

Ag Commission 2/8/23  
Public Comment  
MT

## Myrna Tow

**From:** Brad Christian <bc@ellusionist.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 26, 2023 4:27 PM  
**To:** Myrna Tow  
**Cc:** AG-ELDC AG; LeeAnne Mila; greg.boeger@edcgov.us; lloyd.walker@edcgov.us  
**Subject:** Re: From the Owner of Black Oak Mountain Vineyards

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Hi Myrna, yes please! Many thanks.

Brad.

On Thu, Jan 26, 2023 at 4:04 PM Myrna Tow <[myrna.tow@edcgov.us](mailto:myrna.tow@edcgov.us)> wrote:

Good afternoon Brad, I need to know if you would like this document to be attached to the Ag Commission Hearing we will be having on Feb. 8, 2023 as a Public Comment? Thank you

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**From:** Brad Christian <[bc@ellusionist.com](mailto:bc@ellusionist.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 26, 2023 3:49 PM  
**To:** AG-ELDC AG <[ELDCAg@edcgov.us](mailto:ELDCAg@edcgov.us)>; LeeAnne Mila <[leeanne.mila@edcgov.us](mailto:leeanne.mila@edcgov.us)>; [greg.boeger@edcgov.us](mailto:greg.boeger@edcgov.us);  
[lloyd.walker@edcgov.us](mailto:lloyd.walker@edcgov.us)  
**Subject:** From the Owner of Black Oak Mountain Vineyards

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To the Department of Planning and Building and Agriculture (Department

Title 130 of the County Code of Ordinances, Zoning for Sections 130.40.260 - Ranch Marketing and 130.40.400- Wineries.)

**Special attention to:** Interim Ag Commissioner LeeAnne Mila, Supervisor Parlin, Ag Commissioner David Bolster, Ag Commissioner Greg Boeger:

I cannot and will not agree to losing the 1-50 persons per event change in the ordinances.

The purpose of this 1-50 clause is to ENSURE that \*an event which is counted against\* the 48 yearly accepted events is in fact financially viable for the property as a source of income. Events which hold 40, or 20, or even 5 persons are NOT

viable as a source of added revenue for any ag-related property. It's too little and simply cannot count against an already too small number of accepted events. If that is enacted you will REDUCE income further to what has been suffered by venues with frosts, smoke damage and pandemic related extreme losses. I'm sure the numbers for El Dorado hold accurate to the rest of the State.....50% of businesses have been lost due to the extreme and incalculable decisions made by governor Gavin Newsome.

You heard DIRECTLY from ag property and vineyard owners at this meeting. Businesses are hanging on by a thread. You should be asking what you can do FOR US, to help the situation, not trying to make changes that REDUCE revenue. These particular words are written directly to LeeAnne Mila and Miss Parlin.

If the county enacts this change, I will have no option but to assume they want Black Oak Mountain Vineyards, and many other vineyards and ag properties in El Dorado, OUT of business.

*This is of great concern to Black Oak.*

As it is, our vines are young. We began our journey 4-5 years ago and it takes decades to grow the fat, rich vines you see in Napa. We've only just now bottled our FIRST label. With such young vines we don't get a full crop to harvest and have suffered through fires at the threshold of our back door (threatened evacuation due to proximity), smoke damage, having to reduce employees in these inflationary times and having to take loans just to pay bills during the pandemic lockdowns which lasted an unheralded two years.

In even proposing this, one would think that El Dorado County itself, Miss Parlin and LeeAnne Mila, WANT the businesses that they swore to SERVE, out of business. This overreach cannot and MUST NOT, be allowed to happen. This ordinance change must immediately be put into reconsideration and removed from the agenda - for good.

I do understand there are new venues taking advantage of the County and this cannot continue either. We are in full support of the County on this issue. It's unacceptable, but the way it should be handled is that those venues should be focused on individually. Not blanketing the rest of us with new rules and changes.

Allow me to bring up a few key items from Black Oak's history that will show our will to comply and abide with county regulations. It was a steep learning curve for us to get to this place but we dug in and did it.

1. BOMV conducted a \$4,000 noise study across the 150 acre property. Come hell or high water we record decibel readings with professional equipment at EACH event. Our managers are fully versed. We manage DJ's with an iron hand and a couple of times when we couldn't get them to comply, the event coordinator walked over and unplugged

their equipment mid-song. This never goes over well on the dance floor but does get our point across. These DJs are taken off the recommended list and never heard from again at Black Oak.

The county noise cut off at 10PM is always complied with in strict fashion.

2. Now that we have our first bottle of wine to sell we will ramp up our actual marketing events. It has taken this long to get the first vintage together! As I'm sure you're aware, growing and managing vines is no easy task... it's expensive, labor intense, and takes years for the vines to develop acceptable fruit. It's taken so long but we are very proud of our FIRST El Dorado County bottle (label attached, have a look).

3. During our learning process our barn was red tagged for over a year. We were given a list of modifications that made our contractors a LOT of money. During the pandemic, when every business suffered and SO many closed, we were given tens of thousands of dollars of changes to make to our barn. It took us some time but we made every change and were permitted with flying colors and some compliments as well.

4. The fire department is vital in El Dorado, as I'm sure you're aware. In order to achieve our permitting we had to actually widen our roads, put in fire hydrants, store huge volumes of water, cut fire breaks (which we did around the ENTIRE 150 acre property), and several other things that were on the to-do list. All were completed and we achieved an undervalued (A+) Rating by County Fire. This rating is almost impossible to get, but our goal is to be an example for other venues and businesses in El Dorado.

Marketing events typically bring in just the local community. A wedding (the bulk of our events) brings in groups from much further away. Once guests are here, they always want to know what activities are available for them to do in El Dorado. We have introduced many visitors to the beauty of El Dorado County and turned them on to new wines and food, as well as rafting just to name a few. This obviously supports the local environment in creating and building revenue and energy for the El Dorado ecosystem. Black Oak employs up to 30 good people during our event season, and 5 superb employees have jobs year round due to this burgeoning vineyard.

FYI, the costs of running a property such as Black Oak are so great that even now we are still not profitable. We depend on the revenue generated by our events to help keep us running and need the 1-50 guest event to NOT count against our overall total of 48 for the year. Very little is earned from a 1-50 event and is \*almost\* not worth putting on.

In closing, I encourage the members of county to have a shift in attitude toward its ranches, vineyards and wineries. Oversight can never be allowed to go so far that it obstructs and ruins the hard working businesses that are trying, and trying HARD, to follow the rules and succeed during such a tough time.

Many thanks,

Brad Christian

Owner, Black Oak Mountain Vineyards.

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