Farm Wineries Work

Good for Somers, Good for Connecticut
Why Farm Wineries Work for Somers

- **Open Space Preservation**
  - Protecting Somers farmlands/natural resources without using public funds
  - Fully consistent with Somers 2015 Plan of Development
  - They support Somers farms and farming

- **Responsible Tourism**
  - They bring in welcome tourist dollars to Somers
  - During and beyond COVID-19 pandemic, promote safe and responsible outdoor gathering
  - Residual benefits for local B&B, restaurants and businesses without extra infrastructure
  - Family-oriented, safe and quiet activity

- **Financial Benefits**
  - Increase Somers’ tax base
  - Increase local job opportunities

- **Worthington Pond Farm: Run By Somers Residents**
  - Worthington Pond Farm is a family-run business with Somers roots
  - We operate in a responsible way at a site already approved for events
  - We are your neighbors and want to preserve the agricultural culture in Somers
Why Farm Wineries Work for Somers

- Farm wineries are increasingly popular with Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y
  - In the past decade, the number of East Coast wineries has more than tripled.
  - CT Wine Trail & Passport Program growing in popularity
- They are local places to visit and enjoy the Connecticut countryside
  - To have a picnic in quiet, rural setting
- Farm wineries offer premium wines not typically available in stores
- They keep rural areas rural
- They offer opportunities to learn about growing grapes and the craft of winemaking
- They support farm-to-table practices
- They provide strong revenue possibilities for town
  - To keep Somers competitive with area towns
A Well-Regulated and Respected Industry

- Farm wineries are well-regulated and taxed at both the state and federal level
  - Tight restrictions on types of wine that can be sold
  - Tasting hours limited to daytime/early evening
  - Current regulations and special permit process can review any concerns about noise, functions, recreational use, etc.
- Connecticut Grown: State requires all licensed farm wineries to use a minimum of 25% CT-grown fruit in their wines.
- Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council uses Community Investment Act funding each year to foster growth of the farm winery industry in the state.
- They expand local farming opportunities with alternate crops, accessory farming uses and promote other local farming products.
Let’s Grow Agriculture: Bring Farm Wineries to Somers

- Amending the Regulations to permit farm wineries as an accessory use is a sound, workable zoning framework that protects Somers and gives the Zoning Commission the tools to permit farm wineries.

- Let’s Put Somers on the Connecticut Wine Trail:
  - More than 40 Connecticut towns have wineries and 13 Connecticut towns have farm wineries
  - Permitting such sites is an enhancement to the vast amount of agriculturally zoned property in Somers
  - Somers needs a regulation that provides flexibility, site review, and promote the open use of agriculture recreational spaces, both passively and actively
Why the Proposed Regulation Is Too Restrictive

- No flexibility for site size, location or abutting properties
- Definition does not include use of fruit or other crops
- Conflicts with intent of maintaining open space
- No consideration for outdoor entertainment and recreation
- Private events shouldn’t be addressed as they fall outside the Farm Winery scope
- Conflicts with COVID-19-based health/safety standards
  - Limits size of outdoor patio
  - Fencing requirements force people closer together
  - Increases risk of virus transmission
  - Inconsistent with Governor’s COVID social distancing standards
Why the Proposed Regulation Is Too Restrictive

- Requires regulatory review on an activity-by-activity basis and will create repetitive use of Town staff and resources
  - Special permitting should address the site issues, such as size, location, buffers, and abutting properties
- Regulates activities or issues that are already regulated, resulting in differential treatment
- Regulates matters already governed by state statute/regulations
- In regulating activities or events, places unreasonable restriction on property use, including limits to tasting room
- Proposed regulations inconsistent with state statutes
- Somers should rely on our own regulation - looking at other Towns’ regulations is not always in the interest of the Town and its taxpayers.
Let’s Grow Somers, With Farm Wineries

- A growing, well-regulated industry that will benefit Somers and its residents
- Strong economic benefits to Town
- Farm wineries preserve open space and passive recreation of agricultural land
- Farm wineries can spur home-grown businesses run by Somers residents
- They avoid spot development of cluster housing on land that is best used as farmland.

Let’s not lose any ground. Please build a sound and flexible framework to help make this happen.

**Good for Somers,**

**Good for Connecticut**