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Southold Farm + Cellar for sale as winery plans move to Texas

By Nicole Smith | June 7, 2016

Southold Farm + Cellar, the embattled local winery that failed to get necessary approvals from the town to continue its tasting room operations, has announced it is planning a move off Long Island.

Less than three months after the Southold Town Zoning Board of Appeals rejected a request for variances to convert an existing accessory structure into a wine-tasting area and build a winery building on the property, Regan and Carey Meador said in an email to customers that they plan to pack up their operations and head for Texas Hill Country.

The family's farm and three-bedroom home have been listed with Town and Country real estate for \$1.9 million.

"Without being able to offset the costs of land and living through the ability to grow, make and sell our small batch wine from our farm, our ability to sustainably run our small business here has been diminished," the Meadors said in an email to customers Tuesday.

"Furthermore, this zoning decision, coupled with recently uncovered conflicting Town Code and State Liquor Authority regulations, means we are left with no viable options to continue here in Southold Town," they continued.

The couple went on to write that they have watched the wine industry in Texas grow, and made the decision to relocate after numerous visits to that region.

In a telephone interview Tuesday, Mr. Meador said the move to Texas, where he is from, will likely have to wait until after the sale of the family's property in Southold.

The entire business — name, inventory and all — will be relocated, he said.

"We're looking forward to the industry itself [in Texas] and to be part of something that's so new and growing," Mr. Meador said.

On March 17, the Southold Zoning Board of Appeals rejected Southold Farm + Cellar's request for variances to allow the winery to convert an existing accessory structure into a 400-square-foot wine tasting area, and to build a 3,600-square-foot winery building on their property, saying the certificate of occupancy for that one-acre parcel was for a single-family dwelling and not a winery or tasting room.

The ZBA also voted unanimously to deny the Meador's a variance to set the winery building back 60 feet from the road as opposed to the required 100 feet.

These decisions "effectively closed [the business] to the public," Mr. Meador said at the time.

In April, the Meadors filed a notice of claim against the town, saying the ZBA "acted beyond the scope of its authority" in making the decision.

At the time of the decision, 22.5 acres had been planted with grapes. The accessory building is on the same one-acre parcel as the Meador family home along Old North Road.

Southold Farm + Cellar opened its tasting room in June 2014 after launching a successful Kickstarter campaign. The winery has since developed a loyal following and have frequently sold out of their popular wines like the sparkling red blend "Damn the Torpedos" and the petillant naturel-style "Weather to Fly."

Southold Farm + Cellar will continue selling current releases on its website and at Chef Hayden's Farmers Market at the North Fork Table & Inn on Fridays. The Meadors said they also still plan to bottle and release their first vintage while they await the future.

"As excited as we are about the next chapter, we are equally distraught over having to leave our home, our friends, and family here," the Meadors said in the email to customers. "You are all part of our story."

