

**Dry Creek Valley Citizens Advisory Council
Zoom Meeting Minutes
October 17, 2024
Meeting held in person and online**

Call to Order

The meeting of the Dry Creek Valley Citizens Advisory Council was called to order at 6:07 pm.

Introduction of Councilmembers and

Roll Call

Present Councilmembers: Alex Harris, Arthur Murray, Nancy Bevill, and Richard Kagel. Potential new councilmember Dani Price, who will replace Elaine Foppiano, was also present.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the 08-15-2024 meeting were approved on a motion by Arthur Murray, and a second from Richard Kagel. Passed on a voice vote 4-0.

Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items –

No comments.

Correspondence: Letters pertaining to the proposed project are attached at the end of the Minutes.

Councilmember Announcements and Disclosures: NA

Referrals from Permit Sonoma County –

File Number: UPE24-0048

Applicant Name: Robert Mauritson

Owner Name: Robert Mauritson

Site Address: 3319 Dry Creek Road, Healdsburg

APN: 090-150-041

Project Description: Request for a Use Permit for a new 100,000-case winery on a 20.45-acre parcel including: construction of a new 16,264 sq ft production facility, including a 9,130 (TYPO) sq ft tank storage room, 2,304 sq ft barrel room, 2,304 sq ft goods storage room, an a 2,493 sq ft tasting room with approx.. 1,400 sq ft outdoor porch/patio area; construction of a 4,608 sq ft covered crush pad; 24 agricultural promotional events and 6 industry wide event days with a max of 50-300 guests; removal of an existing barn and two water wells; expansion of existing on-site access road and driveway entrance.

Zoning: LIA B620, RC50/25 SR VOH

Jean Kapolchok handled the initial presentation on this referral. Jean passed out information to our council and any interested audience members. She is a land use and planning consultant, working for Robert Mauritson. She addressed the consistency of this project with our Guidelines document. She noted that Bob (Mauritson) and Mr. La Franchi would also be presenting. There were also a traffic consultant and Cort Munselle, Civic Engineer, available for questions.

The winery will be built in a non-vineyard area. They are estimating no more than a quarter acre of vineyard may be removed. They are proposing 20 events of 50 or fewer people, 3 industry wide event days, which equals 6 days. Jean went over each area of the Guidelines expressing the belief that they met each of the requirements.

Access is via two 12 ft. lanes and is 45 ft. wide at the entrance. The parcel size is above 20 acres, and is mostly agricultural—mostly vineyard. There are 2 wells. There will not be any on-street parking. Under activities they feel they are consistent with each category. They are not planning any trade or marketing events. They have had a noise analysis prepared that will be submitted to the county. They plan to mitigate all noise issues—a 6 ft. high by 250 ft. long sound wall will be erected.

They do not plan to have a restaurant or menu. They will only offer food pairings with wine and use food prepared at a caterer's kitchen. The facilities will be 1,300 sq. ft. They are asking for 100,000 case capacity. The buildings will be set back 200 ft. to be consistent with scenic corridor requirements, and the smaller face of the building faces toward the road and entrance.

They will source 75% of their grapes from Sonoma County, and 75% of the grapes will come from vineyards owned or leased by the family. She stated their biggest concern is about concentration and community character. She mentioned that this requirement is not specific and there is no definition of rural character. They are claiming to be consistent with most other guideline requirements, as well.

She mentioned that there will be parking in the vineyards for larger events and that they will have parking manager for those events. She said the property has been historically sued for agriculture and agricultural storage. They concluded that they do not believe there will be any traffic impacts. There will be no night-time grape deliveries except during harvest.

Bob Mauritsen, the property owner, resumed the presentation. Bob shared that his is of the 6th generation of the family in Dry Creek. He explained that most of their grapes are currently shipped out of the county to be processed. That is the main reason for building this winery to handle processing. He would like to be able to process fruit for other growers in the valley. He mentioned size issues. The team has built it in a compacted way to fit into a smaller facility. 1,300 tons, at 66 cases per ton is roughly 85,000 cases, so the 100,000 case ask would allow some room for growth. He asks that the council consider this.

Ken Lafranchi, of Lafranchi Architecture and Development--100 E. Street, Suite 204, Santa Rosa CA 95404--showed drawings of the planned development. He explained that 75% of the property will remain vineyard. The winery is shown on a current compacted barren area that has been used for staging. There is an existing home. The entire footprint of the new facility will be 22,000 sq. ft. There will be a 950 sq. ft. patio. The existing barn will remain for storage. The Crush area will be behind the building. Traffic will circle around the building and is screen from the road.

He explained that truck traffic will enter and go to the crush area behind and circle around to come out. Tasting room parking is in front. Trucks would also be able to go entirely around the winery. Some parking for events would go down vineyard rows. The architect for this project is Don McNair. There will be a gate for security, and plantings along the driveway entrance and tasting room parking area. There will also be perimeter plantings on the north side of the paved area.

Councilmember Arthur Murray asked for the building length. He was told it will be address later in the presentation.

Ken Lafranchi showed a photo simulation of the entry, showing entry when approaching from the south. The footprint is about the same as Comstock Winery. The maximum height is about 45 ft. He then showed a photo simulation of the approach from the north. Existing vineyards, large trees that already exist, plus the view of landscaping and the buildings. He explained the materials used will be a standing-seam metal roof, stone, and a cast-in-place concrete tank room. He showed elevations of the building in darker shades—a grayish brown. They will use rusted steel as accents on the outer areas. It will have a board and batten look, but will be all concrete.

The longest dimension will be for the tasting room to the back of the crush pad at 180 ft. and approximately the same from north to south. There will be no on-site bottling.

Questions from the Council

Councilmember Alex Murray asked about the size and similarity of this size in Dry Creek. Ken Lafranchi compared it to Comstock. He explained that this winery would be much more spread and compact. He further explained that Ferrari Carano is much larger and that Mauritsen Winery is taller but about the same size, and he believes more apparent because of the viewing angle. Alex mentioned that it is close to Gallo, whose permit is for 4.9 million and that the Gallo driveway is just to the north of this property and proposal. Arthur asked about the crush facility in Windsor. Ken mentioned that this project is similar in size to Red Custom Crush on Grove Street (Healdsburg).

Councilmember Richard Kagel asked if there were currently tanks on the property. Bob clarified that there are tanks on the property that are not currently being used, as well as three tanks for water storage on other properties. Richard also asked about the 2,493 sq. ft. tasting room. It was mentioned that the County had asked for clarification. 1,000 sq. ft. will be offices, restrooms, etc. Richard asked for clarification of the 75% Sonoma County grapes, mentioning that 75% would be from the family's vineyards, but that they own vineyards in other counties. Bob clarified that 75% would be from Sonoma County no matter what. Richard wanted to know if this would be written into the permit.

Arthur asked about the big picture—why here? Why now? Bob shared that current market conditions are difficult right now. The costs have gone up. Heat issues have impacted facilities. He had to wait five extra days to deliver some of his grapes in the heat because the facility tanks were full. He is comparing his project to Gallo and saying that they are all used to the traffic. He was expecting unanimity, but expressed that the concerns voices are about size and capacity. Bob said size was chosen based on his current vineyard's capacity, as they would be crushing everything at this facility. They chose to leave 25% available so that they might crush some of his grapes from outside of the county.

Richard again asked for clarification. He expressed his involvement with the permit for Gallo's increase in production, and the concerns about wells drying up, septic issues, etc. He asked about the size of the septic for the project. Cort Munselle explained that one septic field would be for the tasting room, and the other would be for the production area, plus an expansion area that is required. The solids perked very well. There would be some pre-treatment. Richard mentioned the large leech field and also the traffic impacts, saying that Gallo was required to have a turning lane. He also mentioned that part of the Gallo mitigation ended up with the city putting in the stop signs at the freeway on/off ramps to 101 at Dry Creek and Highway 101. He stated that the compact footprint was not what mattered, it was the scale of the project and its effects on the usage of water. He mentioned that the more traffic there is, the more impacts there would be, and he was concerned about growth. He mentioned that the Guidelines state projects should be on AT LEAST 20 acres. His expectations is that if you are at 20 acres you should be at the smaller end of the production—for instance 5,000 cases. Each category of the Guidelines need to be considered. He mentioned that parking in the vineyards does no work in the wet season. The Guidelines were written so this council would have a tool to gauge whether a proposal would be suitable for Dry creek, or not.

Incoming Councilmember Dani Price asked if there was any consideration to buy Comstock (which is currently for sale). Bob jokingly asked if she could lend him the money.

Comments and Discussion with the Public

David Majerus (dwmajerus@gmail.com--West Dry Creek Road)—spoke on behalf of the DCVA board. He mentioned that Bob Mauritsen had met with them. This is a big winery. The building is designed well—small and well-hidden. But, it feels like an industrial facility rather than a winery. He mentioned the size of Gallo, which is huge, and also the proximity of other wineries. He is concerned about the groundwater, also, and that the state is not currently regulating groundwater very well. He wonders if this will effect neighbors' wells. He believed that the Winegrowers (Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley)

would normally be for this project because they historically side with the growers, and that the DCVA (Dry Creek Valley Association) would be against it. They are trying not to just follow the historical norms.

Councilmember Alex Harris asked about where supplemental crush facilities are located. Arthur mentioned that his go to Sonoma. The applicant stated that Comstock has a custom crush, and also mentioned several other facilities. Alex asked about events—he mentioned that Grand Cru is another custom crush facility and mentioned that their clients are allowed to hold events there. Bob clarified that all events would be strictly for them specifically.

Toni Masino, Neighbor)— (3280 Dry Creek Rd, Healdsburg, CA 95448)—stated she lives next to Amista Winery with her husband Rich. They have to cross the street to collect their mail. They are concerned about the danger of this activity due to traffic and recent accidents. She mentioned that a motorcycle needed to swerve to avoid a truck turning. She pointed out the dedicated turn lane for Gallo. This proposal does not have a dedicated turn lane. **Rich Masino** talked about the speed of the vehicles in this area. He is anxious to see the traffic study. This driveway is for all vehicles entering and exiting the facility. The volume of traffic, safety, and noise are his concerns. He thinks this will add to safety issues. He agrees that as a grape grower he understands Bob's concerns and the difficulty of the market.

Arthur asked about the proximity to the Gallo Road (Frei Road). Bob explained that there is no deeded access. Ken clarified that the width of the proposed driveway is two lanes. Rich Masino reiterated his concern that there is not a dedicated turn lane.

Kim Stare Wallace (Dry Creek Vineyards—Lambert Bridge Road)—emphasized that we are all neighbors and friends and she hopes that we can remain so. She is pro family wineries. Her concern is not that there will be another winery but there will be another 100,000 case winery—this will mean 100 fdays of bottling and 400 trucks. She also mentioned that there would be 3-5 trucks per day per event. Grape trucks would total about 120-130 per year. Vicky Farrow inserted that it might be as many as 180 trucks. This does not include visitor traffic nor Fed Ex or other delivery vehicles. Kim mentioned that there are seven wineries in a fairly small area, plus the Dry Creek store, so there is a lot going on in this area. She thinks the custom crush is totally inappropriate for the area. She mentioned that Bob produced 1,300 tons and that equals 85,000 cases. He could do that there. She doesn't think that this is the right area. She believes it is naïve to do this at that location. For the health, vitality, rural character of Cry Creek Valley, this is not warranted. She is okay with the winery, but not the size nor the location. She mentioned bicyclists and the close call she had. She feels it is inappropriate at this scale. Arthur asked what number would be appropriate and acceptable.

David Majerus state he would like to see three to six thousand. Toni Masino agreed with David. Vicky Farrow shared that they make 3,000 cases but they are permitted to do 20,000. She asked about events—she indicated that the number they are requesting would equal about one event per week. Kim state she was not sure she wanted to put a number to it, but would like them to consider perhaps 30,000 cases.

Richard expressed having an issue with the fact that the permit also goes with the property. It may not stay a family winery and may be sold to someone outside the area. The puts additional weight on this decision. Bob responded that their family history is that they have six generations in the valley. He has no intention to sell while he is alive. His wife is also from a fifth generation agricultural family. Rich Masino mentioned precedent—he asked that this will set a precedent and that that be considered also. Richard Kagel also said that we have not had an application (for a winery) in four to five years. The Guidelines were written in 2017 and approved in 2018. He also mentioned that there are currently

several wineries for sale in the valley. He asked what the current crush capacity need is for the valley. He does not believe this has been a problem/need.

Vicky Farrow—(owner of Amista Winery, 3310 Dry Creek Road, Healdsburg, CA 95448)—She believes many aspects of this project fit the Guidelines and stated that they have made adjustments to fit the Guidelines even better. Her concern is the same as the others—the scale is the issue. They are trying to balance the needs of agriculture and the character of the valley. She is not concerned with the size of the building, but the number of cases. She understands the business rationale. If you can control that part of your business, it is appealing. But she does not think this is the right place. She emphasized what Richard had voiced—this is not about Bob Mauritson, it is about land use. Unless promises are written into the conditions of the permit, anything can happen going forward. We have had applicants that no one trusted, yet the project fit the guidelines and were approved. We want to approve this referral and support the idea of family ag. Her number is 20,000 cases rather than 100,000. Truck traffic is a big concern.

Councilmember Nancy Bevill asked about events. 100 people on the patio may produce lots of noise that can be heard fairly far away. She asked about the sound wall. The applicant clarified that it will be 6 ft. tall and 250 ft. long. She asked them to make the project “family friendly”. She mentioned a head-on collision in front of her house (4724 Dry Creek Road), as well as a car rally in the valley that kept them from crossing the road for about 20 minutes.

Kim Wallace asked if Bob lived in the Dry Creek Valley. He stated that he does not live here, though he grew up here. She asked about crush clients and events.

Darlene Whetloa—(Traffic Analyst)—Presented details of the traffic analysis. She said that there would be four trucks in and out per day for the four month harvest period. She mentioned the concern about bicyclists and said that they will be using the shoulder. Truckers are very careful. If they are on the shoulder, cyclists can see them and will not try to pass. They counted traffic on Dry Creek Road in August. This section of road operates at grades A & B—which is two levels above C—so not a problem. The industry wide events will not increase traffic—traffic will be there whether this project exists or not. Masino asked about speed analysis. Darlene stated that safety was lower than other roads of the same speed. Kim Wallace asked about bottling traffic. She responded that it should be spread out over more months, but was concerned that there would show more trips. Darlene indicated that the difference would not be noticeable based on the current traffic numbers. The 100,000 from the traffic perspective would be almost imperceptible. Rich Masino mentioned the shoulder—the mentioned measurement of 5 feet is not true for the whole shoulder in this area because of the gully there.

Darlene clarified that moving toward the shoulder signals to traffic behind to be aware—both bicycles and other drivers. Richard asked about A, B & C levels. She explained it has to do with the amount of time you are following other vehicles. Level A, you can go as fast as you want (low volume). Richard asked about slowing for turns into driveways. This causes some congestion. This level system does not address noise or safety to cross the street to collect mail. Darlene explained it is mostly about the driver. Vicky said it is not about the neighbor. Arthur asked the length of analysis—is it just the 3 blocks or is it does it cover all the way to Lake Sonoma? Darlene clarified that the study is just for that specific spot. The pneumatic tube records the traffic—divides by a little more than two to account for different length and axles. Classification counts can be done to determine types of trucks. They did not do that for this study.

Alex asked of the group—100,000 cases? Where would this be appropriate? Vicky responded that most wineries needed to be under the 30,000 maximum as 80% of the wineries are less than that. If you are on the higher end, they should be in an uncongested area or near the freeway. So, 30,000 was viewed as

the upper limit. The council has reviewed one that was requesting 30,000 and preferred 20,000. It was in a better location and was approved. David said the DCVA board was not happy with the 100,000 case number, and that number would not be appropriate anywhere. Toni Masino address the concentration. Kim Wallace commented there wer 7 winreis, but had not counted Saini or Zo, which has a small winery permit also.

Comments from Council

Arthur—big picture: it is a small community, and an old family. We are friends. He would like to see this work for everyone. It may not work for Bob. He would like there to be some compromise. He feels pulled in two directions.

Richard asked about tabling a decision. He said if they were voting on this permit now, he would have a hard time approving it. It doesn't make him feel good. He does not feel that this project conforms a much as the applicant would like us to believe.

After further discussion, it was determined that two of the current four voting council members would have a hard time voting for approval. It is up to the applicant, but they may want to consider some sort of adjusted proposal. Alex mentioned that the read of the room indicates the case volume is too big.

Nancy agreed that it might work if they work with the neighbors and squeeze it down a bit. Not only is it in an area concentrated with wineries, but an area concentrated with homes. She mentioned that it has the appearance of a factory. She suggested meeting again with the neighbors and taking some of their thoughts into consideration.

Bob agreed to defer the resolution until the November DCVCAC meeting.

Statement of Motion:

On a motion by Councilmember Arthur Murray, seconded by Councilmember Alex Harris, the council voted to defer this decision until the November DCVCAC meeting. The motion carried on a voice vote, 4-0. (Incoming Council member Dani Price did not vote).

Presentation on General Plan Environmental Justice and Safety Elements

Claudette Diaz of Permit Sonoma presented a PowerPoint presentation on this aspect of proposed updates to the Sonoma County General Plan (GP). These updates will try to consider what we want to look like, as a county, in 20 years. She explained that policies need to be consistent with GP to be approved. This particular focus is safety from environmental issues and environmental justice (like food equity, etc.). They are asking for community input.

There are currently 10 elements. It will be the Blueprint for land use. Safety element will be included to reduce risk. The GP was las updated in 2014. The goal is to evaluate evacuation and climate resilience, and the fair treatment of all people.

We will attach the PowerPoint presentation when it is received. Claudette mentioned the various community engagement opportunities coming up. They will be discussion pollution and housing issues. Also, the elevated housing cost burden—some people pay more for housing and also are exposed to more pollution. She mentioned that draft elements will guide policy, and policy guides implementation. She asked which strategies are the highest priority for our community. She also asked what concerns our community has with the proposed strategies. What is missing from the strategies that we think is important? Do these strategies work for our community? They will accept comments and questions after this meeting.

Discussion Items

Possible discussion items: Discuss items of significant interest on the calendar; discussion of General Plan Update.

Agenda Items for Future Meetings

Deferred Referral for UPE24-0048 Mauritson/Aman Winery

Adjournment

On a motion by Councilmember Arthur Murray, seconded by Councilmember Richard Kagel, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm. The motion carried on a voice vote (4-0).

Approved Date: _____
Council Chair:



UPE24-0048-Amann
-Mauritson_Stare-W



UPE24-0048-Amann
-Mauritson_Litchfiel



UPE24-0048-Amann
-Mauritson_Massin



UPE24-0048-Amann
-Mauritson_Farrow



UPE24-0048-Amann
-Mauritson_Majerus