



ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING
STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

Project Name: SP201500008 King Family Polo	Staff: Rachel Falkenstein, Senior Planner
Planning Commission Public Hearing: June 16, 2015	Board of Supervisors Hearing: To be determined
Owner(s): Roseland Farm, LLC	Applicant(s): David L. King
Acreage: 199.7	Special Use Permit for: Farm winery events under Section 10.2.2 of zoning ordinance
TMP: 05500-00-00-08000 Location: 6640 Roseland Farm, Crozet, VA	Zoning/by-right use: RA Rural Areas - agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses; residential (0.5 unit/acre in development lots)
Magisterial District: White Hall	Conditions: Yes
RA (Rural Area): Yes	Requested # of Dwelling Units/Lots: N/A
Proposal: To allow up to 1000 spectators at polo events on Sundays from the end of May through the second weekend in October.	Comp. Plan Designation: Rural Areas - preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources/residential density 0.5 unit/acre in development lots.
Character of Property: Site of King Family Vineyards – mostly cleared with vineyards, tasting room/event space, polo field, family residence.	Use of Surrounding Properties: The nearby properties include large- and small-lot residences, farms, other open land, and forests.
Factors Favorable: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The site is adjacent to the Development Areas and is less than two miles from local fire and rescue stations. 2. Access to the site requires a minimum amount of driving on Rural Area roads and Half Mile Branch Road can support the traffic generated by the events. 3. The polo events help support a strong agricultural economy and a local winery. 4. The local community has largely expressed support for this use. 5. Polo events have taken place since 2005 with no documented complaints or major incidents. 	Factors Unfavorable: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some traffic impacts are anticipated on Half Mile Branch Road, but the applicant will be providing a certified traffic controller during events to direct traffic and reduce traffic backups.
Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the special use permit with conditions as outlined below.	

STAFF CONTACT: Rachel Falkenstein, Senior Planner
PLANNING COMMISSION: June 16, 2015
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: TBD

PETITION:

PROJECT: SP201500008 King Family Polo
MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: White Hall
TAX MAP/PARCEL: 05500-00-00-08000
LOCATION: 6640 Roseland Farm, Crozet, VA
PROPOSAL: To allow up to 1000 spectators at polo events on Sundays from end of May through second weekend in October.
PETITION: Farm winery events under Section 10.2.2 of zoning ordinance. No dwellings proposed.
ZONING: RA Rural Areas - agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses; residential (0.5 unit/acre in development lots); FH Flood Hazard Overlay.
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Rural Areas - preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources/residential density 0.5 unit/acre in development lots.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA:

The 200 acre parcel is part of the larger 379 acre Roseland Farm properties (4 parcels total) which is home to King Family Vineyards. The subject parcel, TMP 55-80, is mostly cleared and contains the winery tasting room and carriage house as well as a polo field, horse barn, vineyards and a single family residence. The site has an entrance on Half Mile Branch Road and a gravel drive leading back to the tasting room and polo field.

Adjacent parcels to the east and south are mostly small and medium sized lot residential. Parcels to the north and west are mostly larger farms, open land and forestry uses. The northeast corner of the parcel is adjacent to a residentially zoned portion of the Crozet Development Area (at the corner of Jarmans Gap Road and Half Mile Branch Road). Old Trail Golf course is east of the site across Half Mile Branch Road (attachment A).

The property is zoned RA Rural Areas and the majority of the adjacent parcels are also zoned RA. TMP 55-79A5 adjacent to the northeast corner of the subject parcel, across from Half Mile Branch Road, is zoned R-1 Residential.

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY:

- The property was zoned RA in 1980.
- ALB-VOF-822 – The property was put under conservation easement in 2000. The easement is held by Virginia Outdoors Foundation for open space.
- SDP2002-56 King Family Vineyards Farm Winery – Site plan to allow the construction of the winery and dwellings.
- SP2006-03 Pink Ribbon Polo – Special use permit to allow one polo match of up to 2000 attendees per year to benefit American Cancer Society.
- SP2006-25 King Family Vineyards – Request for a special use permit to allow two special events per week. Application was indefinitely deferred.
- SDP2010-26 Pink Ribbon Polo – Removed 5 year renewal requirement from the 2006 special use permit. The last Pink Ribbon Polo event was held in 2013. The special use permit expires after two years of discontinued use.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL:

King Family Vineyard has been the site of an annual polo event for up to 2000 people for the American Cancer Society from 2006-2013, for which a previous special use permit (SP) was granted. Additionally,

the applicant has been hosting Sunday polo on the property since 2005 and has allowed winery customers to attend the matches for free. In recent years Sunday polo attendance has grown in scale and has triggered the need for an additional SP for the Sunday polo events. SPs are required for farm winery events and activities with more than 200 attendees.

The applicant proposes to hold Sunday polo events weekly, from May through October for up to 1000 attendees. Polo begins the last Sunday in May and typically ends the second Sunday of October. Polo matches commence at 1:00pm and generally last about two hours. The winery and grounds close at 5:30pm.

Polo events are free of charge to winery customers and are held weather permitting. The applicant is proposing to operate Sunday polo in the same manner in which it has been operated in recent years. There will be no announcer, no public address system and no amplified music at the events. The applicant is not proposing any new permanent structures or lighting on the property.

The applicant is asking for attendance for up to 1000 people. According to the applicant, attendance has averaged around 500 people and 200 vehicles per Sunday in previous years. The 1000 person limit is intended to cover peak attendance that can occur on holiday weekends. The applicant has also proposed to provide one crowd manager for every 250 people and proposes to manage the events in accordance with a public safety plan approved by fire/rescue staff (attachment D).

For all polo events the applicant provides traffic control beginning at 11:00am at the entrance on Half Mile Branch Road. Attendees park in grass parking areas around the polo fields and most attendees tailgate, so spectator areas are the same as the parking areas (see attachment B & C for application plan and narrative).

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST

Section 33.8 of the Zoning Ordinance states that the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors shall reasonably consider the following factors when reviewing and acting upon an application for a special use permit:

No substantial detriment. The proposed special use will not be a substantial detriment to adjacent lots.

The applicant is not proposing any changes to the farm winery property and already has adequate infrastructure to handle this use on site. There will be no amplified sound or lighting associated with the use and no new structures associated with the use. Events will only take place during the day on Sundays with the winery closing to the public at 5:30pm.

The largest anticipated impact is the traffic generated by the events. At past events the applicant has provided trained traffic control personnel to mitigate impacts on Half Mile Branch Road. According to VDOT and engineering staff, Half Mile Branch Road and the winery entrance/access road are of suitable capacity to handle the anticipated traffic load. Staff is recommending a condition that the applicant receive a land use permit from VDOT and provide a certified traffic controller at the entrance on Half Mile Branch Road beginning at 11:00am on polo Sundays to direct traffic.

At the community meeting for this proposal citizens and neighbors mostly expressed support for the use, though some had concerns about traffic safety and a general concern about speeding on Half Mile Branch Road, not necessarily associated with Sunday polo. Staff worked with the police department to obtain crash data for the roadway and found that there have been nine accidents on the roadway since 2012 with two accidents occurring at the intersection of the King Family Vineyards entrance and Half Mile Branch Road. These two accidents both occurred on Thursdays (see attachment E). A speed study on Half Mile Branch Road was conducted in the vicinity of the King Family Vineyards entrance in March of this year. It was found that though there is some minor

speeding on the road, that it is not indicative of an overall speeding problem at this location (attachment F).

The applicant has been hosting Sunday Polo since 2005 and the County has not documented any complaints from this use to date. Due to the infrastructure in place and the applicant's efforts to direct traffic, staff does not feel that the proposed use will be a substantial detriment to adjacent lots.

Character of district unchanged. The character of the district will not be changed by the proposed special use.

The proposed events are larger and more frequent than would normally be suitable for property in the Rural Area. Typically events of this size and frequency could generate impacts that would change the character of the Rural Area. However, staff believes that due to the location of the property and the available infrastructure, that the proposed events are acceptable in this location with conditions addressing potential impacts.

The northeast corner of the subject parcel is adjacent to the Crozet Development Area. Event attendees access Half Mile Branch Road either from the south via Route 250 or I-64 (with a short drive on Hillsboro Lane or Yancey Mills Lane) or from the north from Jarmins Gap Road. Visitors must only travel a short distance on Rural Area roads to access the events and, as discussed above, Half Mile Branch Road is designed to handle the anticipated event traffic from the polo matches.

It is also not anticipated that the use will negatively impact farming, forestry or scenic/historic characteristics of the Rural Area. Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) holds a conservation easement on the property for open space. VOF has provided a letter of support for the proposed use and has found that the weekly polo events will not permanently alter the physical appearance of the property or surrounding landscape (attachment G).

Harmony. The proposed special use will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this chapter.

The Rural Areas zoning district was established to protect agricultural and forestry activities, water supply protection and conservation of natural, scenic and historic resources.

The proposed use is in harmony with the above Rural Area uses. The use allows the winery to promote its agricultural products and contributes to the viable use of the property as a farm winery. Since the use is for periodic events and does not require the construction of permanent structures or changes to the site, it is not expected to impact the natural and scenic character of the Rural Area. The site is within a water supply watershed, but polo events are cancelled for rain or wet conditions, so erosion and sediment runoff is not expected to be an issue for nearby waterways.

...with the uses permitted by right in the district

As mentioned above, this use is not anticipated to negatively impact adjacent rural uses. Increases in traffic are anticipated on event days; however staff feels that the recommended conditions would ensure compatibility with by-right uses in the district.

...with the regulations provided in section 5 as applicable.

The applicant has submitted the information and sketch plan as required by section 5.25(d) with the SP application (attachment B & C).

...and with the public health, safety and general welfare.

The events will be managed in accordance with a public safety plan that has been reviewed and approved by County Fire/Rescue staff. The County Police Department has also reviewed the plan and has asked for one crowd manager on site per every 250 attendees. The applicant has agreed to provide crowd managers as part of their public safety plan.

The Crozet Fire Station and the Western Albemarle Rescue Squad are both within two miles of the property and will have easy access to the site from Half Mile Branch Road.

The applicant provides portable restroom facilities at events so impacts to the septic system are expected to be minor.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. The use will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy 4a of the Rural Area Chapter of the draft Comprehensive Plan (draft recommendations are consistent with the current Plan) recommends special use permits for events for over 200 persons at wineries in the Rural Area and states that “these special events should promote or support agricultural production or a uniquely rural activity, such as a County fair, and be limited to once or twice per year.” The plan later states that “the County should continue to evaluate individual requests on a case-by-case basis with preference given to occasional rather than regular large events.” Polo events would classify as a “uniquely rural” event based on their equestrian nature and the need for a large tract of open space.

The request for up to 1000 attendees at events held up to 21 times per year is for larger and more frequent events than what is recommended in the Rural Area by the Comprehensive Plan. Though this frequency and scale would likely not be appropriate for most Rural Area properties, several of the site’s characteristics outlined above, such as its adjacency to the Development Areas, its proximity to public safety services and the availability of infrastructure, will help to lessen impacts to the Rural Area.

Staff does not feel that the proposed use will be in conflict of the overall goal for the County’s Rural Area of having thriving farms and forests, protected scenic areas and preserved natural resources. According the applicant, the King Family Vineyard parcels had 27 development rights prior to being put under conservation easement. The potential impacts to the Rural Area would be much greater were this site developed to its full potential rather than being preserved as a farm winery. The polo use on the farm helps promote local farm winery products and helps support a strong agricultural economy.

SUMMARY:

Staff has identified factors which are favorable and unfavorable to this proposal:

Factors favorable to this request include:

1. The site is adjacent to the Development Areas and is less than two miles from local fire and rescue stations.
2. Access to the site requires a minimum amount of driving on Rural Area roads and Half Mile Branch Road can support the traffic generated by the events.
3. The polo events help support a strong agricultural economy and a local winery.
4. The local community has largely expressed support for this use.
5. Polo events have taken place since 2005 with no documented complaints or major incidents.

Factors unfavorable to this request include:

1. Some traffic impacts are anticipated on Half Mile Branch Road, but the applicant will be providing a certified traffic controller during events to direct traffic and reduce traffic backups.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Based on the findings described in this staff report and factors identified as favorable, staff recommends approval of SP 2015-00008 King Family Polo with the following conditions:

1. Polo events may be held only on Sundays in May through October.
2. No polo event shall exceed a maximum of 1,000 attendees at any time.
3. Polo events may be open to the public no earlier than 10 am and shall close no later than 5:30 pm.
4. There shall be no announcer, no amplified music, and no public address system associated with polo events except as permitted under County Code 18.4.18.05.
5. There shall be no outdoor lighting associated with polo events.
6. No new permanent structures shall be constructed for polo events.
7. For each polo event, beginning at 11 am, a VDOT-certified traffic controller shall be stationed at the farm entrance on Half Mile Branch Road to direct traffic. The applicant shall maintain a Land Use Permit from VDOT for traffic control.
8. Polo events shall be managed in accordance with the King Family Vineyards Polo Public Safety Plan dated June 6, 2015.

MOTIONS:

Special Use Permit

- A. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of this special use permit:
I move to recommend approval of SP 201500008 King Family Polo with the conditions outlined in the staff report.
- B. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of this special use permit:
I move to recommend denial of SP 201500008 King Family Polo (state reasons for denial).

ATTACHMENTS

- A – [Location map](#)
- B – [Concept plan](#)
- C – [Project narrative](#)
- D – [Public Safety Plan](#)
- E – [Half Mile Branch Road – crash data 2012-2015](#)
- F – [Half Mile Branch Road speed study – March 2015](#)
- G – [VOF letter of support](#)