

Congressman Maurice D. Hinchey
Representing New York's 22nd Congressional District

June 4, 2008

Hector S. Rodriguez, Chairman
Economic Development, Housing, Planning
and Transit Committee
Ulster County Legislature
P.O. Box 1800
Kingston, New York 12402

Dear Chairman Rodriguez:

I write today in support of the inclusion of Rivendell Winery in Ulster County's Agricultural District # 2 located in the town of New Paltz. I feel confident that you, along with your fellow committee members, will recognize that farm wineries along with their value-added products and services are by definition agricultural enterprises.

Passed by the New York State Legislature in 1976, The Farm Winery Act paved the way for the modern farm winery, allowing grape cultivators to produce and sell wines directly to the public in tasting rooms located on their own properties. This landmark legislation has been replicated in nearly every state in the nation, firmly establishing farm wineries as agricultural operations. In fact, in a study completed in 2007, it was revealed that there were more than 23,000 farms growing grapes in the United States and that 90% of them had fewer than 100 acres of cultivated land.

Investment in wine production has expanded in large part because of the economic benefits that the industry provides. An average wine grape vineyard will produce a gross value of between \$3,000 and \$15,000 per acre per year, with minimum inputs of fertilizer, pesticides and other non-capital, non-labor products. Work on a vineyard-winery is spread over a yearly cycle, creating a vehicle for rural stability for the family farmers and their employees.

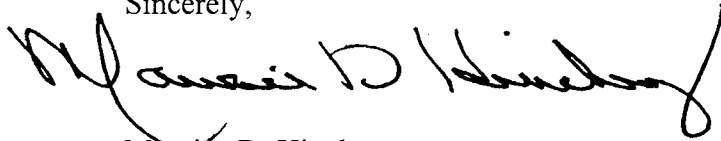
When you consider the range of benefits that come with the development of a farm winery, it is easy to understand why many states encourage their development. In their preliminary phases, they bring a typical investment that can exceed \$1 million. Over time, they can produce stable rural employment of about five to ten employees. There is also the significant tourism income generated by their presence. It is estimated that for every \$3 spent at a winery, tourists will add an additional \$1 to the local economy. In New York, wineries had more than 4 million visitors in 2004 and these visitors generated an estimated \$312 million in tourism revenue at restaurants, bed and breakfasts and boutiques. In the long term, encouraging such growth produces healthier rural economies.

In addition to the numerous economic benefits derived from the inclusion of the parcels owned by Rivendell in the Agricultural District, is the considerable benefit of open space preservation through continued agricultural production. The parcels owned by Rivendell are already located in an A-1.5 Zoning District. Adding them to Agricultural District #2 would be in keeping with both the Town's Comprehensive and Open Space Plans, which recognize wineries as an agricultural use. (R202, 216). In fact, the Comprehensive Plan classifies wineries as "specialty agriculture" (R.202) and goes on to indicate that agriculture must be supported by all practical means in order to preserve open space. (R. 209). Additionally, Rivendell Winery is unquestionably an essential part of the Shawangunk Wine Trail and the New Paltz Open Space Plan specifically refers to it as "as excellent example of successful agritourism in the New Paltz region." (R.216).

I believe it is incumbent upon your Committee to take appropriate action and approve their inclusion in the Agricultural District. If I can offer any further support in this matter, please do not hesitate to notify me.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maurice D. Hinchey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping tail.

Maurice D. Hinchey