

45th Legislative District Democrats

Resolution to Amend King County Adult Beverages Ordinance 2018-0241

King County Council

516 3rd Avenue, Room 1200

Seattle, Washington, 98104

Councilmembers,

We, the 45th Legislative District Democrats, are concerned about undesirable consequences of the Adult Beverages Ordinance as it is written.

While it is legal to produce adult beverage products in Rural Area (RA) and Agricultural (A) lands, the Adult Beverage Ordinance opens RA and A lands to drinking establishments and event centers which are urban use retail/commercial businesses that serve as sales outlets for adult beverages. Little or no production takes place at these facilities.

We feel that allowing drinking establishments and event centers to operate in Rural Areas harms both the environment and several business sectors in dire ways, and we consider this harm to be avoidable. There is ample evidence that the wine industry can thrive when remote tasting rooms operate inside of city limits, in fact, there are more than 130 production wineries and remote tasting rooms, along with many breweries, and distilleries in the Woodinville area that already comply with Washington State's Growth Management Act.

Our concerns include but are not limited to:

Public health and safety:

"Drinking establishments" – businesses that serve but do not manufacture alcoholic beverages -- that operate in Rural Areas will not have proper public infrastructure. They lack sewers, traffic lights, and roads with proper shoulders to support the clientele they hope to draw. This creates both public health and public safety hazards.

Fairness to Woodinville businesses:

Adult Beverage Ordinance 2018-0241 appears to privilege the business models of a minority of businesses over all others. If, for example, "drinking establishments" do retail business in Rural Areas, it will disadvantage businesses that operate within city limits. Rural Areas lack infrastructure to support these businesses, but bars and restaurants that operate on them also pay nothing for infrastructure. This creates a "two-tiered" system that is anticompetitive for several local business sectors.

Wine Tourism vs. General Retail:

The cities that adjoin the Sammamish Valley are home to many remote tasting rooms and have space for many more. They want to preserve wine tourism for years to come. The drawing power of Woodinville's wine country is the aesthetic appeal of the agricultural Sammamish Valley. Opening the valley to retail uses will degrade its charm and impose risk to local business sectors, both farming and tourism.

Furthermore, one type of retail does not constrain others. Illegally operating remote tasting rooms in the RA are already serving as retail outlets for other goods (e.g. clothing, jewelry, household goods).

Implies a plan to annex:

Documents submitted to the County Council by the businesses advocating for retail drinking establishments indicate that they do not want to suffer a lack of infrastructure long term. It is likely that a plan to annex these areas will follow the Adult Beverages Ordinance 2018-0241.

This is exactly the kind of expansion Washington's Growth Management Act was intended to preclude. Preserving the Sammamish Valley is essential to our environment, our farmers, and our tourism sector.

A large part of the draw to Woodinville is that the Sammamish Valley is beautiful and iconic. Threatening the valley only serves the interests of a few. All of them could (and several of them do) do business within the city limits.

Sammamish Valley farmland:

Our local farmland is a non-renewable resource, as well as the basis for an important local business sector. Consequences from Adult Beverage Ordinance 2018-0241 negatively impact our farmers most of all. For a list of negative impacts, please refer to Friends of Sammamish Valley Hearing Testimony Binder submitted to the King County record on June 12, 2019 during a full King County Council meeting.

To these ends, the 45th Legislative District Democrats offer the attached resolution.

Respectfully,

Dave Williams, Chair, 45th Legislative District Democrats

Resolution on Protecting the Sammamish Valley Agricultural Production District

Whereas the King County Council is in the process of creating Ordinance 2018-0241; and

Whereas the 45th District Democrats prioritize the needs of farms, farmers, and farming in the Sammamish Valley Agricultural Production District over the wishes of a small number of movable retail businesses; and

Whereas organizations such as Futurewise, the Woodinville City Council, and Friends of Sammamish Valley have expressed serious concerns regarding the draft ordinance; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the 45th Legislative District Democrats:

1. request that the King County Council work with Futurewise and the Friends of Sammamish Valley to produce an amended ordinance that adheres to the letter and intent of the Growth Management Act, Countywide Planning Policies, and current zoning; protects the Agricultural Production District; protects Rural Area character; and is enforceable;
2. urge that the amended ordinance repair harmful elements of the ordinance such as Overlays A and B; allowance of retail drinking establishments that do not produce on-site the products that they sell; and vagueness and loopholes in definitions for terms such as “winery,” “brewery,” “distillery,” and “event;”
3. request that King County recommence enforcement of its land use codes in the Sammamish Valley at the earliest possible date; and
4. urge the King County Council to strengthen other programs such as the King County Land Conservation Initiative that protect lands by such means as purchase of land or of development rights.

Resolved on July 10, 2019

David Williams, Chair

Robin Barnes, Secretary