

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**AN URGENCY ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SONOMA,  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA, ADOPTING AND IMPOSING A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE  
CULTIVATION OF INDUSTRIAL HEMP TO TAKE EFFECT IMMEDIATELY**

**(URGENCY ORDINANCE – 4/5 VOTE REQUIRED)**

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, State of California, ordains as follows:

**SECTION I. PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY.** The purpose of this Ordinance is to establish a temporary moratorium on industrial hemp cultivation, including hemp cultivation by Established Agricultural Research Institutions, within the unincorporated area of Sonoma County. This Ordinance is adopted pursuant to California Government Code sections 25123(d) and 25131.

**SECTION II. FINDINGS.** The Board of Supervisors finds and determines as follows:

- (a) A moratorium on the cultivation of industrial hemp is urgent and necessary because state laws regulating industrial hemp are still under development, industrial hemp and cannabis cultivation will often be indistinguishable presenting public safety risks and challenges for enforcement, and the unregulated cultivation of industrial hemp may be harmful to the welfare of the County and its residents, and for these reasons the County needs time to study and determine how and whether to regulate industrial hemp cultivation.
- (b) “Industrial hemp” is defined under the California Food and Agricultural Code (FAC) Section 81000 and Health and Safety Code Section 11018.5 as “a crop that is limited to types of the plant *Cannabis sativa* L. having no more than three-tenths of 1 percent tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) contained in the dried flowering tops, whether growing or not; the seeds of the plant; the resin extracted from any part of the plant; and every compound, manufacture, salt, derivative, mixture, or preparation of the plant, its seeds or resin produced therefrom.”
- (c) “Hemp” is similarly defined under Federal law, 7 U.S.C. 1621 et seq., as “the plant *Cannabis sativa* L. and any part of that plant, including the seeds thereof and all derivatives, extracts, cannabinoids, isomers, acids, salts, and salts of isomers, whether growing or not, with a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol concentration of not more than 0.3 percent on a dry weight basis.”
- (d) The County of Sonoma’s current cannabis ordinance, County Code Section 26-88-250 through 258, does not regulate or define industrial hemp;
- (e) The Federal Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill) first established the allowance for the cultivation of industrial hemp by an institution of higher education or a state department of agriculture under an agricultural pilot program or other agricultural or academic research if allowed by the state in which the cultivation occurred.

- (f) The Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) enacted on December 20, 2018, allows for industrial hemp to be grown throughout the United States and removes hemp and its derivatives from being classified as a “Schedule 1” drug under the Controlled Substances Act. The manner by which hemp is grown is no longer restricted to pilot programs and research. The Act also requires that there be a program which collects certain information (location, person responsible, etc.), testing for THC level, destruction of industrial hemp not in compliance with testing, and annual inspection. In lieu of the U.S. Department of Agriculture regulating, a state may choose to regulate the cultivation of industrial hemp through a plan submitted to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture which contains the same components as the Federal requirements.
- (g) In California, the cultivation of industrial hemp for agricultural research and commercial purposes is governed by FAC Division 24 (Section 81000 et seq.). The laws governing hemp were first adopted in 2013 (SB 566), made partially operative by the 2014 Farm Bill, made fully operative by Proposition 64 passed in 2016, and amended in 2018 (SB 1409).
- (h) Under FAC Division 24, all commercial industrial hemp cultivators must register with the county Agricultural Commissioner prior to cultivation. Registration is not yet available.
- (i) FAC Section 81001 establishes an Industrial Hemp Advisory Board to advise the California Secretary of Food and Agriculture and make recommendations to the Secretary pertaining the cultivation of industrial hemp, including fees and process for registration, industrial hemp seed law and regulations, annual budgets, and the setting of an assessment rate.
- (j) The Industrial Hemp Advisory Board is expected to promulgate regulations governing the registration, testing, and enforcement of industrial hemp cultivation in 2019. In November 2018, regulations governing only registration were submitted to the Office of Administrative Law. It is anticipated that the State may open registration once these registration regulations are adopted and prior to promulgating any additional regulations.
- (k) FAC Division 24 exempts “Established Agricultural Research Institutions” from the registration requirements and some of the regulations that otherwise apply to commercial hemp cultivators. The State has not provided guidance to aid with implementation of State law with regards to Established Agricultural Research Institutions.
- (l) Senate Bill (SB) 1409 was signed into law by Governor Brown on September 30, 2018 and went into effect on January 1, 2019. That bill changed the state’s definition of “industrial hemp,” to allow it to be grown for uses other than oilseed and fiber production (allowing, for example, cannabidiol (CBD) production). The bill also allowed for the individual tending of plants, similar to cannabis cultivation, whereas prior to passage industrial hemp could only be grown in densely planted plots.
- (m) The passage of SB 1409 makes distinguishing cannabis from industrial hemp cultivation particularly challenging for local officials. The physical appearance of cannabis and industrial hemp, their odor, and their manner of cultivation are virtually identical. Absent

a laboratory chemical analysis for THC content performed prior to harvest, the two plants cannot be reliably distinguished under their legal definitions.

- (n) The similarities in the two types of plants may present unique challenges for law enforcement and code enforcement when determining if a cultivation site is legal or illegal, or has paid appropriate taxes.
- (o) Industrial hemp may also threaten nearby cannabis farms because it may cause pollen contamination. Industrial hemp may be grown to produce seed which would require male plants to pollinate the female plants. Commercial cannabis is grown exclusively with female plants. Seed production from nearby industrial hemp cultivation could ruin a cannabis crop due to pollen contamination.
- (p) Allowing industrial hemp, particularly when the state laws are in flux, and prior to the adoption of reasonable regulations, if any, may exacerbate violations of the County's cannabis program, create opportunities for cannabis tax evasion, frustrate enforcement of the County's cannabis program, interfere with the County's ability to effectively implement environmental regulations, and may be harmful to the welfare of the County and its residents. Until the State has established laws, regulations, and guidelines for industrial hemp, it is not possible for the County to establish effective local regulations. Any such local regulations would be at best unsettled and at worst possibly voided by subsequent State regulation.
- (q) To protect its residents and businesses from the potential negative effects of the cultivation of industrial hemp, the County of Sonoma needs time to study and determine how best to regulate the cultivation of industrial hemp and if it does choose to regulate, consider appropriate zoning districts and regulatory standards.
- (r) The Board of Supervisors desires a robust public process concerning industrial hemp that builds on and does not conflict with the developing state law, that studies and shares information, and that receives community input on potential decisions on whether or how best to regulate industrial hemp in the unincorporated areas of the county.
- (s) It is necessary to establish a moratorium and prohibition on the cultivation of industrial hemp within the unincorporated area of the County pending further development of State regulations and the County's completion of a review of the needs of its constituents and residents and consideration of any impacts and compatibility issues associated with industrial hemp cultivation.

**SECTION III. CULTIVATION OF INDUSTRIAL HEMP PROHIBITED.** During the term of this Ordinance, the cultivation of industrial hemp for any purpose, including by Established Agricultural Research Institutions as defined by the California Food and Agricultural Code Section 81000, shall be prohibited within the unincorporated areas of Sonoma County.

**SECTION IV. DECLARATION OF URGENCY.** Based on the findings and conditions set forth and described in Section II above, the Board of Supervisors declares that this Ordinance is necessary as an urgency measure to address existing and immediate threats to the public safety and welfare

as described in Section II. The Board of Supervisors determines that the cultivation of industrial hemp without local regulations would result in a further threat to the public safety and welfare.

**SECTION V.** During the period this Ordinance remains in effect, the provisions of this Ordinance shall govern. If there is any conflict between the provisions of this Ordinance and any provision of the Sonoma County Code, or any County ordinance, resolution, or policy, the provisions of this Ordinance shall control.

**SECTION VI. SEVERABILITY.** If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portion of this Ordinance. The Board of Supervisors hereby declares that it would have passed this Ordinance and every section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase thereof irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses or phrases be declared unconstitutional or invalid.

**SECTION VII. CEQA DETERMINATION.** Adoption of this Ordinance is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) in that it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that this Ordinance or its implementation would have a significant effect on the environment because the prohibition on industrial hemp cultivation maintains the status quo. This Ordinance is also exempt pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines sections 15307 and 15308 because it restricts activities to assure the maintenance and protection of natural resources and the environment by prohibiting unregulated hemp cultivation that could be destructive to the environment. There are no unusual circumstances under CEQA Guidelines 15300.2(c) that would render these exemptions inappropriate, and each exemption stands as a separate and independent basis for determining that this ordinance is not subject to CEQA. The Agricultural Commissioner is directed to file a notice of exemption in accordance with CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines.

**SECTION VIII. EFFECTIVE DATE.** This Ordinance shall be and the same is hereby declared to be in full force and effect immediately upon its passage by a four/fifths (4/5) or greater vote, and shall continue in full force and effect unless and until a permanent ordinance prohibiting or regulating industrial hemp goes into effect. This Ordinance shall be published once before the expiration of fifteen (15) days after its passage, with the names of the Supervisors voting for or against the same, in *The Press Democrat*, a newspaper of general circulation published in the County of Sonoma, State of California.

In this regular session of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, passed and adopted this \_\_\_\_\_, on regular roll call of the members of said Board by the following vote:

**Supervisors:**

Gorin:

Zane:

Gore:

Hopkins:

Rabbitt:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

**WHEREUPON**, the Chair declared the above and foregoing Ordinance duly adopted and

**SO ORDERED.**

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Chair, Board of Supervisors  
County of Sonoma

**ATTEST:**

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Clerk of the Board of Supervisors