



# COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION  
DRIVE, ROOM 102A  
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

## SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 2/25/2025

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**To:** The Board of Supervisors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** County Counsel

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Elizabeth Coleman- 707-565-3735

**Vote Requirement:** 4/5th

**Supervisorial District(s):** Fifth District

**Title:**

Proposed Lower Russian River Eviction Defense Urgency Ordinance Related to Declared Flood State of Emergency

**Recommended Action:**

- A) Introduce, Waive Further Reading of, and Consider Adoption of Proposed Lower Russian River Eviction Defense Urgency Ordinance Related to Declared Flood State of Emergency
- B) Adopt Resolution Modifying Ratification of Local Emergency Proclamation of February 11, 2025 to terminate invocation of county-wide emergency tenant protections under Section 8 of Sonoma County Ordinance No. 6496

(4/5<sup>th</sup> Vote Required)

**Executive Summary:**

On February 11, 2025, the Board of Supervisors ratified a Proclamation of Local Emergency made by the Director of Emergency Services for the circumstances of the February 2025 atmospheric river storm event and danger of additional storms impacts as described in the Director's Declaration of Local Emergency of February 4, 2025. By the terms of the ratification resolution, the Board activated the emergency protections from eviction pursuant to Ordinance Number 6496, limiting evictions in Sonoma County to those articulated in the Ordinance, until termination of the declaration or further action of the Board to terminate the emergency protections. Pursuant to Board direction to staff at the February 11, 2025 Board of Supervisors meeting, County Counsel is returning to the Board to introduce and consider adoption of a proposed Lower Russian River Eviction Defense Urgency Ordinance Related to Declared Flood State of Emergency, to become effective immediately upon adoption of the Ordinance. The proposed ordinance would protect tenants in the unincorporated areas of Forestville, Guerneville, Rio Nido, Monte Rio, Villa Grande, and Duncans Mills.

**Discussion:**

Beginning on January 31, 2025, heavy rainfall as a result of a category 4 atmospheric river storm brought over 6.50 inches of rain over five days, as recorded at the Charles M. Schulz-Sonoma County Airport. Other areas of the county received up to fifteen inches of rain in that same time period. On and around February 6, 2025, another inch of additional rainfall was received in the Sonoma County area.

The accumulated rainfall and associated stormwater runoff during the February 2025 atmospheric river storm event ("Event") have resulted in severe ground saturation, unstable hillsides, debris flows, landslides, downed

trees, flooding, road blockages and road washouts/slip-outs, evacuations, and power outages in multiple parts of Sonoma County. These and other Event-related conditions have significantly impacted County and community operations and resources, and require the provision of additional public safety, health and emergency services. On Westside Road in the Hacienda area of the lower Russian River, a hillside collapsed, and a house was washed away into the river. Several creeks and streams and the lower Russian River reached and were predicted to reach the action/monitor stage, requiring emergency protective measures. The lower Russian River crested at “moderate” and “major” flood stages on Wednesday, February 5, 2025.

Due to these ongoing conditions of extreme peril to safety of persons and property, the Director of Emergency Services issued a Proclamation of Existence of Local Emergency in the Sonoma County Operational Area on February 4, 2025, due to the Event. The Sonoma County Emergency Operations Center was activated Wednesday, February 5, 2025, morning. County staff was advised by multiple residents of the impacted areas that landlords were using the event as the basis to begin proceedings to remove their tenants from the affected areas, which could cause worsening of the health and safety impacts upon the community of the emergency.

Under Sonoma County Code Section 10-5(b), the proclamation of local emergency by the Director of Emergency Services was ratified by the Board of Supervisors, to extend the emergency response authority under applicable laws and make available to the County/Operational Area, state, and local mutual aid, and allow for any State and Federal emergency funding, if it is made available. The resolution of ratification also included language pursuant to Section 8 of Sonoma County Ordinance No. 6496 to prohibit the termination of any tenancy in all areas of the County, including the incorporated cities of the County, during the duration of the local emergency declared by the resolution. The Board of Supervisors concurrently directed County Counsel to return to the Board on February 25, 2025 with a proposed urgency ordinance to create protections from eviction for the impacted areas, in order to protect those impacted by the critical threat to housing without burdening other areas of the County not directly impacts.

The proposed ordinance contains similar provisions to the previously adopted Section 8 of Sonoma County Ordinance No. 6496, with modifications to indicate it will be in effect until the earlier of six months after adoption, or 30 days after the termination of the related local emergency. The language is also modified from the generally applicable text of Section 8 of Sonoma County Ordinance No. 6496 to exclude from its terms any rental of two or less bedrooms in an otherwise owner-occupied single family residence, to preserve owner-occupied household’s ability to end cohabitation with tenants without necessity of meeting the strict requirements for termination for covered tenancies. As proposed, the urgency ordinance would prevent the termination of covered tenancies except in cases of violence/threats of violence or requirements of health and safety, immediate removal from the rental market, or as may be required by law or court order. The proposed urgency ordinance would cover the geographical areas most impacted, designated by postal code. The included postal codes are 95436, 95471, 95446, 95462, 95486, and 95430, covering the unincorporated areas known as Forestville, Guerneville, Rio Nido, Monte Rio, Villa Grande, and Duncans Mills.

Under the Emergency Services Act, codified at Government Code section 8550 et seq., the County is vested with authority to declare a local emergency and act as may be necessary for the protection of life and property. Pursuant to that authority and the threat to life and property presented by the risk of becoming unhoused in a time of emergency impacting housing of residents within the impacted area, the proposed

urgency ordinance is presented for the Board’s consideration. The Board’s approval of the county-wide eviction limitations effectuated via the February 11, 2025 ratification of emergency served to protect the life and property of vulnerable residents until such time as the Board could fully consider the proposed urgency ordinance.

Accordingly, staff recommends the Board adopt a resolution introducing and waiving further reading of the Lower Russian River Eviction Defense Urgency Ordinance Related to Declared Flood State of Emergency, consider its adoption, and, upon adoption or rejection of the proposed urgency ordinance, adopt a resolution to terminate its invocation of such county-wide protections under Section 8 of Sonoma County Ordinance No. 6496, by adopting the proposed resolution.

If the Board adopts the proposed urgency ordinance, it would go into effect immediately, and publication of the adopted ordinance would be published within 15 days of adoption.

**Strategic Plan:**

This item directly supports the County’s Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

**Pillar:** Healthy and Safe Communities

**Goal:**

**Objective:**

**Racial Equity:**

**Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?**

No

**Prior Board Actions:**

02/11/2025- Resolution Of The Board Of Supervisors Of The County Of Sonoma, State Of California, Ratifying the Proclamation of Local Emergency Due to the February 2025 Atmospheric River Storm Event  
9/17/2025- Adoption of Sonoma County Tenant Protection Ordinance- Sonoma County Ordinance No. 6496

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY23-24 Adopted</b>	<b>FY24-25 Projected</b>	<b>FY25-26 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>			
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>			

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

N/A

<b>Staffing Impacts:</b>			
<b>Position Title (Payroll Classification)</b>	<b>Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)</b>	<b>Additions (Number)</b>	<b>Deletions (Number)</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

N/A

**Attachments:**

Resolution Introducing, Reading Title, and Waiving further Reading of Proposed Lower Russian River Eviction Defense Urgency Ordinance Related to Declared Flood State of Emergency  
Resolution Modifying February 11, 2025 Ratification of Proclamation of Local Emergency to Terminate Invocation of Emergency Tenant Protections  
Proposed Lower Russian River Eviction Defense Urgency Ordinance Related to Declared Flood State of Emergency

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**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

None