

**New Paltz Times 7/24/08**

### **Wool is the only product**

We are writing to express our thanks to the Ulster County Legislature for denying Rivendell's application to be included in an agricultural district. There were many reasons to reject this application, but the main one is simply that Rivendell is not agriculture, has grown no grapes in the past for its wine, and the overwhelming weight of evidence is that it is a "wine bar," a retail establishment selling wine.

Rivendell has grown no grapes, even though they have been located on over 25 acres for many years. They buy grapes grown elsewhere and except for one or two wines their label is made elsewhere. At the wine store in Gardiner they sell 75 different types of New York wine.

In New York City they operate two "micro-wineries," one in SoHo and one in the Upper West Side. Both locations sell according to their website - "200 wines from around the state." Of all the Hudson Valley wineries, Rivendell, we believe, is the only one to operate shops in New York City, and this is simply indicative of their business model. We have nothing against this model. However, it does not belong in a true agricultural district and would be better located in the town borders, reflecting the store that it really is.

Compare this pretense of a winery to its nearest winery neighbor, Whitecliff Winery. According to the Shawangunk Wine Trail brochure, Whitecliff produces from its own 25-acre vineyard much of the grapes for their Seyval Blanc, Vigroles, Chardonnay, Gamay Nour, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir.

Instead Rivendell chose to move from their current 25-plus-acre location and purchased a residential house with only a few acres and neighbors nearby, right on Route 299 and at the pristine viewshed site of the Shawangunks, simply because it is a good, usable tourist location for a wine store.

Our community is not opposed to real agriculture and knows when the wool is being pulled over our eyes. In the same area a local farmer recently developed a community supported agriculture project on Mohonk land called Brook Farm. People drive in and pick up their vegetables, but there has not been one single complaint because this is an appropriate use of the land and is consistent with the neighborhood.

Rivendell was turned down by the New Paltz zoning board because the true nature of their plan is obvious, and now the owners are suing the town. Their inclusion in the agricultural district was a way to avoid local planning and home rule.

In closing, we ask the New Paltz and Gardiner community to use common sense in looking at this project and to stand in opposition to it. By any yardstick it can't qualify as agriculture. We hope when all the legal battles are finished Rivendell will not end up insinuating itself in one of the loveliest spots anywhere in our community.

*Alan and Lindsay Kraus  
New Paltz*