



COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 3/24/2026

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma

Staff Name and Phone Number: Scott Orr, Director (707) 565-1754, Michelle Arellano, Assistant Director (707) 565-2296

Vote Requirement: 4/5th

Supervisorial District(s): All

Title:

Permit Sonoma User Fee Study Professional Services Agreement

Recommended Action:

1. Authorize the Director of Permit Sonoma to execute an agreement with Matrix Consulting Group for a Comprehensive User fee Study in an amount not to exceed of \$80,000 with a term ending March 26, 2027.
2. Adopt a Resolution authorizing a budget adjustment to the Permit Sonoma Department FY 2025-26 Final Budget in the amount of \$80,000 to fund the agreement utilizing FY 2025-26 General Fund Contingencies. (4/5th vote required)

Executive Summary:

Permit Sonoma is requesting authority to enter into an agreement with Matrix Consulting Group to prepare a comprehensive user fee study that reviews all existing Permit Sonoma service fees and potential new fees, a detailed cost analysis of the Permit Center, and an evaluation of At-Cost Project minimum fees and monthly billing practices to improve and streamline cost recovery mechanisms.

Matrix Consulting Group was selected to provide these services through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process. The department is requesting authority to enter into an agreement in an amount not to exceed \$80,000 for a one-year term and authorization to utilize FY 2025-26 General Fund Contingencies to fund the study.

Discussion:

Permit Sonoma is Sonoma County's consolidated land use planning and development permitting agency. Land development or construction that takes place in the unincorporated area of Sonoma County is reviewed, permitted, and inspected by Permit Sonoma. Permit Sonoma's fees for services support the review, approval, and inspection of construction, land use and development projects, including permit fees for residential, commercial, or industrial construction projects, land use applications, zoning requests, and environmental compliance, all to ensure adherence to local codes. In addition, fees support fire prevention program activities including fire inspections, investigations, and construction plan checks as well as hazardous materials and Certified Unified Programs (CUPA) programs.

The County last initiated a comprehensive fee study in 2019 which included a review of fee schedules for Animal Services, Permit Sonoma, and Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures. As over five years have passed since that review, a comprehensive fee study is appropriate to ensure fees reflect current practices and actual costs, support full cost recovery, remain legally compliant, and to establish well documented cost allocations to justify and support fees for services. Furthermore, department fees have historically not been set at full cost recovery, consistent with long-standing Board policy to subsidize a portion with the General Fund. Fee increases have largely been limited to cost-of-living adjustments, resulting in a gap between service costs that have continued to widen and increase pressure on the department's budget. The comprehensive fee study is intended to provide up to date data to inform a review of current fees, and adoption of any ongoing, new, or changed fees, which may or may not continue to under-recover costs, but which will not exceed costs.

Request for Proposal

Permit Sonoma released a Request for Proposals (RFP) on October 29, 2025. Four proposals were received and evaluated by staff from Permit Sonoma and the County Executive's Office. Evaluation criteria included demonstrated ability to perform the services, experience, qualifications and expertise, quality of work as verified by references, cost of services relative to the scope of services, and a demonstrated history of providing similar services to comparable local agencies. The evaluation panel selected the Matrix Consulting Group as the preferred consultant based on the consultant's high level of qualifications, experience, project approach, and overall value.

Proposed Agreement

Under the proposed agreement, the Consultant will conduct a comprehensive, cost-based analysis of Permit Sonoma services and programs to ensure fees are accurate, defensible, and aligned with actual costs. The study will include development of a new cost model, review existing fees and potential new fees, and provide comparisons with similar jurisdictions. The fee study will also ensure full cost recovery for Fire Prevention and Hazardous Materials programs, analyze Permit Center operations for sustainable funding strategies, and review At-Cost project fees to streamline revenue tracking and improve administrative efficiency while maintaining equitable and compliant rates.

The proposed contract amount is for a total of \$80,000 with a one-year term ending March 27, 2027.

The department is requesting \$80,000 in FY 2025-26 General Fund Contingencies to finance the study, as fee revenue is insufficient to cover the cost of the agreement. The department is not at full cost recovery, and fee increases have largely been limited to cost-of-living adjustments, resulting in ongoing revenue shortfalls that continue to challenge the budget. Initiating the study is critical to understanding the department's current position and to inform future budget decisions.

Should the Board approve the request, staff will take steps to initiate the study over the next month and use the study results to support fee adjustments annually presented for the Board's consideration for FY 2027-28 fee development.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

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

No

Prior Board Actions:

N/A

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY25-26 Adopted	FY26-27 Projected	FY27-28 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested	\$80,000		
Total Expenditures	\$80,000		
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies	\$80,000		
Total Sources	\$80,000		

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Additional appropriations totaling \$80,000 are requested to fund the study utilizing FY 2025-26 General Fund Contingencies.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Budget Resolution

Attachment 2: Proposed Agreement

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

N/A