

Fauquier Taxpayers Association Statement Concerning

The Lodge at Barrel Oak

October 10, 2019

In June of this year, Barrel Oak Vineyards, LLC, owner of the Barrel Oak Winery in Delaplane, submitted a revised statement of justification for their request for special exceptions that, among other things, would permit the building of a 32,000 square foot, 42-room lodge with private restaurant for clients. The land in question is zoned rural agricultural (RA) and the applicant called the building a “lodge” as “hotels” are not allowed to be built on RA land. The both the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors will have to vote on this special exception.

Fauquier Taxpayers Association (www.fauquiertaxpayers.com) opposes this request for several reasons.

The Association generally supports commercial development, such as the Remington Technology Park. However, such development has been restricted to in the service districts, in accordance with the County Comprehensive Plan of development. If the requested lodge were to be in a service district, all other things being equal (see the paragraph on hydrogeological testing, below), the Association would likely support it. Unfortunately, the requested lodge is outside of any service district. As such, it would set a very dangerous precedent that could be cited by any land owners wishing to build lodges and restaurants outside of the service districts. Rural agricultural land, valued by many Fauquier residents, would be in significant jeopardy.

This project is essentially a commercial development on land zoned RA and as such could be less remunerative to the County than are agricultural activities. The Weldon Cooper Study of 2015 found that on average for every dollar in tax revenues received, agricultural development used only \$0.22 of County services while commercial development used \$0.26. By converting from agricultural activities to commercial, then, this request could cost the County some \$0.04 for every tax dollar collected. Ultimately, the residential real estate taxpayer would have to shoulder any related costs.

A final cause for concern involves the lodge’s water demands. The plans call for a 6,000 potable water storage tank and three fire protection water storage tanks of 60,000 gallons each. According to the Fauquier County Department of Community Development review of July 15, 2019, no data or calculations have been submitted to support the developer’s claim that there would be no impact upon neighboring wells. The Department goes on to say that “applicants typically submit hydrogeological testing studies for uses with draw over 10,000 gpd.” Even if one continues to support the lodge, despite the concerns cited above, and given nearby Marshall’s water issues, hydrogeological testing would be imperative.

For all of these reasons, Fauquier Taxpayers Association urges all members of the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors to vote against Barrel Oak’s request to build a lodge.