

## **WINERY WOULD IMPACT HOUSES**

Rivendell Winery is seeking to relocate its existing commercial operation to 507 Albany Post Road. It appears that the owners have submitted a site plan application to the town, as well as an application to the county for an agricultural district designation. Even though no decision has been made on either application, Rivendell is already advertising the move on its Web site and appears to have begun on-site renovations.

The property to which Rivendell is seeking to move is only 4 acres and is presently improved with a residence. The area around Rivendell's proposed "winery" is a residential area, improved with many single-family homes. While Rivendell is stating that it is proposing a "winery," a closer look at its use reveals that it is more a commercial enterprise than an agricultural operation.

The Rivendell Web site advertises a number of non-agricultural uses including the Riven-Deli, as well as the fact that the winery is available for "private functions, weddings, re-unions, corporate meetings, or club events." Additionally, it appears that Rivendell sells more than 75 varieties of wine, most of which are produced by other wineries and sold from its property. How is this any different from a liquor store? The zoning district in which these uses are proposed appears to prohibit this kind of retail and commercial use. Simply because a few grapes are planted does not give Rivendell the right to shoehorn a commercial and retail use into a residential area.

If these applications are approved, the area residents will be subjected to a number of adverse impacts, including significantly more traffic. Additionally, based on the fact that Rivendell will be hosting events, which includes such things as weddings, the residents will be subjected to significant increased in outdoor noise and light, most likely on weekends, late into the night. Both the town and the county should deny Rivendell's application and Rivendell should look for a site that is more suitable for its use.

Kevin C. Harp, New Paltz

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## **RIVENDELL REBUTS PAST LETTER**

For 20 years, Rivendell Winery has exemplified the New York State Farm Winery Act. If Mr. Harp were to read the law, he would understand that the activities of Rivendell are not only in keeping with the law, but are all specifically spelled out in it. Farm wineries have the right to sell their products from a tasting room on their premises. They also have the right to sell many other products, from foods (we choose to sell only New York produced artisanal items) to wine accessories and souvenirs.

Wineries are specifically enabled to make wines out of any New York grown products, and Rivendell has long been at the center of the movement to support smaller grape growers throughout the state by purchasing their grapes and making them into wine. All parts of this process - from growing to winemaking to wine selling - are considered, under Agriculture & Markets Law as well as Farm Winery Law to be part of the agricultural process. Liquor stores operate under different laws, are different experiences, and are not limited to the sale of wine and only New York wine.

To characterize the neighborhood as residential is misleading. The zoning is Ag 1.5 and there are numerous properties in the area included in the state recognized Ag District including the 60-acre contiguous property. The size of a vineyard is not imposed or restricted under the laws. The misconception that wineries must grow their grapes must be dispelled - fully 50 percent of the grapes grown for wine in New York State are grown by independent farmers who sell to wineries.

The real concerns seem to be about the changes Rivendell will bring to the neighborhood and some sort of nuisance factor. We have been good neighbors at our current location for 20 years and have no intention of changing that. We are not a large enough business to have any meaningful impact on the traffic of Route 299 or Albany Post Road. Weekday traffic is minimal and will never affect commuting or school bus traffic.

Weekend traffic rises seasonally, as it does all over New Paltz. The bulk of our visitors are mid-afternoon on weekends. Our events are minimal, controlled and always over by 6 p.m. Much to our disappointment, the private party business is small - but, like 250 other farm wineries in the state, we offer the service as a marketing tool to sell our wine.

Space does not allow us to answer all the questions and concerns of our neighbors, but we encourage anyone who has questions to call or visit. Our intent is to honor and continue to enhance the New Paltz community by being a focal point of vineyard and agriculture. New Paltz is my home of 37 years. We would never do anything to dishonor it.

Susan Wine & Robert Ransom, Rivendell Winery