

October 10th, 2019

Fauquier County Planning Commissioners; Chairman Mr. John Meadows
Warren Green Building
10 Hotel Street, Suite 208
Warrenton, VA 20186

Re: Comments Regarding Application SPEX-19-011217; The Sanctuary at Barrel Oak

PEC is supportive of Fauquier's Comprehensive plan which strives to develop retail, hospitality, and entertainment industries in the service districts and Towns while protecting and growing the agricultural economy and tourism in rural areas. The Sanctuary at Barrel Oak, an application for a hotel and restaurant, belongs in the Marshall Service District because it is too high intensity a use for the rural area and has no tie to agriculture. Allowing this use in rural zoning blurs the line between the designated growth areas and the rural areas and likely will lead to sprawl.

PEC's concern can be broken into two categories: 1) hotels and restaurants belong in service districts and towns and 2) the combined impacts on this small rural area are excessive and likely to lead to land use conflicts. Below is more detail about those concerns.

Hotels and Restaurants Belong in Service Districts

Fauquier County's Comprehensive Plan directs commercial activity to our towns and 'service districts' which includes nearby Marshall. The goal is to preserve our rural areas and efficiently build and maintain public infrastructure for the benefit of businesses and residents. We believe a hotel and restaurant of this size belong in nearby Marshall, not two miles west of it.

Marshall needs this kind of investment. The application includes four water storage tanks, a large scale alternative onsite septic treatment facility, widening of the lengthy driveway, and parking for 147 vehicles. If located in Marshall, all of this investment would be going into public water and sewer infrastructure, sidewalks, possible shared parking, and landscaping in Marshall. Diffusing private investment by allowing economic development in places not served by any such infrastructure creates stranded assets in the landscape that can become a burden rather than an asset if they fail.

Additionally, a hotel and restaurant in Marshall would benefit in-town businesses by attracting more foot traffic. As proposed, the Lodge at Barrel Oak may very well pull away many shoppers who currently come into Marshall to dine in town or pick up picnic lunches to eat at the winery.

Combined Impacts On the Small Rural Area Are Excessive

There are already two activity centers in close proximity, Blue Valley Vineyard and Winery and Barrel Oak Winery and Farm Taphouse. All three venues would be accessed from Grove Lane within 0.7 miles of each other. Grove Lane is a local collector that is designated a scenic Virginia Byway. The 0.7-mile

stretch has a narrow bridge over Bolling Branch which can catch drivers unfamiliar with the area off-guard. VDOT's 2015 estimates show the road carrying an average of 2,100 daily vehicle trips. In the past three years, there have been 9 serious accidents in that approximately 1 mile stretch between Oak Hill Road and Rt. 723, including 8 injuries and 2 fatalities^{1,2}.

Blue Valley Vineyard has a 27,000 sq. ft. winery and tasting room which bottles 10,000 cases of wine per year for customers and hosts about 20 weddings per year along with numerous special corporate occasions according to a recent interview in Country ZEST and Style Magazine³.

Barrel Oak Winery has a permit from the County to host 24 events per calendar year with a maximum of 250 attendees per event and one 500-person event per year. Barrel Oak also produces approximately 10,000 cases of wine per year⁴ and brews a variety of local beers on-site according to their website⁵. On peak activity days (an estimated five Saturdays out of the year according to their application) Barrel Oak Winery has as many as 1,500 visitors on a single day.

The historic John Marshall house (Oak Hill), which could foreseeably apply for an adaptive reuse themselves, and Washington Area Animal Adoption Group (WAAAG) are also located in this small area. All of this activity in a condensed rural area raises significant concerns about traffic on Grove Lane, the groundwater supply and drawdown of neighboring wells, potential groundwater contamination from numerous large septic systems, and quality of life impacts on neighbors such as noise and lighting.

We ask that you recommend denial due to inconsistency with the County's Comprehensive Plan and the detrimental impact this proposal could have on public health, safety and welfare. Thank you for considering our comments and as always feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Julie Bolthouse, AICP
Fauquier County Land Use Representative
Piedmont Environmental Council

¹ Traffic Records Electronic Data System (TREDS) Crash Location Map:
<https://www.treds.virginia.gov/Mapping/Map/CrashesByJurisdiction> (accessed 10.10.19)

² Fauquier Now: Bicyclist suffers fatal injuries near Delaplane. Sept 19, 2018:
https://www.fauquiernow.com/fauquier_news/article/fauquier-bicyclist-suffers-fatal-injuries-near-delaplane-2018
(accessed 10.10.19)

³ Country Zest & Style Magazine. Fall 2019, pg 34:
https://issuu.com/uncoveringthevalley/docs/cz_layout_fall2019_issuu (accessed 10.10.19)

⁴ Barrel Oak Winery FAQs: <http://www.barreloak.com/faqs> (accessed 10.10.19)

⁵ Barrel Oak Winery: The New Barrel Oak Farm Taphouse: <http://www.barreloak.com/new-barrel-oak-farm-taphouse> (accessed 10.10.19)