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Napa County Roads and Street Standards Exception Request

The Winery at Mount Veeder Use Permit P22-00248-UP, Exception to
the Conservation Regulations P25-00088-UP, and Exception to the
Roads and Street Standards
Planning Commission Hearing - June 4, 2025

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January 26, 2023

County of Napa Planning, Building, and Environmental Services
Attn: Brian Bordona
1195 Third Street, Suite 210
Napa, CA 94559

RE: Winery at Mt Veeder Use Permit Application
Driveway Exception

Dear Director Bordona,

This request for an exception to the Napa County Road and Street Standards (RSS) is being filed as part of the Use Permit application for the proposed Winery at Mt. Veeder, located at 1300 Mt. Veeder Road. We are providing this information for your review and final decision, by the Conservation, Development and Planning Commission pursuant to Section 3 of the 2020 Napa County Road and Street Standards. Section 3 allows exceptions to the Standards, provided that the exception still provides the same overall practical effect as the Standards towards providing defensible space and consideration towards life, safety and public welfare. Specifically, we are requesting an exception to the RSS commercial driveway standards for portions of the Winery's access road. While an exception is requested the proposed driveway improvements are designed to enhance accessibility and emergency egress with the addition of turnouts and widening where feasible, as well as replacement of the existing nonconforming bridge with a new bridge that conforms to the current Napa County RSS.

The project parcel contains a residence, approved vineyard and a shared driveway with a bridge. The existing unimproved driveway also provides access to existing vineyards on a separate parcel of record to the east of the subject property, and is covered with an access and utility easement. The existing driveway is approximately 2,700 feet from the intersection with Mt. Veeder Road.

The proposed exception request involves sections of the driveway with noncompliant width and noncompliant radii. The exception request is based upon regulatory constraints including setbacks from blue line and ephemeral streams, the presence of mature vegetation, as well as existing steep slopes, areas of soil instability as shown on the accompanying constraints mapping prepared by RSA+. The remainder of the driveway either conforms to current RSS standards or will be improved to meet the current standards.

The exception is sought pursuant to Sections 3(d)(i) of the Napa County Road and Street Standards. This section provides that:

(d) An exception to these Standards may be allowed as provided if one or more of the following findings can be made and the findings in subsection (e) can also be made:

(i) 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;

Further, an exception is “only allowed ‘where the exceptions provide the same overall practical effect as ‘the SRA Fire Safe Regulations’ towards providing defensible space” as noted in RSS 3(e). To approve the exception, the approving body must find “that grant of the exception, as conditioned ... provides the same overall practical effect as these Standards towards providing defensible space, and consideration towards life, safety and public welfare.”

We believe the exception sought here, meets the requirements for an exception under section d(i). The proposed driveway meets the same overall practical effect as the current SRA Fire Safe Regulations as well.

RSS 3(d)(i): As shown on Sheet UP5.0, portions of the existing driveway from STA 0+00 to 4+70 is constrained by the creek setback. The entire width of the driveway is within the setback. Work in this area has been minimized using a bridge replacement and turnouts to provide adequate width for egress and emergency vehicle passing. Work in the creek setback has been minimized in order to minimize any potential impact to water quality.

RSS 3(e): The nonconforming sections of driveway allow for safe travel to and from the winery for visitors and emergency vehicles. The accompanying Sheets UP5.0 through UP5.4 and C6.0 shows the path of a Type I Fire Engine through the requested exception areas with no restrictions. The existing road is at minimum 14 feet (14') paved within the area of the exemption request. There will be opportunities for vehicles to pass at the turnouts at STA 2+50 and 4+25 of the proposed driveway and along the lengths of the proposed driveway that will meet the current width and radii standards from STA 9+25 through 32+35. As such, the exception area provides the same overall practical effect as the SRA Fire Safe Regulations reflected by the current road and street standards.

The proposed portion of the driveway to connect to the existing entry location on Mt. Veeder Road is proposed to meet Napa County Road and Street Standards.

We consider that the Same Practical Effect is met for the following criteria:

a) Access for emergency wildland fire equipment:

As previously explained the proposed driveway, allows for passage of a Type I Fire Engine with no restrictions as shown on Sheets UP5.0 - UP5.5 and C6.0.

b) Safe Civilian Evacuation:

Vehicles will have the opportunity to pass at the turnouts at STA 2+50 and 4+25 of the proposed driveway and along the lengths of the proposed driveway that will meet the current width and radii standards from STA 9+25 through 32+35. These locations provide adequate width and radii by Napa County Road and Street Standards and allow for passing of passenger and emergency vehicles.

c) Signing that avoids delays in emergency equipment response:

“Yield to Emergency Vehicle” signs will be installed as shown on Sheet UP5.0 – UP5.4 to avoid delays in emergency vehicle response.

d) Available and accessible water to effectively attack wildfire or defend a structure from wildfire:

The exception request will not impact water availability or accessibility. The proposed winery will have approximately 50,000 gallons of water dedicated to fire suppression stored in tanks above the winery. This water is connected by fire water lines to two (2) proposed hydrants located around the winery.

e) Enhancement of access to a strategic ridgeline:

The location of the proposed winery is in the vicinity of, but not on a strategic ridgeline that has been used by firefighting services in the past to fight past fire events. This ridgeline is currently most directly accessible via the existing ± 10 to 12 foot ($\pm 10'$ - $12'$) wide access driveway in the location of the proposed driveway. The proposed enhancement to the driveway will improve access to this strategic ridgeline.

The following summarizes the requested exception and findings:

Relevant section: **STA: 0+90 to 1+50**

Request: An exception to the minimum radii of 50 feet (50') as defined in Section 15 of the Napa County Road and Street Standards in the referenced portion of driveway.

Exception: Expansion has been minimized within the stream setbacks defined by the Napa

County Conservation Regulations. Realignment of the road here would push the road much closer to the top of bank.

Findings: The proposed road has utilized the existing alignment to maximize width in this area. Realignment or additional widening is constrained by environmental site limitations, including stream setbacks to an adjacent stream, per Napa County Conservation Regulations section 18.108 which, prohibits grading within the stream setbacks. The exception will preserve those existing natural features, including the ephemeral stream course and top of bank. As detailed in a) to e) above, the proposed road provides the same overall practical effect as the SRA Fire Safe Regulations.

Relevant section: **STA: 1+50 to 8+00**

Request: An exception to the minimum commercial driveway width of 20 feet (20') paved plus 2 feet (+2') total shoulders, as defined in Section 15 of the Napa County Road and Street Standards in the referenced portion of driveway.

Exception: Expansion has been minimized within the stream setbacks defined by the Napa County Conservation Regulations. Realignment of the road here would push the road much closer to the top of bank.

Findings: The existing edge of road location and grade on the west side of the road has been preserved for the proposed road. Turnouts are proposed in this area to aid in emergency and other vehicle passing. Turnouts will be constructed with walls as to minimize grading and disturbance in the area. Additional widening is constrained by environmental site limitations, including stream setbacks to an adjacent stream, per Napa County Conservation Regulations section 18.108, as well as existing steep slopes to the east of the existing driveway. The exception will preserve those existing natural features, including the ephemeral stream course and top of bank. As detailed in a) to e) above, the proposed road provides the same overall practical effect as the SRA Fire Safe Regulations.

Relevant section: **STA: 8+00 to 9+25**

Request: An exception to the minimum radii of 50 feet (50') as defined in Section 15 of the Napa County Road and Street Standards in the referenced portion of driveway.

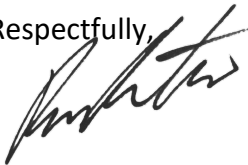
Exception: Expansion has been minimized due to surrounding steep slopes and proximity to the nearby stream setbacks defined by the Napa County Conservation Regulations.

Findings:

The proposed road has utilized the existing alignment while maximizing width in this area. Realignment or additional widening is constrained by environmental site limitations, the steep slopes that lead towards the stream setbacks to an adjacent stream, per Napa County Conservation Regulations section 18.108 which, prohibits grading within the stream setbacks. The exception will preserve those existing natural features, including the ephemeral stream course and top of bank. As detailed in a) to e) above, the proposed road provides the same overall practical effect as the SRA Fire Safe Regulations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions regarding the above.

Respectfully,



Bruce Fenton, P.E.
Project Manager



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