

June 26, 2017

Solano County Dept. of Resource Management  
675 Texas Street, Suite 5500  
Fairfield, CA 94533

RE: Opposition to Use Permit Application Co. U-16-04 of Caymus Suisun Winery  
Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration

Dear Mr. Leland,

This letter is submitted in opposition to the winery applicant's requested increase from 100,000 to 200,000 gallon bottling capacity at 4991 Suisun Valley Road, Fairfield, Solano County, California. I am a concerned citizen and valley resident opposed to the large winery being built at this site for a number of reasons. The location being very close to the Suisun Valley Elementary School at 4985 Lambert Road is detrimental to the welfare of area citizens and students. This large winery will be 10 times larger than any of Suisun Valley's 12 existing wineries. Our area also has 3 small wineries with online sales.

The vision contained in an article published a few years ago quoted Ron Lanza of Wooden Valley Winery. He said it would be nice to have 12 to 15 wineries in the valley to make it a desirable destination. Little if any attention was given to winery size.

The Suisun Valley Strategic Plan provided planning guidance for retaining the agricultural viability of the Suisun Valley. However, it and the Solano County General Plan that it updated, are unconstitutionally vague to the detriment of its citizens. It left the door open to outside corporations and investors because it lacks rules and regulations. It opened economic opportunities without adherence to desirable zoning practices, such as truly protecting agriculture as the state defines it. Simply worded allowable land uses without definitions and regulations, is a recipe for disaster. That disaster began unraveling here in 2013. The unique timing on the heels of a national recession only complicated matters. When unintended negative impacts are realized, the county's Board of Supervisors is required to revisit, revise or repeal the Plan. We have been warning county staff for more than 3 years that impacts were apparent and obvious. The County has been slow to respond and enforce local health and safety regulations. There have been only mild attempts to enforce the County's existing Agritourism definition, one which does not allow concerts and amplified music. Two quazi-event centers hosting summer concerts and events throughout the year without proper county use permits have been operating undisturbed for 3 years, putting the public in danger on a regular basis. They share the general location with the Caymus Suisun Winery site, forming a hub for alcohol-tourism. It can also be a bottleneck of traffic on our narrow country roads that our rural fire departments and Cal Fire must travel. The rural school is in the middle of all this. Wine tourism, and the never satisfied need for supporting services aimed at keeping tourists happy, always requires expensive improvements to infrastructure. Wine tastings become wine/food pairings, which become small plates, which bring applications for

restaurants. The Plan allows for restaurants, resorts and hotels, again these are commercial uses that do not directly support Agriculture. They support tourism. We are not seeing much in the way of Agritourism which would include an educational or historical element. The best business the valley had for that is Larry's Produce Stand, but that site also sold, and Larry's may never be reproduced somewhere else. Once Larry's lease term expires in 2 years, why wouldn't another large Caymus Suisun Winery and event center go in? Without winery regulations, limits, and better planning, it will likely become another winery, event center, tasting room free-for-all. If the valley's land, water and air are the environment, then the unintended negative impacts occurring now and in the near future, do have a significant effect on the environment. Already, Williams Road has been cleared of its orchards. Those orchards provided habitat and protected riparian areas. No wildlife lives in a vineyard. Our ground water supply is only a guess.

Solano County has minimal, if any, protections for our watershed, hills and ridgelines. Those areas are fair game for exploitation without protective land use regulations. There are no established creek setbacks for vineyards according to the Ag Commissioner.

Although agriculture is the primary land use in the Suisun Valley agricultural region, potential and actual conflicts have been discovered. Unintended negative impacts have resulted. Some have put people in harms way. Mankas Corner was designated as 1 of 8 planned Agricultural Tourist Centers, since it was one of a few pockets of commercial zoning in the valley. While the County recognized the shortage of parking there, they selected it to become the first ATC developed. It is also the furthest away location at the northern portion of the "loop" of the valley. In the 1980's, the site that is now Mankas Steakhouse was a country delicatessen. On-site parking and adjacent limited parking spaces amounted to less than 40. Through changes of ownerships and two subsequent restaurant expansions, the County never required additional parking to meet the needs of the business. Today, there are still less than 40 parking spaces. In the last 2 years, we have counted 225 vehicles during illegal concerts. Illegal "events" that drew more than 400 guests, without use permits, nor the approval of Suisun Fire Marshal Chief Johnson, have been allowed to occur. These events were always advertised weeks or months in advance. Both locations have maximum 150-person capacities. Solano County has a history of poor code enforcement, which doesn't bode well for residents quality of life.

Distinctions of what are commercial uses, and what is agriculture, has been argued in many courtrooms where rural areas are treated like resource-extraction areas. Suisun Valley has 35-acres (0.4%) dedicated to commercial use. The Plan allows marketing and economic opportunities (commercial uses) that will lead to the loss of the unique rural character of Suisun Valley. Read the 5 Stages of Tourism attachment. You don't need to look further than Napa and Sonoma Counties to see the negative impacts of wine tourism. In comparing our general plan to other counties, Solano County's general plan is missing pages of important definitions. Thus a very attractive opportunity to outside investors seeking to monopolize our area is created. While valley farmers sought to boost the value of farmland here, it resulted in making the land unaffordable for food farmers. Instead of helping the family farm survive, it made farm families sell or lease their land.

Properties under 15-30 year leases become difficult to sell on an open market. The valley will lose its residents and diversity, and become gentrified. It has happened in Napa, Sonoma and elsewhere.

Suisun Valley Road will separate the school from the winery. Two large tasting rooms will be less than 600 feet from the school's playground. A liquor sales license will be required, and although mere proximity by itself is not sufficient to deny an applicant, public welfare and morals are considered. Please consider the welfare of the people who live here and student's routine exposure to alcohol tourism. Children are susceptible to their environment. This project is only one piece of a burgeoning public safety problem, one that includes significant vehicle traffic that the County has only recently acknowledged privately. A count of 5,000 vehicles on a typical Friday afternoon is significant, and we have been witness to this traffic pattern for a few years.

Adjacent parcels are being snapped up quickly for contiguous vineyards under the same ownership, thus could easily become a wine theme park for adults. By law, in our country, no one has more rights than another.

The Caymus Suisun Winery will be the first large winery to be developed in Suisun Valley, north of Interstate 80. The approval of the industrial-size Cordelia Winery was the first in the county. Both are the same ownership. If built out to capacity as planned, Cordelia Winery and Distillery, will be the largest distillery in California. Solano County does not have winery regulations and policies in place that are necessary to prevent abuse and negative impacts.

The wine industry has grown faster than agricultural studies could keep up with. In my opinion, the SVSP was obsolete soon after it was passed. We are at a critical time now, where the Plan needs to be revisited. There are adverse environment impacts occurring that the County was not aware of in 2010. Any road widening, even adding shoulders and bike lanes, requires an EIR. Cal Fire did not receive an EIR from Solano County for the Mankas Corner Road Improvement Project. That project is incomplete and has stalled due to the discovery of an S.I.D. domestic water line easement in the roadway. Now, the water line itself must be moved north onto private property. This costly error and construction delay could have been prevented.

Rockville Corners is another designated ATC. However, the County now realizes that location has significant archaeological and cultural deposits that make it undesirable for future expansion and tourist use development. The Gomer School location on Abernathy Road should no longer be considered for tourist use development, due to heavy traffic. The owners of that site and of the adjacent vineyards are currently planning an event center for that location. The County's next major planned project is to widen Abernathy Road. All the while, flooding issues are not being addressed in the valley, which is in a flood zone and experiences flooding. Creeks have not been properly cleared of obstructions for years, which increases property damage caused by flooding, as was witnessed locally last winter.

Therefore, in the best interest of public safety, for students of the Suisun Valley Elementary School, and the quality of life for valley residents, please delay the approval of Use Permit Application No. U-16-04 Notice of Intent, until winery regulations can be written and approved. Winery regulations here should be modeled after those of Napa County, since our regions are connected and adjacent, but scaled to our 9,000 acre valley. Until adequate regulations exist, only a limited number of small wineries should be considered for approval. And, you must set a maximum number of wineries and tasting rooms in order to have any type of sustainability.

Furthermore, large wineries who export their wine should not be allowed to build event centers and hold direct-marketing events, because they do not need to market wine in this way. Events require parking lots, and parking lots pave over significant amounts of farmland. Weddings should be banned, as they are not ag supporting. Urban commercial uses should be directed to the urban areas. The City of Fairfield can accommodate all of these commercial uses that will otherwise harm the valley and drive away residents.

As for our County's limited funding for these projects, spending for the "needs" must come before the "wants" in order for the community and majority of citizens to truly benefit. Do not fall for the false promises that accompany requests for variances. The City of St. Helena is recalling their mayor in August, because he has favored Big Wine over the townspeople. Residents there do not want to be overrun by wine tourism. One false promise made recently was a large winery claimed that if granted approval to build, the town would see \$500,000 in annual state sales tax. The truth revealed the town would only see \$5,000. That is because the wine is exported out of California. Ninety percent of the wine produced in California is exported.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mary Browning  
Suisun Valley resident

## **5 Stages: “Tourism’s Faustian Deal” – George Caloyannidis: NAPA Vison 2050**

**Stage 1:** Tourism is purely supplemental and supportive to an existing economic base.

**Stage 2:** The local economy increases its reliance on tourist dollars and is perceived by local governments and businesses as essential.

**Stage 3:** The dislocation of the local population begins, a gradual tearing of the social fabric, the proliferation of low paying jobs with the associated concentration of outsider investor wealth at the top.

**Examples:**

- Neighbors move out and part-timers or vacation rentals proliferate: neighbors do not know or talk to each other.
- Low paying jobs proliferate – the income gap widens – only the wealthy are “thriving”
- Housing is not available – workers have to commute in creating more traffic congestion

**Stage 4:** By this stage, the process is irreversible. The deficit economy of tourism becomes evident as the wear and tear of the infrastructure requires ever increasing funds for maintenance and further destructive expansion. (Taxes, use and mitigation fees)

**Examples:**

- Tourism becomes “unwelcome” by local residents.
- Traffic and road safety problems proliferate. Local governments propose additional taxes on residents to pay for fixing roads, etc. Are reluctant to impose “mitigation fees” on the businesses benefiting from the tourism .
- Authentic character is lost – feels like living in or visiting Disneyland.

**Stage 5:** The Faustian deal is complete: Local government has negotiated itself into the corner of no alternative than the vicious cycle of even more and more tourism to pay the bills. It never catches up ... the infrastructure erodes ... once thriving communities are in tatters both in terms of infrastructure and social capital.

**Tourism then moves to other destinations – and the cycle starts again – devouring once thriving communities and locations with authentic character.**