

[Geoff Ellsworth's comments related the Board of Supervisor's changes to the definition of agriculture in County code §18.08.040 to bring it into alignment with General Plan policy AG/LU-2, Apr 4th 2017.]

I was raised in St Helena and Napa County to stand up to protect two things: democracy and the Napa County Ag Preserve. In this situation I guess I stand up for both at the same time. As far as democracy: if we begin altering the definition of words in public trust documents, words that belong to everybody and not just a select few, then we start down a perilous path where we can lose all bearings to our compass. If the definition of the word "cat" starts to include the word "dog" I think that demonstrates the trouble we would be in. I hope you will take a moment to consider what would happen if other words that are important to our families and ourselves were altered. If important words like "agriculture" can be changed, could other words like "democracy" be altered? Where do you draw the line?

In 1968 a remarkable decision was made to create an agricultural preserve here. And that decision of foresight and restraint is a singular moment in time that fostered the amazing place we have here today. The courageous decision to not cash out to maximize short term gains, but rather to hold on to what's most valuable here for perpetuity, our farming and growing, our strong rural communities, the delicate ecosystems to support those things. The creation of the ag preserve also created a unique partnership between our cities and counties where we work together to maintain a balance between true farming and growing and commercial activity. The alteration of the definition of agriculture in 2008 puts at risk that balance by fueling intensified commercial encroachment into the growing lands, forcing the cities and counties to compete with each other for commercial dollars rather than to continue come together in the successful plan that existed for 40 incredible years from 1968 to 2008. I believe the best way to rectify any general plan inconsistency is to simply return to the pre 2008 definition of agriculture, the one that allowed us to be so successful in the first place. The one voters based their measure J and P votes on. The one that is consistent with state and cultural definitions.

Today is also a day when a new generation of Napa County supervisors, with a new chair, can make a courageous decision, and stand up with the giants of Napa Valley history in protecting real agriculture, farming and growing, and protect the Napa County agricultural preserve so future generations can have the blessings we have experienced here.