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Regulating Winemaking Town seeks different perspectives from the public

By Sophie Braccini



Early morning harvest Photo Andy Scheck

About a year ago, Moraga Planning Director Shawna Brekke-Read proposed the development of regulations to address local winery operations. "The Lamorinda Winegrowers Association announced last year that it was interested in expanding vineyards and wineries in the Lamorinda area," she said. "At this time, Moraga allows for home-based occupations, but it does not allow for wineries in general. In addition, the Town has received some complaints about winery operations." Brekke-Read's purpose is to develop a process that will address both neighborhood concerns about wineries and the interests and goals of Lamorinda Winegrowers.

The Planning Director met several times with winery owners/operators, vineyard owners, and members of the Chamber of Commerce. "The meetings have been productive and useful, as the vintners and growers have explained the history of winegrowing in Lamorinda, the small scale of current operations, the hope to designate an AVA for the Lamorinda area, and the modest long-term objectives of expanding wineries and winegrowing in Lamorinda," she said. "To date, the meetings have been

private and limited to those the wineries and winegrowers have invited to attend."

Additionally, Brekke-Read met with neighbors of wineries and two other individuals who volunteered to look at regulating wineries. "Neither group is appointed," she said, "it is simply an opportunity to have a conversation." But she wants to hear from a larger constituency, from more individuals providing additional perspective about wineries in Moraga. Should they be allowed to expand? Are more wineries appropriate in Moraga? Are there concerns that should be addressed? Are wineries compatible with Moraga's semi-rural character?

"We would like to meet the groups that may have different perspectives a few more times before having a meeting with both groups together," said Brekke-Read. "These meetings will help staff put together a package that addresses a variety of concerns to bring to the Planning Commission, then Town Council, for their consideration."

Anyone interested in sharing a perspective may contact Planning Assistant Kelly Clancy at (925) 888-7040 or kclancy@moraga.ca.us.

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