

Ag Protection Committee proposes countywide growth summit

August 25, 2015 • [BARRY EBERLING BEBERLING@NAPANNEWS.COM](mailto:BARRY_EBERLING@NAPANNEWS.COM)

Napa County's agricultural protection committee sees a sequel to its now-completed work - it wants the county and its cities to hold a summit addressing regional land use and transportation issues.

This growth summit would be different from the all-day session the Napa County Board of Supervisors and county Planning Commission held on March 10. The Agricultural Protection Advisory Committee wants city officials to also be part of a talk on the region's future.

"That's something way beyond our ability to do something about, but it's clearly needed, from our discussions," said Peter McCrea, who represents Napa Valley Vintners on the committee.

Committee member Dan Mufson of Vision 2050 talked about tourism issues that involve not only wineries, but hotels in cities. He, too, wants to see a growth summit among the county and its cities.

"It's an absolute necessity," Mufson said after Monday's APAC meeting. "If they don't do it, shame on them."

Vision 2050 is a local coalition of environmental and neighborhood groups.

But committee members spent only a few seconds

talking about the possible summit. They moved from proposal to proposal over 3½ hours, making 16 recommendations in all, nine coming with one vote. That's in addition to recommendations from previous meetings.

This was APAC's final meeting. After almost 31 hours of work in 10 meetings spanning four months, the committee will now turn its proposals over to the county Planning Commission and, ultimately, the county Board of Supervisors.

The 17-person committee has been trying to find an ideal balance among grape-growing and farming, wineries and tourism.

One recommendation calls for having no more than 20 percent of parcels up to 40 acres in agricultural areas developed for wineries, homes and other permitted uses. The total maximum development area for parcels larger than 40 acres would be 8 acres. Existing county standards apply only to wineries.

Committee Chairman Ted Hall said after the meeting that this recommendation gets to the heart of the matter by including all development.

"It's a very clear and unambiguous standard that's very important for preserving agriculture," said Hall, who represented Napa Valley Grape-growers.

Another recommendation would prevent new wineries in agricultural areas from storing and

hauling off wastewater, with limited exceptions. They would have to deal with wastewater onsite as their properties allowed.

Still another recommendation would allow proposed small wineries that meet certain criteria to be approved by the zoning administrator in a public hearing, rather than going before the Planning Commission. Deputy Planning Director John McDowell is the zoning administrator.

Unmute

Criteria include producing less than 30,000 gallons of wine annually and being less than 5,000 square feet.

APAC must pass recommendations by a two-thirds vote. Given the committee's diverse composition - members came from the wine, agricultural, business and environmental communities and neighborhood groups - that often proved a challenge.

This showed when Lucio Perez of the Napa County Farm Bureau objected that some recommended restrictions applied to proposed wineries only. He thought it important that restrictions also apply to expansions at existing wineries.

Yountville Mayor John Dunbar replied that taking this compromise approach made "modest victories" possible.

All of the recommendations the committee made over its 10 meetings will be compiled in a report to go before the Planning Commission on Sept 2. This report will include the pros and cons of each proposal as expressed by various committee members.

Hall concluded the last APAC meeting with words of

thanks to county staff and the committee members.
“Thanks all for your work,” Hall said. “Many, many
hours have gone into this.”