

# Yakima County Public Services Agritourism Operations Review/ Case Number: LRN2019-00010.

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EXHIBIT NO.: 22

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Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioner's,

I, and a small group of wineries, breweries, distillery's and Agritourism Operations served on the advisory group for this Yakima County Public Services agritourism operations review/ Case Number: LRN2019-00010.

I attended the meetings since last year and voiced my concerns and ideas about the proposed changes to the Development Code (Yakima County Code Title 19) for permitting of wineries, breweries, Distilleries (WB&D's) and Agritourism Operations (ATO's) located in the unincorporated Yakima County.

Our winery has been in business in Zillah, WA. since 2005 and operational as winery and tasting room in an agricultural zone for the last 15 years. As a winery, we have public events such as association events (Spring Barrel, Catch the Crush, etc.) and our own wine club events held onsite. We have not once in the last 15 years had a noise complaint, parking violations, health district or fire violations. I and many other meeting attendees have raised the question multiple times to the staff who hosted the advisory group meeting since April of 2021 to provide some sort of data of "said" complaints from the public and have not had a solid response. And was given \*\*one\*\* example from a winery located in Naches Heights. One example is not a reason the change the current codes that have worked for 25+ years for WB&D's and ATO's in the Yakima County.

I understand that there is expansion of new business coming in to the valley and welcome it - particularly in ag zones, due to WB&D's and ATO's. Out of area tourism/customers from all over the world come here to the Yakima Valley to experience what we have offer just for this reason. Locals as well. Visitors love to see the process of how the wine or beer is made from the vineyard and hop yard to their glass. We grow it, produce it and promote the Yakima Valley.

My husband and I both have families that operate farms/orchards with a combination of over 140 years in this valley farming and are still in business today. For the last 20 years, my mother-in-law has been operating a very successful B&B on their farm as well. We understand agritourism in our valley - we work and experience it every day.

The proposed code changes make it harder to operate a prosperous WB&D & ATO business in an ag zone by:

1. Permitting large events when there was not an existing permit before: Why fix something that is not broken? After business's being shut down due to Covid and revenue lost - business's were still expected to pay our annual fees to the various Yakima County departments to stay current to be operational. I feel that this new permit is an attempt to get more money for the Yakima County pockets at the expense of small business's who are trying to recoup after the last two years of not be operational or fully operational. And as stated above, the County cannot give any examples of what the event complaints are. Also, the number of people at any given event should be more then 100 people - to put a limit on the amount of people is going to hurt tax revenue and the business's bottom dollar. Leave the person amount to be what is on the business's current permit's allowance.

2. Cost of permits for large events: I have raised the point many times of what the cost will be and see that is undecided in the last draft. I had also asked the question - would existing WBD's and ATO's have to purchase a permit going forward, as we have already paid fees when we applied to operate our business (aka grandfathered in) and was told that this going forward was only to be applied to new business's applying for business permits in the Yakima County's ag zone. That looks like it's not the case...I suggest that the Planning Commission and Commissioner's listen to the recordings from the advisory group meetings to get a full scope of what was talked about and not make a final decision on only reading the provided drafts.

3. Special Events: I have also raised concerns about this proposal. How can Yakima County say what type of events and marketing aspects you can and can not have at your place of operational business? As long as the business is in the rights of the permits that they currently hold and have paid for - why should a business have to apply for another "one time" (which it's not - it's per event) special event permit per 100 attendees? According to this permit, my wine club event with over 100 people - could be classified as a "meeting" or a "retreat" in the eyes of the "Administrative Official". This is not needed and has not been needed. I should NOT have to get a permit for having these types of events.

4. Limiting ATO's overnight for accommodations down to 6 from 12: There is support from the ATO's to keep the number at 12 (as it has been) due to the economy of scale to function as a prosperous business - i.e. employee retention, food service, etc.

5. Outdoor Festival Regulations: What defines an outdoor festival from an already existing festival such as Spring Barrel, Catch the Crush, etc.? I have brought this question to the advisory meetings. Is there really difference? The \$10,000 annual bond/and or deposit per business is absolutely outrageous - is this to employ the "Administrative Official"? Who then can say what wasn't done correctly and not refund the amount back? And the "Official" can cancel an event a day before the event and the business will be out of the monies that was put into that event? Once again, overreach on a government level - we do not need this to be approved. Period.

6. Permit applications for outdoor festivals that might be denied due to parking/fire/health department violations: Business's have annual in person inspections from the Health & Fire Department's. That business is notified immediately if there are any infractions. Why do we have these two departments and now are creating another - the "Administrative Official"? It seems to be a waste of tax payers monies to create another department and in the end will hurt the business's bottom dollar. And business's possibly not doing events anymore - why would you?

I sincerely hope that the Planning Commission and Commissioner's will review all of the the advisory group's work that has been done to date and review the public's comments and make a final decision that reflects the concerns of the WB&D's and ATO's.

If the new county codes are approved - this will affect Yakima County wineries, breweries, distillery's, ATO's and tourism in our beautiful valley for many years to come:

\*Loss of tax revenue from not doing events

\*Profit loss for the small business's

\*The burden of new government regulations and permit fees put upon the business's

\*Tourism and tourism dollars lost due to lack of events and/or no events

\*Small business's not looking to start a new business in the Yakima County ag zone due to the new codes

\*Business's shuttering due to the new codes

\*Loss of jobs

\*New and old business's looking to open their business in another county and or state that do not have these proposed codes enacted

Let's keep business alive & prospering and tourism dollars in our Valley!

Thank you to the Planning Commission and the County Commissioner's for your consideration.

Cheers,  
Sarah Fewel  
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