



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 3/23/2021

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): County Administrator's Office
Staff Name and Phone Number: Peter Bruland, (707) 565-2431
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Consolidated Fee Hearing Fiscal Year 2021-22 Overview

Recommended Actions:

Receive the adjustments to department and agency user fees and charges included in this agenda, reflecting new or updated user fee and charge schedules to be effective on July 1, 2021 unless otherwise noted.

Executive Summary:

The Constitution and laws of the State of California allows for the collection of certain fees and charges for cost recovery of government activities that provide a specific benefit or service or are in place for regulatory purposes such as issuing licenses or performing inspections. Each year the County departments and agencies adjust and/or add service delivery user fees, rates, and charges based on actual costs incurred to provide service and projected costs estimates for the coming fiscal year. This year 4 departments are submitting 115 adjustments to fees as part of this package. The total estimated revenue change for FY 2021-22 is \$127,023. This year's fee hearing includes significantly fewer adjustments than in most years. This is primarily because of two reasons: First, Permit Sonoma, the Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures, and Animal Services are in the final stages of completing a fee study and thus adjustments are not included in this packet; second, in light of the COVID 19 epidemic and its impact on businesses, the Department of Health Services has opted not to adjust its fees, which fall primarily on impacted businesses. Separately, the Board has approved some fee reductions for businesses during the epidemic. Subsequent individual items give details on specific changes to fees and program impacts. An executive summary of the changes is attached to this item.

Discussion:

On September 11, 2020 the Board ratified the Budget and Financial Revenue Management Policy, which states "Programs financed by charges for services, fees, grants, and special revenue fund sources shall pay their full and fair share of all direct and indirect costs to the extent feasible and legally permitted, including cost recovery towards future assets and/or system replacement."

Annually, staff presents for the Board's consideration ordinances and resolutions adjusting and adding user fees, rates, and charges based on operating cost estimates for the coming fiscal year. In accordance with Government Code 6062(a) public notice was given through publication of notice of the fee hearing on two successive weeks with at least five days between publications. In addition, all materials for this item were available online on February 26, 2021 to give additional time for public review, and were noted in the "Items of Significant Public Interest" section of the County's website.

Items in the Package

The attached staff reports include the following departments: County Administrator's Office, Regional Parks, Sheriff's Office, and Transportation and Public Works - Airport. Attachment A includes an executive summary of these changes and Attachment B includes a numerical summary of fee adjustments, including the percentage changes and revenue changes.

Departments are including 5 new fees in this item. Four of these are from the Regional Parks Department. Regional Parks is proposing a document copy fee of 10 cents per page to help offset the costs of materials for providing copies of documents to the public, two new fees at Spud Point Marina to allow for On-Boat Fish Sales (\$100 for a week or \$200 for a month). These fees are expected to generate approximately \$1,600 in Fiscal Year 2021-22. In addition they are proposing a \$2 discount for County residents on Community Engagement Program fees, such as trainings, camps, and educational programs. This discount is similar to those offered at other parks systems, including East Bay Regional Parks. The discount is anticipated to reduce revenues by approximately \$1,000, although this may be offset if it encourages greater participation. The other new fee is being proposed by the Airport, and is a \$4 fee for reservations of short or long term parking. Currently the Airport does not have reserved parking, a service offered at other comparable airports. This fee is estimated to bring in \$1,000 in Fiscal Year 2021-22.

Regional Parks is also proposing the elimination of 13 fees at Spud Point Marina. The fees are being eliminated to streamline the fee schedule and eliminate redundancies, and do not reflect a change in the services offered. They include little-used rates for high-volume diesel sales (over 2000 gallons) and berthing fees that are duplicative or otherwise confusing. Because these activities will now be included in other existing categories, there is minimal revenue impact from these deletions.

The bulk of the changes proposed by departments are adjustments to existing fees. In all, 95 fees are proposed for increases while 4 fees (all at the Sheriff's Office) are proposed to decrease. Existing fees change primarily because of changes to the cost of doing business, particularly changes to staffing costs and because of revised time studies or analyses of work performed. In Fiscal Year 2021-22 the average increase in salary and benefit costs across the County is estimated at 3.5%, however there is some variation between job classes and departments. More than two-thirds of the fees proposed for adjustment are going up by 3.5% or less, reflecting this normal increase in the cost of doing business.

The exceptions to the 3.5% increase include 13 fees at the Sheriff's office, with the larger increases coming to new Concealed Carry Weapons permits and Telecommunications Technician Rates due to reviews of the work performed and need to better capture full costs. The Airport is increasing parking fees by between double digits in order to provide additional revenue for operations and future improvements. These rates continue to be within the normal range offered by comparable regional airports, and are based on a study of these rates. These changes were initially prepared for Fiscal Year 2020-21, but were delayed due to COVID 19. Finally, Regional Parks is proposing a \$2 to \$3 increase to camping fees, which translates to an adjustment of between 6% and 11%. Camping fees at Regional Parks have not been adjusted since 2015, and this increase will put Regional Parks' rates in alignment with State Parks camping fees in Sonoma County.

In total, the adjustments to existing fees included in this hearing are expected to generate approximately \$125,000. Of this total, about \$87,000 is expected to be generated by the increased camping fees. Details of

all changes can be found in individual board items.

Note on Fees not Adjusted in this Package

This fee package contains fewer departments and significantly fewer fee adjustments than are usually brought forward in the annual Consolidated Fee Hearings. In particular two departments, Permit Sonoma and Health Services, generally account for the largest share of fee adjustments and revenue generated from fees. These and several other departments have opted not to include fee adjustments at this time for a variety of reasons.

Permit Sonoma, Agriculture/Weights and Measures, and Animal Services are currently finalizing fee studies with an independent consultant, and as such are not included in this package. These studies were expected to be completed during the fall of 2020, however they were delayed due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Currently drafts are in the final stages of development. Initial results show that in most cases current fees are significantly below full cost recovery, resulting in an effective General Fund subsidy of these services. This is due both to the relatively large period of time in which these fees have not been adjusted and to issues with the methodology for capturing and assigning costs. As noted above, this subsidy is in conflict with the Board's adopted Financial Policies. During Budget Hearings, staff will provide the Board with options, including a revision to the fiscal policies to acknowledge these subsidies or an option to hold a separate fee hearing for specific items to bring them closer to cost recovery.

The Department of Health Services opted not to include fee adjustments at this time. Their fees are largely related to Environmental Health permitting and inspections, and are primarily charged to businesses such as Restaurants and Tattoo Parlors that are heavily impacted by COVID 19. Separately the Board has approved reductions to fees for businesses impacted by the pandemic, and it was determined that increasing fees at the same time as offering relief would be confusing and frustrating for the public. This does mean that rates are not keeping up with normal cost of business adjustments and may require a larger increase in future years. Behavioral Health rates, which are primarily charged to Medi-Cal, receive their annual adjustments separately from the consolidated fee hearing, and Animal Services rates are included in the fee studies discussed above.

Prior Board Actions:

9/11/2020 - Adoption of the Budget and Financial Revenue Management Policy

3/24/2020 - Adoption of the FY 2020-21 User Fee and Charges Schedule

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 20-21 Adopted	FY21-22 Projected	FY 22-23 Projected
Budgeted Expenses		\$127,023	
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures		\$127,023	
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other		\$127,023	

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Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources		\$127,023	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

If approved, fees included in the individual items are expected to generate \$127,023 in additional revenue, all of which is offsetting costs in the departments charging the fees. Individual items lay out the fiscal impacts to departments.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll)	Monthly Salary Range (A - I Step)	Additions (number)	Deletions (number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Executive Summary of Fee Changes
- Attachment B: Numerical Summary of Fee Adjustments

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