

Proposed Changes to the Agriculture Tourism

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To: Olivia Story <olivia.story@co.yakima.wa.us>

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Dear Olivia

Please pass on my comments about the proposed changes to the agritourism codes to the planning committee for tomorrow's meeting. As the owner of Silver Lake Winery that had a remote tasting room in unincorporated King County, please proceed with caution and be certain that there is a need for these changes. It took King County over 6 years to study the situation, hold multiple public hearings to finally pass a new ordinance. It was challenged in the courts and now over 8 wineries are facing potential closure. In my case, Silver Lake Winery which had been operating in the general Woodinville area was FORCED to close. I worry you can have the same impact in Yakima.

My comments in the proposed changes are:

Chapter 19.18.500 Wineries, Breweries, and Distilleries

Paragraph 2 (b) Food Service. You propose to limit the food for a winery, brewery or distillery (WBD) to packaged foods only unless it is provided by a licensed food vendor at a special event.

Does this mean that a WBD can not have a food truck unless they have a special event permit? Many WBD currently have food trucks every weekend which helps drive business and reduces the chance of intoxication by eating food with alcohol.

Suggestion: When you limit food at WBD, you increase the chances of overconsumption hence, I would recommend that you allow WMDs to have both a restaurants and licensed food vendors without a special event.

Paragraph 2 (C) Special events: You propose to require a special event fee if there will be over 100 attendees at an event including weddings.

Silver Lake Winery has hosted weddings for many years. I can tell you most of them are around 150 guests and we have never had an issue!

What is the cost of special event fee? Time for application? Will this add a burden to the young bride and groom who will now have to go thru the process.

Are Wine Club pickup parties exempt from this event permit? Will they also be limited to 100 guests.

Is the 100 guest limit the number of people on the premise at one time or during the whole day?

Allowing a reviewing official to set limits is not a good idea unless there are clear objective standards being applied.

Suggestion: Raise the limit for the need for a special event permit to 150. Make sure it is clear that wine club pickup parties are exempt.

Chapter 19.18.060 Agricultural Tourist Operation

Paragraph 2 (a) Food Service: If I read this correctly, prepared food is permitted only if it is incidental or accessory to a permitted use or value-added food items produced from agricultural products grown on-site or pre-packaged food. This wording is confusing! Does this include a winery that wants to sell pizza made on site? Is this supposed to include restaurants? Or does this actually limit food preparation and consumption to food only grown on site?

Paragraph 4 (b) ATO-Retail Food Service: I have the same comments as above.

Suggestion: Allow Restaurants at WBD or at least at the ATO- Retail level

Paragraph 5 b). ATO-Destination Food Service This is the first time I see the word restaurants mentioned. If you are proposing that a WBD needs to have an ATO-Destination permit to be able to sell pizza (or any other prepared food) on-site, then this threshold is too high and will discourage many to do so.

Suggestion: Allow restaurants at WBDs or at the very least ATO-Retail.

Paragraph 5 (d) ATO-Destination Overnight lodging: Short term rental are limited to six (6) units. This limit is too small as there may not be enough revenue to pay all expenses for running this lodging including the costs for a manger, maid, clerks, janitors and gardener, utilities. All business require a profit point to survive and six is too little. When was the last time any commissioner slept in a lodging with only 6 rooms?

Many of use hosts 1-2 RVs from Harvest Hosts, an online company that refers customers to visit WBDs and farms in exchange for a free place to park their RV. Does this now meant that a participant would need a ATO-Destination to participate in Harvest Hosts?

Paragraph 6 (a) ii – Same Comments as above

Suggestion: Change the limit of 6 units to 12 and be sure Harvest Host participants are exempt.

I am sure there are other concerns that others have expressed. Mine are meant to complement those.

Can you please submit my comments to the commissioners and answer my questions before the meeting so that I may participate in the Zoom meeting as an informed participant.

Sal Leone
Managing Member
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