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## Recommended Findings

**PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING – JANUARY 20, 2021  
RECOMMENDED FINDINGS**

**Wheeler Farms Use Permit Major Modification  
Application Number P19-00130-MOD & Exception to Road and Street Standards  
588 Zinfandel Lane, St. Helena, California  
APN #030-260-016**

**ENVIRONMENTAL:**

The Planning Commission (Commission) has received and reviewed the proposed Negative Declaration pursuant to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and of Napa County's Local Procedures for Implementing CEQA, and finds that:

1. The Planning Commission has read and considered the Negative Declaration prior to taking action on said Negative Declaration and the proposed project.
2. The Negative Declaration is based on independent judgment exercised by the Planning Commission.
3. The Negative Declaration was prepared and considered in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
4. There is no substantial evidence in the record as a whole, that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.
5. There is no evidence, in considering the record as a whole that the proposed project will have a potential adverse effect on wildlife resources or habitat upon which the wildlife depends.
6. The site of this proposed project is not on any of the lists of hazardous waste sites enumerated under Government Code Section 65962.5 and is not within the boundaries of any airport land use plan.
7. The Secretary of the Commission is the custodian of the records of the proceedings on which this decision is based. The records are located at the Napa County Planning, Building & Environmental Services Department, 1195 Third Street, Second Floor, Napa, California.

**EXCEPTION TO ROAD AND STREET STANDARDS:**

The Commission has reviewed the attached described Road and Street Standards (RSS) Exception request in accordance with Road and Street Standards Section 3 and makes the following findings:

8. The exception will preserve unique features of the natural environment which include, but are not limited to, steep slopes, heritage oak trees, or other trees of at least 6"dbh and found by the decision-maker to be of significant importance, but do not include man made environmental features such as vineyards, rock walls, ornamental or decorative landscaping, fences or the like.

Analysis: Strict application of the requirement to improve the existing driveway to current standards and to widen the gate will result in unnecessary grading where safe access already exists as it was constructed consistent with the 2016 RSS. This exception has been reviewed by the County Engineering Services Division and Fire Marshal who have determined that the request will preserve unique features in the natural environment and recommend approval.

9. Grant of the Road and Street Standards Exception will provide the same overall practical effect as the Standards do in providing defensible space, and does not adversely affect the life, safety, and welfare of the public or persons coming to the property.

Analysis: The County Engineering Services Division and Napa County Fire Department reviewed the request and conducted a site visit. Engineering staff, as well as, Fire Department staff recommend approval of the requested road exception, subject to recommended conditions in their memo of December 18, 2020 and January 11, 2021, respectively. The improvement achieves the same overall practical effect of the NCRSS by providing defensible space and consideration toward life, safety and public welfare by providing the following permanent measures: 1) horizontal and vertical vegetation management as described in the RSS exception request shall be implemented along the entire length of the private driveway connection to Zinfandel Lane; 2) surfacing of the entire access road to meet RSS standards and; 3) periodic maintenance of the private driveway by the property owner to assure sufficient structural section for loading conditions to the imposed loads of fire apparatus weighing at least 75,000 pounds and the design Traffic Index.

## **PLANNING AND ZONING ANALYSIS:**

### **USE PERMIT:**

The Commission has reviewed the use permit major modification request in accordance with the requirements of the Napa County Code §18.124.070 and makes the following findings:

10. The Commission has the power to issue a Use Permit under the Zoning Regulations in effect as applied to property.

Analysis: The project is consistent with the Agricultural Preserve (AP) zoning district regulations. A winery (as defined in the Napa County Code Section 18.08.640) and uses in connection with a winery (refer to Napa County Code Section 18.16.030) are permitted in the AP District with an approved use permit. The project, as conditioned, complies with the Napa County Winery Definition Ordinance (WDO) and all other requirements of the Zoning Code as applicable.

11. The procedural requirements for a Use Permit set forth in Chapter 18.124 of the Napa County Code (zoning regulations) have been met.

Analysis: The Use Permit Major Modification application has been appropriately filed and notice and public hearing requirements have been met. The hearing notice and intent to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration were posted on December 31, 2020, and copies were forwarded to property owners within 1,000 feet of the subject parcel and all other interested parties. The public comment period ran from December 31, 2020 to January 19, 2021.

12. The grant of the Use Permit, as conditioned, will not adversely affect the public health, safety or welfare of the County of Napa.

Analysis: Granting the Use Permit Major Modification for the project, as proposed and conditioned, will not adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of the County. Various County divisions and departments have reviewed the project and commented regarding site access, wastewater disposal, parking, building permits, and fire protection. Conditions are recommended which will incorporate these comments into the project to ensure the protection of the public health, safety, and welfare. As conditioned, the divisions and the departments recommend approval.

13. The proposed use complies with applicable provisions of the Napa County Code and is consistent with the policies and standards of the Napa County General Plan and any applicable specific plan.

Analysis: Compliance with the Zoning Ordinance

The project is consistent with the AP zoning district regulations. A winery (as defined in the Napa County Code Section 18.08.640) and uses in connection with a winery (refer to Napa County Code Section 18.16.030) are permitted in the AP District with an approved use permit. The proposed project includes the recognition of additional employees and marketing events as well an increase in the maximum annual production capacity and the expansion of an existing parking area and will comply with the development standards of the AP District. The project, as conditioned, complies with the Napa County Winery Definition Ordinance (WDO) and all other requirements of the Zoning Code as applicable.

Analysis: Compliance with the General Plan

As proposed and as conditioned, the requested Use Permit Major Modification is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the General Plan (2008). The General Plan land use designation for the subject parcel is Agricultural Resource (AR).

General Plan Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Goal AG/LU-1 guides the County to “preserve existing agricultural land uses and plan for agriculture and related activities as the primary land uses in Napa County.” General Plan Goal AG/LU-3 states that the County should “support the economic viability of agriculture, including grape growing, winemaking, other types of agriculture, and supporting industries to ensure the preservation of agricultural lands.” Goal AG/LU-3 and Policy AG/LU-2 recognize wineries as agricultural uses.

The continued use of the property for fermenting and processing of grape juice into wine supports the economic viability of agriculture within the County, consistent with Goal AG/LU-3 and Policy AG/LU-4 (“The County will reserve agricultural lands for agricultural use including land used for grazing and watershed/open space...”). By allowing the continued agricultural use, the requested Use Permit Major Modification supports the economic viability of both the existing vineyard and agricultural product processing uses on the property, consistent with Economic Development Goal E-1 and Policy E-1.

The “Right to Farm” is recognized throughout the General Plan and is specifically called out in Policy AG/LU-15 and in the County Code. “Right to Farm” provisions ensure that agriculture remains the primary land use in Napa County and is not threatened by potentially competing uses or neighbor complaints. Napa County’s adopted General Plan reinforces the

County's long-standing commitment to agricultural preservation, urban centered growth, and resource conservation.

Applicable Napa County General Plan goals and policies:

Goal AG/LU-1: Preserve existing agricultural land uses and plan for agriculture and related activities as the primary land uses in Napa County.

Goal AG/LU-3: Support the economic viability of agriculture, including grape growing, winemaking, other types of agriculture, and supporting industries to ensure the preservation of agricultural lands.

Policy AG/LU-2: "Agriculture" is defined as the raising of crops, trees, and livestock; the production and processing of agricultural products; and related marketing, sales and other accessory uses. Agriculture also includes farm management businesses and farm worker housing.

Policy AG/LU-4: The County will reserve agricultural lands for agricultural use including lands used for grazing and watershed/open space, except for those lands which are shown on the Land Use Map as planned for urban development.

Policy AG/LU-8: The County's minimum agricultural parcel sizes shall ensure that agricultural areas can be maintained as economic units.

Policy AG/LU-15: The County affirms and shall protect the right of agricultural operators in designated agricultural areas to commence and continue their agricultural practices (a "right to farm"), even though established urban uses in the general area may foster complaints against those agricultural practices. The "right to farm" shall encompass the processing of agricultural products and other activities inherent in the definition of agriculture provided in Policy AG/LU-2.

Goal CON-10: Conserve, enhance and manage water resources on a sustainable basis to attempt to ensure that sufficient amounts of water will be available for the uses allowed by this General Plan, for the natural environment, and for future generations.

Goal CON-11: Prioritize the use of available groundwater for agricultural and rural residential uses rather than for urbanized areas and ensure that land use decisions recognize the long-term availability and value of water resources in Napa County.

Policy CON-53: The County shall ensure that the intensity and timing of new development are consistent with the capacity of water supplies and protect groundwater and other water supplies by requiring all applicants for discretionary projects to demonstrate the availability of an adequate water supply prior to approval. Depending on the site location and the specific circumstances, adequate demonstration of availability may include evidence or calculation of groundwater availability via an appropriate hydrogeologic analysis or may be satisfied by compliance with County Code "fair-share" provisions or applicable State law. In some areas, evidence may be provided through

coordination with applicable municipalities and public and private water purveyors to verify water supply sufficiency.

Policy CON-54: The County shall maintain or enhance infiltration and recharge of groundwater aquifers by requiring all projects in designated groundwater deficient areas as identified in the County's groundwater ordinance (County Code Chapter 13.15) be designed (at minimum) to maintain a site's predevelopment groundwater recharge potential, to the extent feasible, by minimizing impervious surfaces and promoting recharge (e.g., via the use of water retention/detention structures, use of permeable paving materials, bio-swales, water gardens, cisterns, and other best management practices).

Policy CON-55: The County shall consider existing water uses during the review of new water uses associated with discretionary projects, and where hydrogeologic studies have shown that the new water uses will cause significant adverse well interference or substantial reductions in groundwater discharge to surface waters that will alter critical flows to sustain riparian habitat and fisheries or exacerbate conditions of overdraft, the County shall curtail those new or expanded water uses.

Policy CON-60.5 All aspects of landscaping from the selection of plants to soil preparation and the installation of irrigation systems should be designed to reduce water demand, retain runoff, decrease flooding, and recharge groundwater.

Policy CON-72: The County shall seek to reduce the energy impacts from new buildings by applying Title 24 energy standards as required by law and providing information to the public and builders on available energy conservation techniques, products, and methods available to exceed those standards by 15 percent or more.

Policy CON-77: All new discretionary projects shall be evaluated to determine potential significant project-specific air quality impacts and shall be required to incorporate appropriate design, construction, and operational features to reduce emissions of criteria pollutants regulated by the state and federal governments below the applicable significance standard(s) or implement alternate and equally effective mitigation strategies consistent with BAAQMD's air quality improvement programs to reduce emissions. In addition to these policies, the County's land use policies discourage scattered development which contributes to continued dependence on the private automobile as the only means of convenient transportation. The County's land use policies also contribute to efforts to reduce air pollution.

Policy CON-81: The County shall require dust control measures to be applied to construction projects consistent with measures recommended for use by the BAAQMD [Bay Area Air Quality Management District].

Goal E-1: Maintain and enhance the economic viability of agriculture.

Policy E-1: The County's economic development will focus on ensuring the continued viability of agriculture in Napa County.

Policy SAF-20: All new development shall comply with established fire safety standards. Design plans shall be referred to the appropriate fire agency for comment as to:

- 1) Adequacy of water supply.
- 2) Site design for fire department access in and around structures.
- 3) Ability for a safe and efficient fire department response.
- 4) Traffic flow and ingress/egress for residents and emergency vehicles.
- 5) Site-specific built-in fire protection.
- 6) Potential impacts to emergency services and fire department response.

14. That the proposed use will not require a new water system or improvement causing significant adverse effects, either individually or cumulatively, on the affected groundwater basin in Napa County, unless that use will satisfy any of the other criteria specified for approval or waiver of a groundwater permit under Sections 13.15.070 or 13.15.080 of the County Code.

Analysis: The project is consistent with General Plan Conservation Policies CON-53 and CON-55, which require that applicants who are seeking discretionary land use approvals, prove that adequate water supplies are available to serve the proposed use without causing significant negative impacts to shared groundwater resources. The project is categorized as being located within the Valley Floor in an area that has an established acceptable water use criteria of 1.0 acre foot per acre per year based upon current County Water Availability Analysis policies. Based upon those criteria, the Allowable Water Allotment for the project site is 11.66 acre-feet per year (af/yr), determined by multiplying the 11.66 acre Valley floor site by a one AF/YR/acre fair share water use factor.

Currently, there are two wells located on the project parcel. The existing domestic (winery) well is located in the southeasterly corner of the project site within the existing vineyard adjacent to Zinfandel Lane and is used for domestic and irrigation water uses. The existing irrigation well is also located in the southeasterly corner of the project site within the existing vineyard adjacent to Zinfandel Lane and is used for irrigation water uses only. The domestic well was drilled by Huckfeldt Well Drilling, Incorporated in 2015 and has a recorded state well number of e0237636. The domestic well has a reported completion depth of 638 feet with a 56-foot cement annular seal. Static water was observed at 22 feet below ground surface at the time of drilling. The existing irrigation well was drilled in 1971. Per the Application and Permit to Construct a Water Well, the irrigation well has an eight (8) inch steel casing. The observed flow rate is reported to be in excess of 25 gallons per minute (gpm) by vineyard management personnel. A yield test was performed on the domestic well by Doshier Gregson Pump & Well Service on February 19, 2016. Prior to the start of the yield test, static water level was recorded at 26 feet below surface. A sustained yield of 80 gpm was recorded after eight (8) hours of continuous pumping. Static water levels recovered to 29 feet below surface after 10 hours and 45 minutes of rest. According to the Water Availability Analysis for The Wheeler Farms Winery 588 Zinfandel Lane, St. Helena, CA APN: 030-260-016 prepared by Bartelt Engineering in December 2020, the anticipated total overall water demand for the project site will be 7.17 AF/YR representing a 0.69 AF/YR decrease of the existing water demand of 7.86 AF/YR. Therefore, the project is considered not to have a potential to significantly impact groundwater resources. Because the projected water demand for the project is below the estimated water availability acre feet per year for the parcel, the requested Use Permit Major Modification is consistent with General Plan

Goals CON-10 and CON-11, as well as the policies mentioned above that support reservation and sustainable use of groundwater for agricultural and related purposes. The project will not require a new water system or other improvements and will not have a negative impact on local groundwater. The project is also consistent with General Plan Conservation Policy CON-54 because it minimizes impervious surfaces and utilizes bio swales to aid in maintaining the site's predevelopment groundwater recharge potential.