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## Recommended Findings

**PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING – NOVEMBER 1, 2023  
RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

**Vineyard 29 – Use Permit Major Modification and an Exception to the Road & Street  
Standards**

**Application No. P20-00062-MOD**

**2929 N. St. Helena Hwy, St. Helena**

**APN's 022-200-027 (winery) & 022-200-026 (parking/driveway)**

**ENVIRONMENTAL:**

The Planning Commission (Commission) has received and reviewed the proposed Negative Declaration pursuant to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and of Napa County's Local Procedures for Implementing CEQA, and finds that:

1. The Planning Commission has read and considered the Negative Declaration prior to taking action on said Negative Declaration and the proposed project.
2. The Negative Declaration is based on independent judgment exercised by the Planning Commission.
3. The Negative Declaration was prepared and considered in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
4. There is no substantial evidence in the record as a whole, that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.
5. There is no evidence, in considering the record as a whole that the proposed project will have a potential adverse effect on wildlife resources or habitat upon which the wildlife depends.
6. The site of this proposed project is not on any of the lists of hazardous waste sites enumerated under Government Code Section 65962.5 and is not within the boundaries of any airport land use plan.
7. The Secretary of the Commission is the custodian of the records of the proceedings on which this decision is based. The records are located at the Napa County Planning, Building & Environmental Services Department, 1195 Third Street, Second Floor, Napa, California.

**EXCEPTION TO ROAD AND STREET STANDARDS:**

The Commission has reviewed the attached described Road and Street Standards Exception request in accordance with Road and Street Standards Sections 3(D)(i) and 3(E) and makes the following findings:

8. The exception will preserve unique features of the natural environment which includes, but is not limited to, natural water courses, steep slopes, geological features, heritage oak trees, or other trees of least six inches in diameter at breast height and found by the decision-maker to be of significant importance, but does not include human altered environmental features such as vineyards and ornamental or decorative landscaping, or artificial features such as, rock walls, fences or the like;

Analysis: The existing internal access roads and on-site circulation configuration generally meets Napa County Road and Street Standards (RSS) except for approximately 500-feet where the roadway width is 15.8 to 17.8-feet and is located within the setback of an extrapolated stream and abuts a steep slope. The request would minimize earthwork on slopes to preserve the existing environmental features and protect water quality. The driveway in the area of the exception has a width of 16-feet and intervisibility between the connections to the compliant two-lane driveway at both ends. Further, the applicant proposes to install “yield to emergency vehicles” signs at both ends of the 16-foot-wide driveway section.

9. Grant of the Road and Street Standards Exception will provide the same overall practical effect as the Standards do in providing defensible space, and does not adversely affect the life, safety, and welfare of the public or persons coming to the property.

Analysis: The request also includes an exception to the maximum longitudinal slope and maximum cross-slope perpendicular to the longitudinal slope near the terminus of the driveway, just north of the winery building, to create a compliant turnaround area. The exception is requested to minimize earthwork on steep slopes and to preserve a large native oak tree. A turnaround area is provided approximately 35-40 feet south of the driveway terminus, in front of the crush pad/receiving area. All portions of the driveway not discussed in this Road Exception Evaluation will meet commercial standards as defined in the RSS. The request has been reviewed by the Engineering Division and Fire Marshal’s Office and staff determined that the request achieves the same overall practical effect of the RSS by providing defensible space and consideration toward life, safety and public welfare.

The subject parcel falls entirely within the State Fire Protection Responsibility Area (SRA). The development area is not designated as being in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). Exceptions are only allowed where the exceptions provide the same overall practical effect as the SRA Fire Safe Regulations towards providing defensible space.

The Road Exception Request letter prepared by RSA+, dated December 23,2021, and associated exhibits attached demonstrate how the exception request provides measures which provide safe access for emergency apparatus, safe civilian evacuation, and the avoidance of delays in emergency response based on the demands of the property. As noted above, The driveway in the area of the exception has a width of 16-feet and intervisibility between the connections to the compliant two-lane driveway at both ends. Further, the applicant proposes to install “yield to emergency vehicles” signs at both ends of the 16-foot-wide driveway section. The existing roadway configuration and proposed improvements in the Request, subject to recommended conditions of approval by Engineering Services Division and the Fire Marshal, will serve as an alternate method by which adherence to the RSS may be achieved and will provide the same overall practical effect as the RSS towards providing defensible space, preserving the natural environment and protecting the life, safety and welfare of the public.

## **PLANNING AND ZONING ANALYSIS:**

### **USE PERMIT MAJOR MODIFICATION:**

The Commission has reviewed the use permit major modification request in accordance with the requirements of the Napa County Code §18.124.070 and makes the following findings:

10. The Commission has the power to issue a Use Permit under the Zoning Regulations in effect as applied to property.

Analysis: The project is consistent with the Agricultural Watershed (AW) zoning district regulations. A winery (as defined in the Napa County Code Section 18.08.640) and uses in connection with a winery (refer to Napa County Code Section 18.20.030) are permitted in the AW District with an approved use permit. The project, as conditioned, complies with the Napa County Winery Definition Ordinance (WDO) and all other requirements of the Zoning Code as applicable.

11. The procedural requirements for a Use Permit set forth in Chapter 18.124 of the Napa County Code (zoning regulations) have been met.

Analysis: The Use Permit Major Modification application has been appropriately filed and notice and public hearing requirements have been met. The hearing notice and intent to adopt a Negative Declaration were posted on October 12, 2023, and copies were forwarded to property owners within 1,000 feet of the subject parcel, as well as other interested parties. The public comment period ran from October 12, 2023, to October 31, 2023.

12. The grant of the Use Permit, as conditioned, will not adversely affect the public health, safety or welfare of the County of Napa.

Analysis: Granting the Use Permit Major Modification for the project, as proposed and conditioned, will not adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of the County. Various County divisions and departments have reviewed the project and commented regarding site access, wastewater disposal, parking, and fire protection. Conditions are recommended which will incorporate these comments into the project to ensure the protection of the public health, safety, and welfare.

13. The proposed use complies with applicable provisions of the Napa County Code and is consistent with the policies and standards of the Napa County General Plan and any applicable specific plan.

#### Analysis: Compliance with the Zoning Ordinance

The project is consistent with the AW zoning district regulations. A winery (as defined in the Napa County Code Section 18.08.640) and uses in connection with a winery (refer to Napa County Code Section 18.20.030) are permitted in the AW District subject to an approved use permit. The proposed project will comply with the development standards of the AW District. The project, as conditioned, complies with the Napa County Winery Definition Ordinance (WDO) and all other requirements of the Zoning Code as applicable.

Analysis: Compliance with the General Plan

As proposed and as conditioned, the requested Use Permit is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the General Plan (2008). The General Plan land use designation for the subject parcel is Agriculture, Watershed, and Open Space (AWOS).

General Plan Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Goal AG/LU-1 guides the County to “preserve existing agricultural land uses and plan for agriculture and related activities as the primary land uses in Napa County.” General Plan Goal AG/LU-3 states that the County should “support the economic viability of agriculture, including grape growing, winemaking, other types of agriculture, and supporting industries to ensure the preservation of agricultural lands.” Goal AG/LU-3 and Policy AG/LU-2 recognize wineries as agricultural uses.

The approved use of the property for fermenting and processing of grape juice into wine supports the economic viability of agriculture within the County, consistent with Goal AG/LU-3 and Policy AG/LU-4 (“The County will reserve agricultural lands for agricultural use including land used for grazing and watershed/open space...”). By allowing the expansion of the existing agricultural use, the requested Use Permit supports the economic viability of both the vineyard and agricultural product processing uses on the property, consistent with Economic Development Goal E-1 and Policy E-1.

The “Right to Farm” is recognized throughout the General Plan and is specifically called out in Policy AG/LU-15 and in the County Code. “Right to Farm” provisions ensure that agriculture remains the primary land use in Napa County and is not threatened by potentially competing uses or neighbor complaints. Napa County’s adopted General Plan reinforces the County’s long-standing commitment to agricultural preservation, urban centered growth, and resource conservation.

Applicable Napa County General Plan goals and policies:

Goal AG/LU-1: Preserve existing agricultural land uses and plan for agriculture and related activities as the primary land uses in Napa County.

Goal AG/LU-3: Support the economic viability of agriculture, including grape growing, winemaking, other types of agriculture, and supporting industries to ensure the preservation of agricultural lands.

Policy AG/LU-2: “Agriculture” is defined as the raising of crops, trees, and livestock; the production and processing of agricultural products; and related marketing, sales and other accessory uses. Agriculture also includes farm management businesses and farm worker housing.

Policy AG/LU-4: The County will reserve agricultural lands for agricultural use including lands used for grazing and watershed/open space, except for those lands which are shown on the Land Use Map as planned for urban development.

Policy AG/LU-8: The County’s minimum agricultural parcel sizes shall ensure that agricultural areas can be maintained as economic units.

- Policy AG/LU-15: The County affirms and shall protect the right of agricultural operators in designated agricultural areas to commence and continue their agricultural practices (a “right to farm”), even though established urban uses in the general area may foster complaints against those agricultural practices. The “right to farm” shall encompass the processing of agricultural products and other activities inherent in the definition of agriculture provided in Policy AG/LU-2.
- Goal CON-10: Conserve, enhance and manage water resources on a sustainable basis to attempt to ensure that sufficient amounts of water will be available for the uses allowed by this General Plan, for the natural environment, and for future generations.
- Goal CON-11: Prioritize the use of available groundwater for agricultural and rural residential uses rather than for urbanized areas and ensure that land use decisions recognize the long-term availability and value of water resources in Napa County.
- Policy CON-53: The County shall ensure that the intensity and timing of new development are consistent with the capacity of water supplies and protect groundwater and other water supplies by requiring all applicants for discretionary projects to demonstrate the availability of an adequate water supply prior to approval. Depending on the site location and the specific circumstances, adequate demonstration of availability may include evidence or calculation of groundwater availability via an appropriate hydrogeologic analysis or may be satisfied by compliance with County Code “fair-share” provisions or applicable State law. In some areas, evidence may be provided through coordination with applicable municipalities and public and private water purveyors to verify water supply sufficiency.
- Policy CON-55: The County shall consider existing water uses during the review of new water uses associated with discretionary projects, and where hydrogeologic studies have shown that the new water uses will cause significant adverse well interference or substantial reductions in groundwater discharge to surface waters that would alter critical flows to sustain riparian habitat and fisheries or exacerbate conditions of overdraft, the County shall curtail those new or expanded water uses.
- Policy CON-60.5 All aspects of landscaping from the selection of plants to soil preparation and the installation of irrigation systems should be designed to reduce water demand, retain runoff, decrease flooding, and recharge groundwater.
- Policy CON-72: The County shall seek to reduce the energy impacts from new buildings by applying Title 24 energy standards as required by law and providing information to the public and builders on available energy conservation techniques, products, and methods available to exceed those standards by 15 percent or more.
- Policy CON-77: All new discretionary projects shall be evaluated to determine potential significant project-specific air quality impacts and shall be required to

incorporate appropriate design, construction, and operational features to reduce emissions of criteria pollutants regulated by the state and federal governments below the applicable significance standard(s) or implement alternate and equally effective mitigation strategies consistent with BAAQMD's air quality improvement programs to reduce emissions. In addition to these policies, the County's land use policies discourage scattered development which contributes to continued dependence on the private automobile as the only means of convenient transportation. The County's land use policies also contribute to efforts to reduce air pollution.

Policy CON-81: The County shall require dust control measures to be applied to construction projects consistent with measures recommended for use by the BAAQMD [Bay Area Air Quality Management District].

Goal E-1: Maintain and enhance the economic viability of agriculture.

Policy E-1: The County's economic development will focus on ensuring the continued viability of agriculture in Napa County.

Policy SAF-20: All new development shall comply with established fire safety standards. Design plans shall be referred to the appropriate fire agency for comment as to:

- 1) Adequacy of water supply.
- 2) Site design for fire department access in and around structures.
- 3) Ability for a safe and efficient fire department response.
- 4) Traffic flow and ingress/egress for residents and emergency vehicles.
- 5) Site-specific built-in fire protection.
- 6) Potential impacts to emergency services and fire department response.

14. That the proposed use would not require a new water system or improvement causing significant adverse effects, either individually or cumulatively, on the affected groundwater basin in Napa County, unless that use would satisfy any of the other criteria specified for approval or waiver of a groundwater permit under Sections 13.15.070 or 13.15.080 of the County Code.

Analysis: The project is consistent with General Plan Conservation Policies CON-53 and CON-55, which require that applicants, who are seeking discretionary land use approvals, prove that adequate water supplies are available to serve the proposed use without causing significant negative impacts to shared groundwater resources.

The parcel is located within the GSA Subbasin and the 0.3 acre-feet per acre per year calculation was used to determine the water allocation. For the 24.64-acre site the water allocation is 7.39 acre-feet per year. RSA+ prepared a Water Availability Analysis (WAA), dated November 21, 2022, for the project to demonstrate that the proposed water use is not impacting groundwater in the area. Based on the WAA prepared for the project, proposed water use would be 0.22 acre-feet per year less than current water use due to the use of recycled or treated process wastewater for vineyard irrigation. The project will not require a new water system or other improvements and will not have a negative impact on local groundwater.