



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 2/27/2024

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma
Staff Name and Phone Number: Nathan Quarles, (707) 565-3746
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:
Permit Sonoma Resiliency Permit Center Staffing

Recommended Action:
Adopt a resolution amending the Department Allocation List of the Permit and Resource Management Department (Permit Sonoma), effective February 27, 2024.

Executive Summary:
To continue to support rebuilding through the Resiliency Permit Center (RPC) program which has been in operations since February 13, 2018, department management is recommending extending two time-limited positions, 1.0 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Building Plans Examiner II and 1.0 (FTE) Permit Technician II, through June 30, 2026. Extending the terms of these positions is needed to support the completion of about 500 permits underway and potentially 1,500 new permit applications on non-rebuilt parcels. The cost of extending this capacity will be covered through fees.

Discussion:
The 2017 Sonoma Complex Fire changed our community, our priorities, and redirected our focus to strategizing our best path forward to support and rebuild fire survivors' homes and lives. The fire burned 173 square miles and destroyed or damaged almost 7,000 structures county wide, displacing tens of thousands of community members from the safety of their homes.

Permit Sonoma has assisted in the efficient and expedient rebuilding since the fire erupted on October 8, 2017. On February 13, 2018, Permit Sonoma opened the RPC to assist survivors in rebuilding their homes and other structures lost in the fire and contracted originally with West Coast Code Consultants, Inc. and subsequently with 4Leaf, Inc. to provide fire reconstruction permitting and inspection services and operate the RPC efforts. Permit Sonoma's priority is to ensure minimum life safety codes and regulations are followed while ensuring construction can begin quickly and inspections remain a top priority.

Three additional fire disasters occurred since the 2017 Sonoma Complex Fire. These include the 2019 Kincaid Fire, the 2020 Walbridge Fire, and the 2020 Glass Fire. Cumulatively there were approximately 3,100 parcels in the unincorporated County with at least one structure destroyed.

Of the 3,100 fire affected parcels, approximately 1,600 have rebuilt at least one dwelling on their property. The balance of approximately 1,500 remaining parcels have not started the rebuilding or permitting process. A

potentially significant rebuilding effort remains.

The RPC and permit processing for rebuilding continues to be one of Permit Sonoma's main priorities. Permits for rebuilds have been and will continue to be expedited; wait time in the office, permit approval, permit issuance, and time waiting for inspections have been reduced. The RPC provides a maximum processing time of five business days and staff continue to honor that expedited processing time.

Time Limited Positions

As part of FY 2022-23 budget hearings, the Board of Supervisors approved adding four and a half full time equivalent, time-limited positions to allow Permit Sonoma to shift from contract support to County employees to assist in plan review and inspection services. The time-limited positions added included two Building Plans Examiner II, one Senior Building Inspector, one Permit Technician II, and 0.5 FTE Environmental Health Specialist II. Utilizing full-time County positions had several benefits including eliminating the financial liability represented by the 4Leaf, Inc. contract, which was for a not to exceed amount of \$14 million over four years. Costs incurred during the contract period totaled \$10.9 million and were funded by permit fees. Other benefits of using County employees to provide services also included implementing an agreement with the unions to reduce contract help and maintaining the same level of service as the RPC provided under contracted work.

Permit Sonoma is recommending extending one FTE time-limited Building Plans Examiner II and the one FTE time-limited Permit Technician II allocations for two years, until June 30, 2026. The continuity in these positions, training and experience allows these two staff to maintain the five-day processing times for the workload that remains and continue to support the rebuilding efforts for the approximately 1,500 landowners who have yet to start the process of rebuilding.

The remaining time-limited allocations are currently vacant, and the department will not be seeking to extend the terms beyond their June 30, 2024, end date, due to unsuccessful recruitment efforts and attrition.

Strategic Plan:

Not applicable

Racial Equity:

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

No

Prior Board Actions:

FY 2022-23 Board Hearings: Board approved adding 4.5 time-limited FTEs to support In-House Permit Resiliency Center

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY23-24 Adopted	FY24-25 Projected	FY25-26 Projected
Budgeted Expenses		\$348,477	\$365,901
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures		\$348,477	\$365,901
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other		\$348,477	\$365,901
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources		\$348,477	\$365,901

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Appropriations for FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26 will be requested through the annual budget process. The two time-limited positions will be funded entirely by the fees generated from the permitting process for fire survivors seeking to rebuild. No General Fund contribution is required.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)
Building Plans Examiner II	\$7,411.02 - \$9,009.40	1.0	
Permit Technician II	\$5,870.03 - \$7,134.47	1.0	

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Extending the terms for the time limited positions will not impact Permit Sonoma space needs. Human Resources approved the proposed changes in this item pursuant to their established processes on December 20, 2023.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Personnel Resolution

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

Not Applicable