

Draft Amendments to Special Uses and Standards

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Cc: Laurie Kirkland <laurie@wilridgewinery.com>

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Hi Olivia and Amanda,

I am not going to be able to attend the meeting this afternoon so I want to give you my thoughts on the proposed changes to the Special Uses and Standards section of the Yakima County Code. I wish I had time to make specific suggestions for revising the code, but I do not.

I am at a loss to understand how the proposed changes will help small family farms or craft beverage producers survive in the ag zone. The proposed changes further restrict and limit what can happen at an ATO, rather than expand what ATOs or craft producers can do. Unless I am missing something, as drafted, all craft producers would have to obtain either a retail or destination ATO permit (and resort ATOs would no longer be allowed) if they want to hold any sort of event or serve any food at all. That's not helpful. If it was easy or inexpensive, or even possible, for many wineries, breweries and distilleries to obtain ATO permits, many would have already done so. These changes will make it harder to get an ATO permit and limit what ATOs can do. Therefore, unless someone can explain what I am missing, I want to be clear that I strongly oppose these proposed changes. The current ATO code language is much better than this proposed language.

Instead I thought we had all agreed that the purpose of our efforts together was to expand what craft producers can do in the ag zone, not restrict them. Rather than further limiting what ATOs can do, we should be expanding what wineries, breweries and distilleries and other small farm businesses can do as permitted uses in the ag zone. We should be revising the permitted use section of the code to specifically state that anyone with a permitted retail use, such as a craft producer, can hold events, play music, serve and sell food (in compliance with Health Department rules), have lodging, teach classes, hold seminars, have retreats, etc. without having to apply for an ATO. This is the successful model that has worked in Europe and kept small family farms alive there.

Therefore, I think the current proposal should be shelved, and staff should be redirected to draft proposed amendments to the code to increase, not decrease, what wineries, breweries, distilleries and other similar ag-related small businesses can do as permitted uses in the ag zone. Such new amendments are all the more important as I recently learned that some county staff interpret the code to define an event as any time two or more people gather for any purpose. See 3103.3. If that's really the case, we urgently need to specifically delineate all the activities that small family farms are permitted to do in the ag zone. Or we need to change the definition of "event."

Please forward these comments to the entire group. Thanks.

Paul

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