

STAFF REPORT TO: LAND USE COMMITTEE
FOR MEETING OF: NOVEMBER 30, 2023

Item 1 – Continued discussion and possible direction to staff regarding the Committee’s recommendations to pursue a Zoning Code Amendment which would establish regulations for future wineries, tasting rooms, and event locations in the A/Agricultural and R1A/Single-family Residential zoning districts, and in future enrollments into the AG/Exclusive Agricultural (Williamson Act) zoning district.

Applicant: County of Amador

Supervisory Districts: All

Location: Amendments would be applicable to the unincorporated area of Amador County

The potential for wine tasting rooms, and particularly social gatherings and events associated with wineries, to have adverse effects on the environment prompted the Land Use Committee to initiate discussions with the local wine industry and the public about ways to mitigate future impacts.

The impacts that have generated the most public concern are noise, traffic, and lighting which are often attributable to events with attendance numbers that exceed those of customary wine production, tasting, and marketing. Such events can have a diminishing effect on the integrity of agricultural regions when they are intended more for entertainment purposes than the production and marketing of wine.

To address the issues and limit future impacts to the County’s agricultural regions, the Land Use Committee is recommending changes to future winery, tasting room, and event operations based on attendance levels, setback distances, and location on major vs. minor roads. The primary changes are listed below.

- Wineries with building permits issued prior to the adoption date of the ordinance revisions will be allowed to continue operations, including expansion, under the terms of existing ordinances which will remain in place.
- Wineries with building permits issued after the adoption date of the ordinance revisions will meet the terms of the new ordinances.
- Attendance levels for events at new wineries will be based on the setback distance of event use areas from adjoining properties and frontage on major roads
- All new wineries will be allowed:
 - tasting room hours of 10am to 6pm, 7 days/week
 - participation in Amador Vintners Association sanctioned events
 - 12 wine club events per year with up to 200 attendees
 - 6 social events per year with up to 60 attendees
- New wineries with a 200-foot setback for event use areas will be allowed an additional 12 social events per year with up to 200 attendees
- New wineries with a 400-foot setback for event use areas will be allowed an additional 12 social events per year with up to 250 attendees and 12 special events per year with up to 300 attendees
- Parking areas will be required to be setback 50 feet (100 feet for idling vehicles) from residential properties with an occupied residence