

Text amendments to Agricultural Tourist Operations (ATOs) and wineries, breweries & distilleries (WB&D)

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To: Long Range Planning <longrangeplanning@co.yakima.wa.us>

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Yakima County Planning Commission,

Yakima County's agricultural bounty is the backbone of not only our overall economy, but also the tourism industry. Our wineries, breweries, distilleries and agri-tourism operations are renowned and attract visitors from around the world. In addition, wine grape and hop growers plus produce and tree fruit farmers rely on the success of these businesses for their operations. The most recent data (pandemic year 2020) shows the total economic impact of visitor spending in Yakima County exceeds **\$440 million** each year, **supports 4,200 jobs** and generates **\$34 million** in state and local taxes. Yakima Valley Tourism works hard to nurture and promote this vital industry and we implore you to do all you can to help them to prosper.

We recognize there is need to update county regulations based on the state's Growth Management Act while ensuring continued protection for agricultural zones and support for rural communities and tourist industries. But we also do not want it to be burdensome to the businesses. We commend the industry advisory group and planning staff for their work to date.

Based on the comments at the hearing February 9th we have two recommendations for consideration:

Currently Proposed Changes: 19.18.060 (5) (d) Overnight Lodging and Short-term rentals: Short term rentals are limited to six (6) overnight accommodations, down from 12. There was strong support from the industry to keep the number at 12 because of the economy of scale to be functional for a business. We support keeping it at 12 units.

Currently Proposed: 19.18.500 (2) (c) Special Events: "Events not related to the operational and marketing aspects... such as weddings, receptions, meetings, and retreats, and are anticipated to have over 100 attendees, will require a one-time special occasion permit (per event) as set forth in 30 YCC Title 8.10." One winery at that meeting stated 150 attendees would capture most needs, but we suggest it be rounded up to 200 to help sustain these smaller events.

We hope these changes can be made to help sustain our small agri-tourism businesses. Thank you.

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