

Resolution Number 25-12

County of Sonoma  
Santa Rosa, California

September 4, 2025

ORD25-0003

Katerina Mahdavi

**RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE  
COUNTY OF SONOMA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA,  
RECOMMENDING THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
ADOPT AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLES 06, 22, AND 88  
OF CHAPTER 26 (ZONING) OF THE SONOMA COUNTY CODE  
TO CLARIFY PERMITTING PROCEDURE, TERM DEFINITIONS,  
AND PUBLIC NOTICING PROCEDURES FOR PERIODIC  
SPECIAL EVENTS.**

WHEREAS, Sonoma County remains an in-demand destination for periodic special events; and

WHEREAS, amendments to Sonoma County Code Chapter 26 ("Zoning Code") are necessary to clarify procedures and terms for periodic special events and align definitions and standards with current interpretations and practices; and

WHEREAS, the current ordinance language is silent on the size of individual events, and the amendments would establish a size limit until the County can revisit events regulation in a comprehensive manner in the context of the next general plan update with its associated environmental review.

WHEREAS, other revisions to the Zoning Code are necessary for consistency in the language of code sections pertaining to periodic special events; and

WHEREAS, State law and the Zoning Code requires that before the Board of Supervisors adopt any amendment to the Zoning Code, the Planning Commission shall first review and make a recommendation on the proposed amendments; and

WHEREAS, notice of the Planning Commission's September 4, 2025 public hearing on the proposed Zoning Code amendments was published in *The Press Democrat* on August 25, 2025, in compliance with California Government Code and the County Code; and

WHEREAS, on September 4, 2025, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on the proposed Zoning Code amendments, and considered all written and oral comments;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Planning Commission finds and resolves as follows:

- A. The Planning Commission has had an opportunity to review this Resolution and its Exhibit and finds that it accurately sets forth the intentions of the Commission regarding the Project.
- B. The proposed zoning code amendments are overall compatible with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Sonoma County General Plan that seek to reduce land use impacts, including but not limited to noise and traffic, and support tourism and economic activity. The proposed amendments do not conflict with any General Plan policy because the General Plan does not limit the frequency or size of periodic special events.
- C. The proposed amendments to the Zoning Code text (as shown in the attached Exhibit A, incorporated herein by reference) are necessary to ensure efficient and thorough processing of permit applications for periodic special events. The proposed amendments codify current permitting and public noticing practices and establish a cap on the number of attendees per event to reduce potential impacts. The proposed amendments will benefit the public and staff through improved clarity and consistency throughout the Zoning Code for periodic special events.
- D. The proposed revisions to the Zoning Code are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. The project involves minor updates to the Zoning Code to clarify definitions and codify current procedure and practice. The amendments do not change the number of events allowed under current Permit Sonoma policy. The current Zoning Code text does not limit the number of attendees at periodic special events, and this ordinance would specify a cap on attendees. It can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility the proposed Zoning Code amendments will result in a direct or indirect physical change in the environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt the proposed amendments to the Zoning Code, as shown in Exhibit A.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission additionally recommends that the proposed amendments to the Zoning Code allow for a Use Permit option, as shown in Exhibit A.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission designates the Secretary of the Planning Commission as the custodian of the documents and other material which constitute the record of proceedings upon which the decision herein is based. These documents may be found at the office of Permit Sonoma, 2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403.

THE FOREGOING RESOLUTION was adopted by the Sonoma County Planning Commission on September 4, 2025, by the following vote:

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Commissioner Freeman      | Nay |
| Commissioner Reed         | Aye |
| Commissioner Striplen     | Aye |
| Commissioner Koenigshofer | Nay |
| Commissioner McCaffery    | Aye |

Ayes: 3    Noes: 2    Absent: 0    Abstain: 0

WHEREUPON, the Chair declared the foregoing Resolution duly adopted; and

SO ORDERED.

**EXHIBIT A**  
**AMENDMENTS TO SONOMA COUNTY CODE**  
**CHAPTER 26, ARTICLES 06, 22, AND 88**

**I. Sec. 26-06-030. Allowed land uses.** Subdivision 'E' of Section 26-06-030 is amended as shown below.

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**E. Restricted Nonagricultural Uses.**

1. For the purpose of this subsection, a "restricted nonagricultural use" means the following land uses:
  - a. Agricultural farmstays
  - b. Cemeteries
  - c. Commercial kennels
  - d. Day care centers
  - e. Golf courses
  - f. Horse boarding
  - g. Home occupations
  - h. Land and resource management
  - i. Low temperature geothermal resource development
  - j. Meeting facilities
  - k. Non-commercial composting
  - l. Public parks and playgrounds
  - m. Pet fancier facilities
  - n. Public safety facilities
  - o. Public utility facilities
  - p. Recreation and sports facilities: rural sports and recreation
  - q. Renewable energy facilities
  - r. Periodic special ~~Temporary~~ events
  - s. Studios for arts and crafts
  - t. Telecommunication facilities
  - u. Application of clean dredge material or biosolids

2. In addition to any other applicable standards or criteria, restricted nonagricultural uses in the LIA, LEA, and DA zones are allowed, only if the applicant demonstrates that:
  - a. The use meets a local need;
  - b. The use avoids conflict with agricultural activities; and
  - c. The use is consistent with general plan objectives AR-4.1 and policy AR-4a.
3. If a restricted nonagricultural use requires a discretionary permit, the use must also comply with all applicable Conditional Use Permit approval criteria and requirements.

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**II. Sec. 26-22-120. Periodic special events.** Section 26-22-120 is amended as shown below.

- A. **Definition.** A periodic event such as a parade, concert, festival, race or gathering which attracts a large gathering of people either by direct participation, or as spectators, or similar activities.

Excludes: The following activities are not considered periodic special events for the purposes of this chapter:

~~B. **Zoning Permit Required.** A zoning permit is required for all periodic special events, except the following, which are not considered periodic special events:~~

1. Events conducted entirely within dedicated rights-of-way where event organizers have secured necessary encroachment or other permits;
2. Events conducted entirely within a building for which all necessary county permits have been secured, provided that the events are within the scope of the use for which the building was permitted;
3. Events conducted at fairgrounds or events conducted at outdoor spectator facilities for which a use permit has been obtained, provided that the outdoor event is within the scope of the use permit;
4. An event which has all of the following characteristics:
  - a. Has no live amplified music;
  - b. Does not involve an admission fee either for participants or spectators;
  - c. Is a one (1) day event conducted between the hours of seven a.m. and eleven p.m.;
  - d. Does not involve overnight sleeping of participants or spectators;
  - e. Is not conducted more than one (1) calendar day in a thirty-day period;

- f. Is not accompanied by newspaper, internet, social media, radio or television advertising or printed leaflets distributed to the public at large; and
  - g. Does not involve the sale of food or beverages.
- ~~5. All periodic special events may be subject to requirements of sheriff, public health, fire services, building inspection, public works, or other permitting agencies not specified in this article. Event hosts are responsible for securing approvals from applicable agencies prior to zoning permit issuance.~~

#### **B. Permits.**

- 1. A zoning permit is required for all periodic special events. Periodic special events held 30 or more days apart are subject to separate zoning permits.
- 2. A use permit is required for all periodic special events with more than 2,500 attendees.

#### **C. Standards.**

- 1. **Number of Events.** Up to four periodic special events may be permitted over a two-year period on any site.
- ~~1. Periodic special events subject to a zoning permit shall comply with the following requirements, in addition to the requirements of other applicable agencies:~~
- 2. **Number of Attendees.** No more than 2,500 attendees are allowed per event, at any given time during the event, unless a use permit is granted.
- 3. **a.—Code Compliance.** Events shall comply with all local and state fire codes.
- 4. **b.—Noise.** Noise shall be managed in accordance with the noise element of the Sonoma County general plan.
- 5. **e.—Courtesy Notice.** A courtesy notice of an issued zoning permit shall be posted on the property and sent by mail to all properties and property owners within 300 feet of the parcel(s) on which the event will be held at least ten (10) days in advance of the event, which The notice shall states the nature and duration of the event and provide ~~Notice of the event and~~ contact information for the event host, including a telephone number at which the event host can be reached before and at all times during the event, ~~shall be provided at least forty-eight (48) hours before the event to at least one (1) resident of each adjacent lot. The notice shall state that a request for a public hearing may be submitted to the project planner at least 10 days in advance of the date specified on the notice.~~
- 6. **d.—Periodic Special Events** are “restricted nonagricultural uses” in the LEA, LIA, and DA Districts. See Section 26-06-030.E for additional applicable provisions.

**III. Sec. 26-88-085. -Agricultural Farmstays.** Section 26-88-085 is amended as shown below.

- (a) Agricultural farmstays shall be permitted only in compliance with the requirements and standards of this section and all other requirements of the applicable zoning district, subject to the issuance of a zoning permit. The zoning permit shall expire upon sale or transfer of the property or upon the owners moving their primary residence off the property, unless there is a tenant farmer continuing to operate the farm and farmstay.
- (b) Performance Standards.
  - (1) Where Allowed. Agricultural farmstays shall only be located on parcels that produce commercial agricultural products. The agricultural farmstay lodging and meals shall be incidental and secondary to the primary agricultural operation.
  - (2) Dwellings Allowed. Agricultural farmstays shall be provided in a legally established residence or guest house as defined in Section 26-02-140. Agricultural farmstays shall not be located within agricultural employee housing, seasonal or year-round farmworker housing, farm family dwellings, or accessory dwelling units. Tents and recreational vehicles (RVs) are not allowed as a part of an agricultural farmstay. Only one (1) farmstay is allowed per agricultural enterprise in compliance with the permitted residential density.
  - (3) Owner/Operator in Residence. The owner of the land on which an agricultural farmstay facility is located, or a tenant farmer, shall reside on the property. A homeowner's exemption from property tax or lease agreement may constitute evidence of this requirement.
  - (4) Maximum Number of Bedrooms and Guests. Agricultural farmstay establishments may have a maximum of five (5) bedrooms or sleeping rooms. The maximum overnight occupancy for agricultural farmstays shall be two (2) persons per sleeping room or bedroom. Children under three (3) years of age shall not be counted toward occupancy. If a lower limit is stated on the applicable septic permit, the maximum overnight occupancy shall be that stated on the septic permit.
  - (5) Food Service. An agricultural farmstay facility may serve food or meals at any time, but only to registered guests. The price of food shall be included in the price of the lodging. An agricultural farmstay facility that serves food shall maintain a food facility permit as required by the Health and Safety Code.
  - (6) Agricultural Promotion. The operator of the farmstay establishment shall engage in a program of agricultural promotion and guest education regarding the agricultural activities on-site and in the area, and may include active participation in the on-site agricultural activities as part of the consideration

for the lodging. An Agricultural Promotion Plan shall be prepared and submitted with the farmstay application that demonstrates the primary use of land is agriculture and that the use promotes and educates guests about local agriculture.

- (7) Noise Limits. All activities associated with the agricultural farmstay shall meet the standards contained in Table NE-2 and Policy NE-1c of the General Plan Noise Element.
- (8) Events. Non-agricultural activities, agricultural promotional events and ~~periodic special cultural~~ events that involve more than the registered farmstay guests are not allowed, except that ~~periodic special occasional cultural~~ events, such as parties, weddings or other similar activities may be permitted with a ~~periodic special cultural~~ event zoning permit up to four (4) times over a two-year period consistent with Section 26-22-120. per year, but for no more than two (2) years in a row.
- (9) Septic Systems and Sewer Connections. The owner shall maintain a properly functioning and suitably sized septic system or sewer connection for the farmstay. In some cases, a per-room sewer fee may be applied.
- (10) Transient Occupancy Tax. The agricultural farmstay owner shall maintain a transient occupancy tax (TOT) license and remain current on all required TOT reports and payments. The owner or authorized agent shall include the TOT certificate number on all contracts or rental agreements, and in any advertising or websites.