

Winery may give new life to town farm

Written by Steve Ostermann
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Chiselled Grape company wants to establish Lakefield Rd. operation that would have vineyard, produce and sell wine

Town of Grafton officials have given an early favorable review to a company's plan to open a local winery next year.

The Plan Commission last week held an advisory discussion on a proposal for the Chiselled Grape Winery to operate at 1216 Lakefield Rd.

The winery, which was incorporated last year by Allan Haas and Harald Tomesch, would be based on a farm owned by Gale Clapper at the intersection of Lakefield and Port Washington roads.

Plans call for the winery to have a vineyard, production and warehouse facilities, a tasting room and store for sale of wine, books, stemware and other items, the company owners stated in their business proposal.

The property, a former dairy farm, is currently zoned for agricultural use, which includes viticulture (grape growing). However, Town Planner Amanda Schaefer said the production and warehousing of wine are not permitted uses and would require a zoning amendment or designation as a planned unit development.

Those changes would require approval of a petition from the winery owners.

Town Chairman Lester Bartel said the early response to the proposal has been positive.

"It would be a unique business in the Town of Grafton as well as for the Ozaukee County area," he said. "It has a lot of good things going for it, and we are open to the idea of amending the zoning."

Bartel said the use of the farm as a winery would be consistent with the town's goal of preserving open space.

"One of the challenges of doing that is to find ways to use land for other agricultural purposes," he said. "We need to help people make it economically viable as a business operation."

In their proposal, Tomesch and Haas said they hope to have the winery operating by March 2011. Initially, they said, wines would be purchased and labeled for the company by California Wineries and stored in the warehouse for sale.

Plans call for the winery to begin producing its own wine in fall 2011. The company would become part of a winery co-op distribution network that would sell wines to outlets through

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Wisconsin and operate the local tasting room, the owners said.

Wine tasting and sales, Tomesch and Haas said, would probably be limited to Saturday afternoons and by appointment only. The tastings would be overseen by the owners and a trained employee and not involve more than a dozen customers at a time, they added.

In addition to seeking town approval, the owners said they are in the process of applying for federal and state licenses to operate the winery.

Haas is president of H2D Inc., a Milwaukee-based branding and corporate imaging firm. Tomesch is a professor at Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon.

Bartel said the farm, which is near a well-traveled intersection, appears to be a good site for a winery and could facilitate a welcome business addition to the town.

“What would any negative effects be with this? So far, we don’t see any,” Bartel said.