



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Protect the Peninsula Outlines Settlement Position in Wineries Lawsuit; Hosts Public Forum**

TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN – November 10, 2025 – Protect the Peninsula (PTP), defendant by right in the high-profile lawsuit filed by the Wineries of Old Mission Peninsula (WOMP) and 11 wineries against Peninsula Township, today announced its objectives for settlement by publishing its Five Core Settlement Principles. PTP seeks clear, fair, winery-specific terms emphasizing winemaking and wine sales, with expanded agritourism supporting the long-term sustainability of the Township’s agricultural community. Settlement must also relieve taxpayers of damages liability and ensure consistent enforcement and better compliance.

Following Peninsula Township’s announcement that the litigation parties will engage in formal mediation, PTP presented its position to address community demands for visibility into negotiations. “The wineries sued this public township for new activities and money damages,” said PTP Board Member John Jacobs. “Residents have the right to know what’s on the table to resolve a case of this magnitude because it impacts all residents on this narrow peninsula.”

Clarity, fairness, and compliance are the foundations of PTP’s settlement position. Following five years of litigation, the wineries obtained no rights to new or expanded activities. Their lawsuit invalidated historical provisions that authorized wine and food pairing dinners, promotional merchandise sales, and more, without addressing the consequences to authorized wineries. The result is increased uncertainty – may Chateau Chantal lawfully host wine dinners? May Peninsula Cellars sell logo gear? It is clear that renting out facilities for private events remains unauthorized, yet it appears some wineries are doing so – Bonobo’s website currently says, “[f]rom birthdays to rehearsal dinners; corporate receptions to showers, Bonobo is the perfect place to host your celebration”; 2 Lads now “offers the perfect setting for your event,” including “weddings, private celebrations, and corporate functions.” This current state is unfair to wineries that respect zoning and to neighbors who rely on zoning to protect their property rights, including peaceful enjoyment of their homes. Settlement can clear up what each winery can do.

“The wineries did not achieve the sweeping rezoning they demanded in court, and we are confident that the appeals will undo their \$50 million damages award. If settlement can eliminate the threat to taxpayers while providing clarity and improving compliance, that’s a win-win,” said Jacobs.

**PTP will host a community forum to discuss its settlement position November 24 at 5:00 p.m. at the Peninsula Library (not a forum sponsor).**

Founded in 1979, PTP is a citizen group that supports Old Mission Peninsula residential and farming communities. In July 2022, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals granted PTP the right to intervene in the wineries’ lawsuit to defend its members’ interests. The litigation involves a judgment that awarded the wineries \$50 million for historical lost profits. PTP and the Township filed appeals, and the wineries cross-appealed; these appeals remain pending in the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

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## **PTP's Five Core Settlement Principles**

Settlement should result in clarity, fairness, and compliance, which benefits wineries and residents.

### **1. PTP supports winery-specific terms and opposes amending zoning by settlement.**

PTP supports an outcome specifying permissible and expanded land uses tailored to each of the 11 wineries' unique circumstances, land characteristics, and location. PTP supports balancing consistency in winery permissions with respect for how each winery's particular setting impacts its neighbors. PTP also supports uniform, enforceable noise standards.

Every zoning provision found unconstitutional by the court was repealed and replaced by the Township in December 2022. The 11 wineries are now nonconforming uses under old zoning. There is no need to amend the zoning ordinance, and doing so would not resolve the wineries' dilemma. Moreover, state law says how to amend zoning and does not authorize doing so via settlement agreement. The parties may negotiate winery-specific terms in the form of variances or amended special use permits, but not zoning amendments.

### **2. PTP supports winemaking and wine sales as the principal operations of wineries.**

- Generous retail wine sales and tasting (indoors and outdoors)
- Generous retail sales for promotional merchandise (i.e., logo gear)
- Existing food service (e.g., charcuterie boards, small plates), which must remain supplemental to wine sales and tasting; no new commercial kitchens
- Free activities and entertainment for patrons during regular tasting room operations (e.g., music, trivia, running club)
- Traditional hours (e.g., 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.), with later summer hours negotiable

### **3. PTP supports expanded revenues through agritourism tied directly to winemaking.**

PTP will negotiate winery-specific terms (frequency, capacity, hours) for ticketed events that are tied directly to winemaking, including occasional food and wine pairings (e.g., brunch, dinner) and cooking classes. Terms may also be negotiated for limited ticketed winery promotional events. These would include no new commercial kitchens and no facility rentals for private parties, weddings, conferences, receptions, etc.

### **4. PTP supports settlement that results in better compliance.**

The outcome of a negotiated settlement must be improved compliance and consistent enforcement that holds wineries accountable for violations and noncompliance. To start, wineries must immediately cease all illicit activities (e.g., offering to host weddings).

### **5. PTP supports negotiations conditioned on complete taxpayer relief from damages.**

The wineries must forgo collecting any part of the \$50 million damages award from Township property owners.