

Summary of an Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors, County of Sonoma, State of California, Amending Chapter 13 of the Sonoma County Code, Fire Safe Standards (“Ordinance”).

On August 4, 2020, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma conducted a public hearing to consider the Ordinance. The Ordinance makes the following changes to Chapter 13 of the Sonoma County Code:

- In Section 13-25(d), the current ordinance exempts 640 square foot dwellings from fire road upgrade access standards. That has been a longstanding exemption for accessory dwelling units (ADUs), but the square footage is outdated. The ordinance deletes outdated square footage and replaces it with the new square footage limit of an ADU authorized by state law.
- In Section 13-25(h), the current ordinance has an exemption for existing driveways that is a bit confusing because it contains an exception within the exemption. The Board of Forestry staff suggested a rewrite to retain the same requirements but simply write them clearly for what is required for existing driveways. The ordinance language would make this change.
- In Section 13-32, for new road and driveway construction, the proposed ordinance includes verbatim language from the Board of Forestry regulations about construction standards for horizontal curves width requirements for roads with horizontal and vertical curves.
- In Section 13-34, the current ordinance allows reduced widths for new subdivision roads if turnouts and turnarounds are included. The County’s current practice has been to only authorize this road width reduction for minor subdivisions (4 parcels or less). The ordinance includes the word “minor” to reflect the County’s current practice.
- In Section 13-62, there is a process established to request alternative fire protection measures in accordance with State regulations. The Board of Forestry staff requested the County insert “the same practical effect” to explain that these alternatives may be offered only if they have “the same practical effect” as the other standards. This change matches current practice and the requirements in State law.
- The most significant proposed change is in Section 13-25(f) pertaining to fire safety evaluations of existing roads. In Section 13-25(f), the current ordinance requires any pre-1991 road that serves a legal parcel to provide year round unobstructed access to conventional drive vehicles, including sedans and fire engines. The ordinance clarifies that requirement. This change is not changing the current practice; this change is intended to create a checklist to document the current fire safety evaluation for existing roads. The ordinance references an Administrative Policy for Fire Safety Evaluations of Existing Private Roads. The Administrative Policy includes a

checklist to clarify this fire safety evaluation requirement: (1) Any existing private road shall satisfy these criteria if it provides at least a twelve foot path of travel and at least one foot of vegetation clearance on each side of the road. For discretionary approvals, additional turnouts and turnarounds or other mitigation measures may be required to ensure concurrent fire engine access and civilian evacuation. (2) All of the other provisions of Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, Article V Fire Safe Standards shall apply to any road if it is extended, reconstructed or improved pursuant to a development approval, but only as to the portion of the road that is extended, reconstructed or improved; (3) All existing private roads shall comply with Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, Article V, Division C Signing and Building Numbering; (4) All vertical clearances must conform to the requirements in California Vehicle Code §35250. This requires a vertical clearance of 13 feet, 6 inches to ensure fire engine access; (5) Except as otherwise provided in the Fire Safe Standards, all applications for development approvals shall be accompanied by plans, engineering calculations and other data necessary to determine compliance with the provisions of the Fire Safe Standards.

Copies of the Ordinance are available for public inspection during regular business hours outside of the office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, 575 Administration Drive, Room 100A, Santa Rosa, California.

SUPERVISORS:

Rabbitt: ___ Zane: ___ Gore: ___ Hopkins: ___ Gorin: ___

Ayes: _____ Noes: _____ Absent: _____ Abstain: _____