Gambill, Suzanne

From: Poet707 <poet707@aol.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 21, 2015 7:56 AM
To: Gambill, Suzanne
Subject: Napa Custom Crush/ The Caves of Soda Canyon - DENY retroactive approval of "very minor modification" to use permit

Dear Ms. Gambill,

I am writing to express my dismay with your recommendation with respect to Napa Custom Crush, the retroactive approval of its non-permitted cave portal and terrace. But if I may, some background first:

Residents in rural Napa aren't hermits, but we do appreciate the solitude and quiet that characterizes our home. It's what we do up here. You might think it's quaint or old-fashioned to want to live in peaceful communion on a small farm or with Nature. Yet, increasingly, we're awakening to incompatible unnatural noise, visual blights, and the smell of something rotten back at county headquarters. We're hurting.

Of course this is unacceptable. I'd like to ask for your help. We are real people in a real place. Yet my neighbors and I feel increasingly threatened by the tourism industry and you, our permitting agency which enables the industry as it seeks to further expand up into our sleepy neighborhoods. Please try to understand: we are real people, we call Napa home, we live here in our quiet neighborhoods which are becoming sacrifice zones for the tourism industry.

Your approving this egregious "very minor modifications" isn't helpful. It's a deceitful violation of the intent of CEQA and the Napa Viewshed Protection ordinance. It's also a violation of trust with the residents of rural Napa. Who will you serve? It seems as if there's no project and no variance you can say no to. If that's the case, make this the first YES for the people. I urge you to deny this gross request for a use permit modification and to return the site to the the condition permitted for. And give your Napa neighbors a little peace of mind.

Sincerely,
Jim Wilson
5000 Monticello Road
Napa, CA 94558
707-226-2155

Gambill, Suzanne

From: amber manfree <amber_manfree@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 23, 2015 11:22 PM
To: Gambill, Suzanne
Cc: mom
Subject: Objection to permit application #P14-00288

Dear Suzanne,

I am writing on behalf of myself and my family to oppose approval of The Caves at Soda Canyon / Napa Custom Crush ("The Caves") Very Minor Modification Permit Application #P14-00288 which requests permission for an already built 4th portal to their caves at 2275 Soda Canyon Road.

This construction which The Caves is now requesting a permit for was, in fact, completed years ago. The 4th portal was not in the original permit application or shown on their plans submitted with that application. The cave was drilled all the way through the side of the ridge without a permit, and its only purpose is to provide a sweeping view for tourists.

In addition to the environmental and viewshed impacts of this construction, which I find objectionable on their own merits, retroactively permitting construction projects that would likely have been denied at the initial time of permitting sends an absolutely backwards message to land owners and contractors; that, if you have enough money to build, you can go ahead and do whatever you like and – instead of being fined and/or forced to reverse or mitigate for unpermitted construction – one can simply push a permit through Napa County's channels at a later date. This makes a mockery of the permit process and is not an acceptable practice for County employees charged with stewarding the Valley on the public's behalf.

The Caves should be fined for their flagrant disregard of Napa County's regulations and required to perform appropriate mitigation for the disruption they have caused to the environment, including visual and material degradation of the site.

Anything less indicates to other would-be developers that "anything goes" and the Valley can be trampled regardless of well-intentioned and hard-fought public policies. It also sends the public the message that the policies enacted directly by voters and through the representative process are meaningless in practice. This is sure to create ill-will and tension between neighbors; exactly the kind of problem that governments are supposed to prevent.

For the reasons stated above, the right course of action is to protect Napa's environment and hold the applicant to their original approved permit.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our comments,

Amber Manfree

amber_manfree@hotmail.com

Debra Manfree

debra_manfree@yahoo.com

Gambill, Suzanne

From: Bill Hocker <bill@wmhocker.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2015 3:03 PM
To: Gambill, Suzanne
Subject: Napa Custom Crush Very Minor Modification P14-00288

Ms. Gambill,

I am writing to protest the granting of an approval to recognize and allow construction done illegally on the Napa Custom Crush site on Soda Canyon Road.

I would like to suggest that there is nothing very minor about illegally drilling a hole from one side of a ridge to the other especially given the fact that the ridge now graced by the portal is protected under the viewshed ordinance and is perhaps the most iconic piece of rugged ridge line in the Napa Valley (now unfortunately scarred by several home sites). And the fact that the bootlegging was done solely to enhance the tourist experience makes this modification, given the sensitivity that we now feel toward tourism encroachment into our communities, as minor as a lightning bolt.

Unfortunately this project should not have been permitted in the first place. It is a site completely unsuited for winery operations, far up a rural dead end road, far up a steep and winding access driveway on a property too rocky to support vines. It was strictly built to provide a tourist venue in a remote part of the county. The negative impacts of tourism encroachment into areas that are solely residential and agricultural are substantial and have not been given adequate environmental review by the county.

The fact also that this project has been a noise problem to its neighbors for the last year as it continues to run its operations with a generator only adds to the animosity felt by the community toward a government that too often appears to coddle the tourism industry at the expense of residents. This applicant has not been honest with the county, has not been a good neighbor and should not be rewarded for misdeeds with the granting of this modification.

The modification calls into the question not only the actions of the applicant but of a contractor willing to commit a breach of his permit and of the engineer that must have reviewed it. I would hope that the county requires the project to be returned to the condition as approved in 2006 plus further restrictions in the marketing plan to compensate for the illegal construction. And I would also hope that the county places sanctions on the contractor and engineers that were complicit in the violation. The denial of this request and the sanctions are needed to serve as an example that it should not be easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission from the government of Napa County.

Bill Hocker
3460 Soda Canyon Road
Napa, CA 94558

Gambill, Suzanne

From: Chris Miller <mcmiller@frontier.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 03, 2015 7:38 PM
To: Gambill, Suzanne
Subject: Napa Custom Crush modification

Ms. Gambill,

I am exasperated by the fact that the Caves developed beyond the scope of their permit while shunning their obligations to complete the project that was permitted. While the residents of Soda Canyon continue to listen to the drone of the Caves generator and gaze at the eyesore of an exposed winery storage space on a raw, excavated hillside they are seeking retroactive approval for construction that was not allowed. That this approval is even being considered rather than first insisting that they clean up their operation makes no sense at all.

I would hope the county would insist that the Caves resolve the problem with the easement needed to connect to quiet PGE electricity and then immediately make the connection, complete the installation of vegetation to conceal the rubble of their various racks, bins, vehicles and lights from the residents of Soda Canyon, remove the ridge top "observation deck", and close/eliminate the western portal of the permit-violating cave they are attempting to retroactively permit. If they do not comply with all of these, shut them down! I am still amazed they were granted an operating permit with so many flagrant loose ends.

Theirs is an absurd project and they've been manipulating the county and ignoring the neighborhood for too long.

Please reconsider your position on this and understand that the economic benefits of this awkward project are far outweighed by the needs for the aesthetic and cultural survival of rural Napa County and the comfort and security of its residents.

Sincerely,

Chris Miller

Gambill, Suzanne

From: Peter Martin <pmartin0777@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 04, 2015 6:31 PM
To: Gambill, Suzanne
Subject: Napa Custom Crush modification

Ms. Gambill,

I am writing to protest the granting of an approval to recognize and allow construction done illegally on the Napa Custom Crush site on Soda Canyon Road. There is nothing very minor about illegally drilling a hole through the ridge, especially since the ridge now with a portal through it is protected under the view shed ordinance. Secondly a portal is drilled with intent not by accident given the cost to enhance the tourist experience. Tourist who will not drink and drive on a one lane road that my wife and kids drive everyday. Aiding and abetting the criminal acts of this organization with a retroactive approval or permit is crazy.
Unfortunately this project should not have been permitted in the first place. It is a site completely unsuited for winery operations, far up a rural dead end road, far up a steep and winding access driveway on a property too rocky to support vines. It was strictly built to be a tourist/event/party venue in a gorgeous rural part of the county. The negative impacts of tourism encroachment into areas that are solely residential and agricultural are substantial and have not been given adequate environmental review by the county. Soda canyon road is not maintained nor does it have adequate safety features for tourism/drunk driver traffic. Please drive the road up and down please. on the way down please notice the proximity of the telephone poles to the asphalt road - less than 3 feet at some corners. I am sure the county will be sued when a Custom Crush party goer kills himself striking one of the poles. One pole near the 25 mile hour turn already is splintered from several close calls by ag workers.

The fact also that this project has been a noise problem for me and my neighbors as it continues to run its operations with a generator only adds to the animosity felt by the community toward a government that too often appears to coddle the tourism industry at the expense of residents. the county never should have allowed them to start and continue operations on a generator. I know the county would not allow me to run my house in this manner. This applicant has not been honest with the county, has not been a good neighbor and should not be rewarded for misdeeds with the granting of this modification.

Please step up and call an end to the lies, miss dealings and under capitalization of this company should not be operating in the first place. again leave your desk, visit the location and ask yourself is this right and remember the alcohol involved and the potential deaths if you signoff on the permit.

For the record my family live at:
2354 Soda Canyon rd
Napa, CA 94558
707-257-2510

Peter Martin
pmartin0777@yahoo.com
415-377-9077
AOLIM: pmartin412