



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 12/16/2020

Agenda Placement: 7B

## Napa County Planning Commission Board Agenda Letter

---

**TO:** Napa County Planning Commission

**FROM:** Charlene Gallina for David Morrison - Director  
Planning, Building and Environmental Services

**REPORT BY:** Sean Trippi, Principal Planner - 299-1353

**SUBJECT:** Signorello Estate Winery - Use Permit Major Modification P19-00198-MOD

---

### **RECOMMENDATION**

#### **RAYMOND SIGNORELLO - SIGNORELLO ESTATE WINERY - USE PERMIT MAJOR MODIFICATION NO. P19-00198-MOD**

**CEQA Status:** Consideration and possible adoption of a Negative Declaration. According to the Negative Declaration, the proposed project would not have any potentially significant impacts. The project site is not on any of the lists of hazardous waste sites enumerated under Government Code Section 65962.5.

**Request:** Approval of Use Permit Major Modification to an existing 20,000 gallon per year winery to modify previous project approval to allow the following: a) increase in maximum annual permitted wine production from 20,000 to 50,000 gallons; b) increase daily tours and tastings by appointment from 20 visitors per day, 120 visitors per week (6,240 visitors per year) to 60 visitors per day, 350 visitors per week (18,200 visitors per year); c) replace the existing marketing plan (14 events per year with up to 395 guests) to allow two (2) events per month with up to 24 guests at each event, two (2) events per month with up to 40 guests at each event, three (3) events per year with up to 75 guests at each event, and two (2) events per year with 125 persons at each event (53 events per year for up to 2,011 guests). No separate tours and tastings will occur on the same day as the two events with up to 125 guests; d) construction of 15,906 s.f. of cave area; e) conversion of 3,155 s.f. of the first floor of the two-story residence/storage building hospitality and administrative uses; f) provide 17 on-site parking spaces for the winery; g) increase employees from four (4) full-time to a total 20 full and part time employees; h) upgraded water and wastewater treatment systems; and, i) driveway improvements, modify the existing entry gate, and landscape improvements. The project is located on a 56.59 acre property on the east side of Silverado Trail, approximately 300 feet south of Oak Knoll Avenue within the Agricultural Preserve (AP) zoning district and a general plan designation of Agricultural Resource (AR)/Agriculture Watershed & Open Space. 4500 Silverado Trail, Napa. APN: 039-400-080.

**Staff Recommendation:** Adopt the Negative Declaration and approve the use permit modification with the proposed conditions of approval.

**Staff Contact:** Sean Trippi, (707) 299-1353 or sean.trippi@countyofnapa.org

**Applicant Contact:** Donna Oldford, Plans4Wine, 2620 Pinot Way, St. Helena, CA 94574; (707) 963-5832 or dbolford@aol.com

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Proposed Actions:**

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the Negative Declaration based on recommended Findings 1-7 in Attachment A; and,
2. Approve Use Permit Major Modification No. P19-00198-MOD based on recommended Findings 8-13 in Attachment A, and subject to the recommended conditions of approval in Attachment B.

### **Discussion:**

A Use Permit for the winery was approved in 1980 for 20,000 gallons of production with four full time employees and tours and tastings by appointment. In 2002, a building permit was approved to convert the second floor of the winery building to a residence. In 2003, a use permit modification was approved to allow marketing activities. The winery/residential building was lost in the 2017 Napa fires. Subsequently, the Director approved a use permit modification in 2019 to relocate and construct a new winery building with no changes to production, visitors or number of employees. Earlier this year a building permit was approved to allow the construction of a new two-story structure with storage/garage on the first floor and a residence on the second floor to replace the structure lost in the 2017 Napa fire.

The application proposes operational changes and physical improvements to the approved winery facilities including converting the lower floor of the approved two-story residential structure to winery uses, increasing daily visitation allowances, modifying the marketing program, increasing the number of employees, and providing additional parking. Staff has reviewed the proposal and found it to be consistent with the Zoning Ordinance and applicable General Plan policies. The requested annual maximum visitation and number of marketing events are well above wineries with the same production capacity. Sufficient water is available to serve the project and a Transportation Demand Management plan would be implemented as part of the project, reducing potential transportation impacts. All potential environmental impacts were found to be less than significant. Based on the reasons stated above, staff recommends approval of the project subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

## **FISCAL & STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT**

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

County Strategic Plan pillar addressed:

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

Consideration and possible adoption of a Negative Declaration. According to the Negative Declaration, the proposed project would not have any potentially significant impacts. The project site is not on any of the lists of hazardous waste sites enumerated under Government Code Section 65962.5.

## **BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION**

**Owner/Applicant:** Raymond Signorello, 4500 Silverado Trail, Napa, CA 94558

**Representative:** Donna Oldford, Plans4Wine, 2620 Pinot Way, St. Helena, CA 94574, (707) 953-5832

**Zoning:** Agricultural Preserve (AP)

**GP Designation:** Agricultural Resource (AR)/Agriculture Watershed & Open Space (AWOS)

**Filed:** April 10, 2019; **Resubmittals/Additional Information Received:** April 27, 2020 and July 30, 2020; **Deemed Complete:** November 18, 2020

**Parcel Size:** 56.59 acres

**Existing Development:** The project site is currently developed with an agricultural barn and other outbuildings, and approximately 35 acres of vines. The site also includes the remnants of the original winery and residence and other improvements not destroyed in the 2017 fires. The water source for the winery, vineyards and home are from two existing onsite wells. Domestic and process wastewater are treated and dispersed on-site. Access to the site is provided by an existing driveway connection from Silverado Trail. There is an existing two-way left turn lane on Silverado Trail along the frontage of the property.

**Winery Development Area - Approved:** 13,237 sq. ft.

**Winery Development Area - Proposed:** 16,392 sq. ft.

**Production Capacity Approved:** 20,000 gallons per year.

**Production Capacity Proposed:** 50,000 gallons per year.

**Winery Coverage Approved:** 47,765 sq. ft. or approximately 1.93%.

**Winery Coverage Proposed:** 70,310 sq. ft. (1.61 acres) or approximately 2.8% (Maximum 25% or approximately 15 acres permitted, whichever is less).

**Accessory/Production Ratio Approved:** 1,336 sq. ft. accessory/9,864 sq. ft. production - approximately 13.5%. (Maximum 40%)

**Accessory/Production Ratio Proposed:** 5,477 sq. ft. accessory/22,278 sq. ft. production - approximately 24.6%. (Maximum 40%)

**Number of Employees Approved:** Four (4) full-time.

**Number of Employees Proposed:** A total mix of 20 full and part-time employees.

**Visitation - Approved:** 20 visitors per day by appointment with a maximum of 120 visitors per week.

**Visitation - Proposed:** 60 visitors per day, 350 maximum per week.

**Marketing Program - Approved:** 12 per year with up to 20 guests at each event, one (1) event per year with up to 80 guests, and one (1) event per year with up to 175 guests at each event. (14 events per year for up to 495 guests)

**Marketing Program - Proposed:** Two (2) events per month with up to 24 guests at each event, two (2) events per

month with up to 40 guests at each event, three (3) events per year with up to 75 guests at each event, and two (2) events per year with 125 persons at each event. No separate tours and tastings will occur on the same day as the two events with up to 125 guests. (53 events per year for up to 2,011 guests). Food will be prepared on-site or provided by a licensed caterer.

**Days and Hours of Operation - Approved:** 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM daily (production hours) and 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM daily (visitation hours) seven days a week.

**Days and Hours of Operation - Proposed:** No change.

**Parking - Approved:** 10 parking spaces.

**Parking - Proposed:** 17 parking spaces.

**Existing Setbacks:**

Road setbacks – Approximately 1,133 feet from the centerline of Silverado Trail (600 foot minimum) to the nearest winery building.

Property line setbacks - Approximately 145 feet side (north), 35 feet side (south) and 1,430 rear (east). Both required setbacks are a minimum of 20 feet (for structures).

**Proposed Setbacks:** No new structures are proposed.

**Adjacent General Plan Designation/ Zoning / Land Use:**

Surrounding land uses are primarily vineyards, wineries, and residences. Properties in the vicinity of the project site range in size from approximately two (2) to 31 acres. The nearest residence to the original winery building is approximately 305 feet to the north. The nearest winery, James Cole Winery, is located approximately 660 feet to the west of the project site. Darioush Winery is located approximately 1,200 feet south of the project site.

**North:**

AR/AWOS General Plan designation, AP/AW zoning -

North of the project site are five properties ranging in size from 2.0 to 10.67 acres with a single-family home on each of the properties, and the James Cole winery and vineyards on a property with 10.56 acres.

**South:**

AR/AWOS General Plan designation, AW zoning -

South of the project site are three properties consisting of 15.14 acres, 20.86 acres, and 31.49 acres. The 15.14 acre property includes single-family and vineyards, the 20.86 acre property is undeveloped, and the 31.49 acre property is developed with a home, vines and the Darioush winery.

**Northeast:**

AR/AWOS General Plan designation, AW zoning -

Northeast of the project site is a 30.97 acre property with a single-family home and planted in vines.

**West:**

AR General Plan designation, AP zoning -

West of the project site, across Silverado Trail, are three properties ranging in size from 4.73 acres to 41.9 acres, each with a single-family home and two of the properties planted in vines.

**Nearby Wineries: (located within one mile of the project)**

Please refer to Attachment K.

**Background/Project History:**

On May 21, 1980, the Planning Commission approved a use permit (file #U-587980) to establish a 20,000 gallon per year winery within an 8,000 s.f. building with a 2,413 s.f. covered outdoor crush pad. The approval included four (4) full-time employees, 20 parking spaces, and a left-turn lane on Silverado Trail. Tours and tastings were allowed by appointment with a maximum of 20 visitors per day and 120 visitors per week. On August 6, 1985, a modification to #U-587980 was approved to allow a second story within the approved 8,000 s.f. building.

In 2002 building permit #B02-00377 was approved to allow living area on the second floor of the winery building.

On July 16, 2003, the Planning Commission approved a use permit major modification (file #02269-MOD) to add a 325 s.f. kitchen and storage area within the existing winery building and to add a marketing plan with 12 events per year (maximum of two per month) for up to 20 guests at each event and two events per year during auction week, one for up to 80 guests (on Thursday or Friday, luncheon or dinner) and one with up to 175 guests (an open house on Sunday.) The events were allowed to end by 10:00 p.m. except the 80 person dinner was allowed to end by 11:00 p.m. Neighbors were to be notified prior to the events.

On March 28, 2019, the Director approved a use permit modification (file #P18-00359-MOD) to reconstruct and relocate the winery building and associated improvements lost as a result of the 2017 Napa fires. The approval included construction of a one-story 7,969 s.f. winery building; a 1,440 s.f. covered crush pad; enclosed mechanical and electrical rooms; a fenced outdoor mechanical yard; a covered trash enclosure, fire pump room and water treatment room with a fenced area for a transformer; two 10,000 gallon water storage tanks; and, on-site parking for 10 vehicles. The winery was relocated to the south of its former location, centered on the existing driveway. No changes to production, visitors or number of employees were proposed or approved.

On February 21, 2020, a building permit (B18-01473) was approved to allow the construction of a new 8,886 s.f. two-story structure with storage/garage on the first floor and a residence on the second floor to replace the structure lost in the 2017 Napa fire. The structure is proposed in the same location as the original winery building with living area on the second floor.

**Code Compliance History:**

There are no active code violations at the project site.

**Discussion Points:**

Setting - The 56.59 acre project site is located on the east side of Silverado Trail, approximately 300 feet south of Oak Knoll Avenue. The project site is currently developed with an agricultural barn and other outbuildings, and approximately 30 acres of vines. The site also includes the remnants of the original winery and residence and other improvements not destroyed in the 2017 fires. The water source for the winery, vineyards and home are from two existing onsite wells. Domestic and process wastewater are treated and dispersed on-site. Access to the site is provided by an existing driveway connection from Silverado Trail. The front half of the site, from Silverado Trail to the development area, is relatively flat ( $\pm 0-7\%$  slope), and then gently slopes up to a small knoll on the property where an agricultural building is located. Elevations on the property range from approximately 60 feet above mean sea level (msl) near the street frontage to approximately 260 feet above msl at the top of the knoll before descending to approximately 170 feet above msl at the rear (east) property line.

Visitation - The winery currently has by-appointment visitation for 20 visitors a day and is proposing daily visitation for up to 60 visitors per day and up to 350 visitors per week. As shown in Attachment K, the winery was compared to other wineries producing 50,000. Compared to by-appointment wineries and a pre-WDO winery, the proposed daily, weekly and annual visitation is higher than the average and median.

Marketing Program - The winery's current marketing plan consists of 12 events per year with up to 20 guests, one (1) annual event with up to 80 guests, and one (1) annual event with up to 175 guests. The 80-person event was permitted to end by 11:00 p.m. The proposed marketing plan includes two (2) events per month with up to 24 guests at each event, two (2) events per month with up to 40 guests at each event, three (3) events per year with up to 75 guests at each event, and two (2) events per year with 125 persons at each event. No separate tours and tastings will occur on the same day as the two events with up to 125 guests.

Events will take place in the winery building, cave, and on the patio, with food prepared on-site or catered food service. All but one event will end by 10:00 p.m. with one of the 75 person events ending at 11:00 p.m. The applicant has requested that the requirement to provide notification to the neighbors prior to a marketing event be removed. As shown in Attachment K, when compared to the average event numbers of by-appointment wineries, the marketing plan proposes more events than the average and median of other 50,000 gallon per year wineries but with more annual guests.

Traffic - The site is located on the east side of Silverado Trail, approximately 300 feet south of Oak Knoll Avenue at 4500 Silverado Trail. Access to the winery is from an existing driveway on Silverado Trail at the approximate mid-point of the property. A two-way-left-turn-lane (TWLTL) is present on Silverado Trail along a portion of the project frontage extending beyond either side of the driveway. The applicant has submitted a traffic study for the project, prepared by Crane Transportation Group (CTG), dated April 19, 2020. According to the traffic study the project is expected to generate 78 new daily trips during the weekday, 14 during the harvest PM peak hour, and 60 new daily trips during on Saturday, 15 during the PM peak hour during harvest, as a result of the project.

Napa County is currently in the process of establishing a threshold for minimum vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for various land uses. The "winery" project category does not fall neatly into traditional land use categories and is a hybrid land use combining VMT characteristics of agriculture and office uses. Until minimum VMT thresholds are established by the County for winery projects, guidance may be taken from by the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA, December 2018. The Advisory indicates that the VMT metric supports three statutory goals: "the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and diversity of land uses." The Advisory goes on to state that "achieving 15 percent lower per employee (office) VMT than existing development is both generally achievable and is supported by evidence that connects this level of reduction to the State's emissions goals." With regard to the proposed project, the Technical Advisory provides "screening thresholds" for small projects as follows: "Many local agencies have developed screening thresholds to indicate when detailed analysis is needed. Absent substantial evidence indicating that a project would generate a potentially significant level of VMT, or inconsistency with a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) or general plan, projects that generate or attract fewer than 110 trips per day generally may be assumed to cause a less-than-significant transportation impact."

According to the traffic study, the winery intends to develop a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan and appoint a TDM coordinator to achieve the goals mentioned above. It is not unreasonable to suggest that specific project TDM measures would help to reduce overall employee VMT towards the 15% threshold. However, it is also likely the proposed project would be exempt from VMT threshold reductions since it is only generating 78 net new daily weekday trips as a result of the proposed project. A project condition of approval will be included that requires submittal of the TDM program to the County for review. The condition of approval will also include a requirement to provide an annual report to the County regarding the effectiveness of the TDM measures.

Parking - The project proposes to add seven (7) parking spaces to the previously approved 10 parking spaces for a total of 17 spaces. The spaces will be split into two areas, one parking area by each of the winery buildings, so there will not be a single, large parking lot maintaining the agricultural character of the site. No parking is permitted or proposed within the right-of-way of Silverado Trail.

Groundwater Availability - The subject property is located within the Napa Valley Subbasin of the valley floor and lies partially within the Northeast Napa Management Area. Properties that lie within the Northeast Napa Management Area, east of the Napa River, generally require additional review or parcel specific water use criteria based upon a Tier 2 analysis. A Water Availability Analysis (WAA), dated April 27, 2020, was prepared by Richard C. Slade & Associates LLC (RCS), to determine the estimated water use of the existing development (prior to the 2017 Napa fires), the proposed project, and water availability. The WAA indicated that the projected overall water demand for the project site will be 16.12 AF/YR representing a 2.48 AF/YR increase of the existing water demand of 13.64 AF/YR. According to the analysis conducted by Slade, the calculated groundwater recharge rate for the property is 18.2 acre-feet per year. The parcel water demand can be met with the existing project well.

Wastewater - According to the Septic Feasibility Report prepared by BFK Engineers, dated December 2018, the project site and existing systems have adequate disposal capacity to serve the project. The Division of Environmental Health reviewed this report and concurred with its findings.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions - The County requires project applicants to consider methods to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions consistent with Napa County General Plan Policy CON-65(e), which requires GHG review of discretionary projects. The applicant has completed the Department's Best Management Practices Checklist for Development Projects, which is attached to this report as Attachment F. The applicant proposes to incorporate the following additional GHG reduction methods: generation of on-site renewable energy, new vegetation, VMT reduction measures, solar hot water heating, energy conserving lighting, cool roofing, bicycle incentives, use of water efficient fixtures, low impact development, installation of water efficient landscaping; recycling 75% of all waste, composting, implementation of a sustainable purchasing and shipping program, planting shade trees, electric vehicle charging stations, use of recycled materials and a number of other measures as outlined in the application submittal materials.

Grape Sourcing - The project site has approximately 34.6 acres of vineyards with an additional five (5) acres on-site suitable for planting. The applicant also leases an additional 12 acres of vines directly across Silverado Trail. The current amount of production from on-site grapes or vineyards under the applicants control would be approximately 24,768 gallons. In addition, to the aforementioned grape sources, the applicant maintains relationships with other growers in proximity to the winery and hopes to utilize fruit from a number of independent growers.

Tribal Cultural Resources - Staff sent invitations to consult on the proposed project to Native American tribes who had a cultural interest in the area and who as of that date had requested to be invited to consult on projects, in accordance with the requirements of Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1. A response was received from the Middletown Rancheria requesting consultation. Staff met with a representative of the Middletown Rancheria on November 18, 2020, at the project site to discuss any issues or concerns regarding the proposed project.

Consultation with the Middletown Rancheria has resulted in the understanding that ground disturbing activities have the potential to inadvertently impact previously unidentified resources important to Native American tribes, including resources identified as Tribal Cultural Resources under CEQA, specifically Public Resources Code Section 21074 (i.e., Assembly Bill 52). As part of this consultation, the PBES Department and Middletown Rancheria have agreed to additional requirements to monitor ground disturbance activities that have greater potential to impact previously unknown Tribal Cultural Resources. Due to the possibility of unearthing Tribal Cultural Resources, which include but are not limited to Native American human remains, funerary objects, items or artifacts, sites, features, places, landscapes, or objects with cultural values during ground disturbance activities.

In addition to the County's standard condition, and in an effort to further protect potential Native American resources that might be discovered during new construction activities for this project, additional measures developed in consultation with the Middletown Rancheria representative during the site visit, are recommended for inclusion as conditions of project approval. The additional measures include notifying the Middletown Rancheria prior to any earth disturbing activities so a tribal representative can provide training to construction crews of the potential

presence of Native American resources on the property, the potential types of resource that could be found on-site, and the procedures to follow in the event of discovery of such resources.

Public Comments - At the time of staff report preparation, no public comments had been received with exception to concerns associated with placement of solar panels on the property which the design and location is not subject to use permit approval.

### **Decision Making Options:**

As noted in the Executive Summary Section above, staff is recommending approval of the project with conditions of approval as described in Option 1 below. Decision making options also include a no project alternative and a reduced project alternative.

#### Option 1 - Applicant's Proposal

Disposition - This option would result in approval of the proposed modifications to the 20,000 gallon per year winery. Staff recommends this option as the request is consistent with the Zoning Ordinance and applicable General Plan policies. Potential environmental impacts were found to be less significant. Adequate water is available to implement the project the applicant proposes to incorporate additional GHG reduction methods beyond those reduction measures which have already been adopted at the site.

Action Required - Follow the proposed action listed in Executive Summary. If conditions of approval are to be amended, specify conditions to be amended at the time motion is made. This option has been analyzed for its environmental impacts, which were found to be less than significant.

#### Option 2 - Reduced Project Alternative

Disposition - All potential environmental impacts have been found to be less than significant through a combination of project design and conditions of approval. However, this option provides the Planning Commission at their discretion, the ability to further reduce potential impacts by modifying the proposed scope of the project via a reduced production, employees, visitation, and marketing program.

Action Required - Follow the proposed actions listed in the Executive Summary and amend scope and project specific conditions of approval to require a reduction in the requested visitation and marketing program. If major revisions of the conditions of approval are required, the item will need to be continued to a future date.

#### Option 3 - Deny Proposed Project

Disposition - In the event the Commission determines that the project does not, or cannot meet the required findings for the granting of a Use Permit modification, Commissioners should identify what aspect or aspects of the project are in conflict with the required findings. State Law requires the Commission to adopt findings, based on the General Plan and County Code, setting forth why the proposed Use Permit modification is not being approved.

Action Required - Commission would take tentative motion to deny the project and remand the matter to staff for preparation of required findings to return to the Commission on a specific date.

#### Option 4 - Continuance Option

The Commission may continue an item to a future hearing date at its own discretion.



**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

- A . Recommended Findings
- B . Recommended Conditions of Approval and Final Agency Approval Memos
- C . Previous Conditions of Approval
- D . Initial Study/Negative Declaration
- E . Public Comments
- F . Use Permit Application Packet
- G . Water Availability Analysis & Water System Feasibility Study
- H . Wastewater Feasibility Analysis
- I . Traffic Study
- J . Graphics
- K . Winery Comparison Analysis

Napa County Planning Commission: Approve

Reviewed By: Charlene Gallina