

Viticulture Advisory Committee Meeting

5/6/2025

Minutes

1. **Welcome:** Steve Dutton

- a. Meeting called to order at 12:15pm
- b. **Present:** John Azevedo, Bob Dempel, Joe Dutton, Steve Dutton, Nick Frey, Joan Patrick, Mark Sanchietti, Jim Young, Karissa Kruse
- c. **Absent:** John Balletto, Chris Bowland, Michael Sangiacomo, Brent Young, Ryan Stapleton, Nicole Hayden, Mel Sanchietti
- d. **Staff:** Connor Murphy, Merilark Padgett-Johnson, Victor Tam, Janet Stribling, Stephanie Lokhee, Megan Rhodes.

2. **Approval of minutes:**

Motion to approve minutes from 11/19/24 from Joe Dutton, Second from Nick Frey Motion approved.

3. **SRJC and Ag/NR update: Victor Tam**

- a. Victor discussed the steady enrollment in the viticulture program, with 41 students declaring it as their major or certificate goal. Victor mentioned the increasing number of enrollments in the district, which has been growing at a 10% rate annually.
- b. Shone Farm Foundation made the decision to skip the 2025 vintage this year to assess the finances of the commercial winery. The wine club is growing, but there's inventory to handle it.
- c. The Wine Studies Program has streamlined the Wine Studies certificates and degrees and submitted the revisions to the Curriculum Review Committee.
- d. Financial situation at SRJC is stable for now, but if the enrollment target is not met, it could lead to potential staffing and hiring decisions.

4. **Viticulture program update: Merilark Padgett**

Merilark presented summer and fall class schedule with new version of Viticulture Certificate for the program review.

5. **Sanchietti Farming Contract**

Mark provided an update on his contract with SRJC. He reports that his farm contract is in place through 2029. He has secured and signed a new grape contract with Duckhorn and Gallo for specific blocks that have been signed. Some contracts have been triggered or renegotiated, while others are still in progress. He mentions that they need to sell a few more loads of Pino Noir grapes and is exploring options for unsold grapes. He discussed plans for replanting Block 8 with Chardonnay next year, after securing a permit extension. Overall, expresses optimism about their position in the industry despite some challenges.

6. **Update on Well Project Shone Farm: Mark Sanchietti and Connor Murphy**

Connor discussed the progress of the well project, which includes drilling, mechanical work, and electrical installation. The project is expected to be completed within the next few months. Also mentioned the possibility of installing lights for harvest and the construction of a path in front of the tank. He expressed satisfaction with the progress and mentioned that the project will eventually drop off the agenda. Also discussed the reservoir project, which is currently in the feasibility study stage. The reservoir is

expected to be located below the outlook and will have a capacity to be determined.
The project is expected to be completed within the next three years.

7. Potential Reservoir: Mark and Connor Murphy

Mark Presented an opportunity for a public-private partnership to support agricultural innovation in specialty crops through Reservoir Farms. The initiative aims to create ag-tech incubators in agricultural areas, with potential involvement from Sonoma County and Santa Rosa Junior College. The project focuses on developing machinery for specialty crops, keeping jobs local, and providing hands-on learning opportunities for students. While there are challenges with timelines and funding, there is significant interest from various stakeholders, including the college administration and local economic development groups.

8. New Business:

- a. Discusses the formation of a business improvement district (BID) for Sonoma County's wine industry. The BID would assess a percentage of tasting room sales to fund marketing, education, and community engagement efforts. Explains that Sonoma County is behind other wine regions in implementing this strategy, but there is growing interest due to current market challenges. The process involves creating a steering committee, obtaining approval from wineries, and navigating county and city approvals. Highlights the potential benefits, citing examples from other regions that have successfully implemented BIDs and seen increased tasting room sales.
- b. Discussed the need to maintain marketing momentum and encouraged the team to ask questions or seek clarification on any topics. Also proposed a date for a meeting to walk around and view new improvements, with November 18th at 3 PM being agreed upon. The team also discussed the possibility of having a quick business meeting followed by a walk about Shone Farm.

9. Set Date /venue for Fall 2025 Meeting

- a. Tuesday, November 18 at 3:00pm at Shone Farm Pavilion.

10. Meeting adjourns at 1:16pm.