elementary credential through the UC Davis Department of Education's teaching internship program. While a student at UC Davis, he served as the first student advisor to a UC Davis chancellor and graduated with honors in rhetoric. He began his teaching career in Dixon, where he and fellow teacher Paul Moering created an innovative, dynamic, team-teaching classroom for 4th and 5th grades called the "Rainbow Room." At that time, he al-



Daniel D'Agostini describes his planting methods to visitors to 'Abbondanza,' his organic farm on his family's ranch in Amador County's Shenandoah Valley.

LEDGER DISPATCH
PHOTO BY JERRY
BUDRICK

so taught wilderness ethics and camping skills to junior high students in the mountains above Silver Lake, and he became an EMT 1 and an American Red Cross CPR Instructor of instructors.

During the 80s, he taught 7th and

8th grades in Somerset, in El Dorado County, where he introduced 8th graders to the concepts of chemistry and ecology by taking the entire class to Mono Lake during the first month of the school year. From 1989 to 2008, he taught middle grade and junior

high in Yuba City, where he created two award-winning school gardens. In 1976, he was commissioned by the State Department of Education to help draft the "Garden in Every School" project and to produce a poster to encourage that vision. From 2000-2008, he developed and coordinated an extended day program that daily served 300 to 550 students and received "exemplary recognition" from the California After School Network.

"D'Agostini is a model of the very best in teaching. He has every student involved and his former students consider him their best teacher and his colleagues agree," said Doug Minnis, Professor Emeritus, and Jo Ann Skinner, Professor Emerita.

D'Agostini retired in 2008 to return home and care for his mother, Kay, during her last years. There he has his photographic studio and is developing Abbondanza, which provides produce to local restaurants, caterers, MotherLode Harvest and the Plymouth Farmer's Market.



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