Legislation Text

File #: 2025-0323, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors, Board of Directors
Department or Agency Name(s): County Administrator's Office
Staff Name and Phone Number: M. Christina Rivera/Peter Bruland, 565-3086
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:
Consolidated Fee Hearing - Summary

Recommended Action:
Information Only Summary. Subsequent staff reports recommend the approval of resolutions and/or ordinances adjusting department and agency fees and charges included in this agenda, to be effective on July 1, 2025, 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 review for adjustment and/or new 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 six departments are submitting adjustments to fees as part of this package. Individual items for each department are included separately on today's agenda. There are three separate staff report items for Regional Parks, as they must separately adopt fees for Spring Lake Park, which they manage on behalf of Sonoma Water, and the Bodega Bay marinas (Marinas), which operate as enterprises, in addition to the principal general government Regional Parks item. In addition, Sonoma Public Infrastructure is submitting separate items for the Airport, which operates as an enterprise, and the Veterans Buildings. Rental Fees at the Veteran's buildings have not been adjusted since FY 2011/12, and are thus increasing at a higher rate than most fees.

A total of 43 fees are being eliminated and 43 new fees are being introduced. For FY 2025/26, overall, County-wide cost-of-business increases are projected to be moderate when compared to prior years, at about 3% due to programmed labor cost changes. Additionally, inflation rates have cooled from post-pandemic highs. As such, two-thirds of fees that are increasing are increasing by 3% or less, and more than 80% are increasing by less than 4%. In total, if fees and charges adjustments are approved, the revenue derived from the net changes will be $2,633,382.

Discussion:
Government entities provide a mix of services. Some of these, such as justice services, provide general public

benefit and are funded out of general-purpose revenue or specific revenue sources. Others provide specific benefits to those receiving the service, such as use of County property, or issuing of licenses or permits for specific actions. The costs of these services may be wholly or partially offset by collection of fees from those who receive the specific service or benefit.

The County's Financial Policies <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/administrative-support-and-fiscal-services/county-administrators-office/budget-and-operations/financial-policies>, which are adopted by the Board Annually during budget hearings, include two items that speak to use of fees:

- 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 which will include cost recovery towards future assets and/or system replacement.
- Departments requesting new or increased revenues from fees, permits and user charges shall submit these requests to the Board of Supervisors for consideration during the Board's annual fee hearing process or at a separate hearing. … If permissible by law, fees and charges should cover all costs of the services provided, unless otherwise directed by the Board of Supervisors, to provide for public benefit.

In line with the second policy, annually staff presents ordinances and resolutions adjusting and adding user fees, rates, and charges based on operating cost estimates for the coming fiscal year, at what is referred to as the Consolidated Fee Hearing. 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.

For FY 2025/26, overall, County-wide cost-of-business increases are moderate when compared to prior years, at about 3%. Salary increases are generally limited to the final cost of living adjustment from the previous labor agreements, while benefit costs increases were also low, in part due to strong returns on the Sonoma County Employee Retirement Association investments in calendar 2023, which helped keep pension rates from increasing significantly. Additionally, inflation rates have cooled from post-pandemic highs. As such, two-thirds of fees that are increasing are doing so by 3% or less, and 83 percent are increasing by less than 4%. Some rates are increasing at higher rates due to specific changes to costs or to time study reviews that have reassessed total amounts. Details are found below and in individual departmental items.

Items in the Package

The attached report includes fee adjustments from seven departments: Agriculture/Weights and Measures, the County Administrator's Office, Permit Sonoma, Sonoma Public Infrastructure (for Airport fees and fees at Veteran's Buildings), Regional Parks (including items for Regional Parks, Spring Lake Park, and Marinas), and the Sheriff's Office. Together these items contain adjustments to approximately 1,200 fee items. A summary of these changes is attached, and a brief description of each item appears below.

Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures

The Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures is proposing increases to 60 fees. Last year constituted the final year in a three-year effort to increase the rate of cost recovery by departmental fees, and as such 59 of the 60 proposed to increase by about 3%, in line with overall County cost increases. The lone exception is a hazardous material fee that is set by the state.

If approved, the proposed fee changes are estimated to increase revenues by $174,000.

County Administrator's Office

The County Administrator's Office prepares two state-authorized fees on behalf of the Sheriff's Office. The first is the Jail Booking Fee, which would be charged to arresting agencies if the state failed to appropriate $35 million statewide to fund counties for jail bookings. This fee has never been charged and is not anticipated to be charged in FY 2025-26; however, in accordance with state law, the fee is recommended to increase by 3.5%. The second fee is the Jail Access Fee, which per state law, is charged to an arresting agency if certain non-felony bookings exceed a three-year average for these types of bookings. This fee is based on the cost of booking operations. The Sheriff's Office recently completed a review of actual costs associated with booking operations, and in order to meet cost recovery this fee is proposed to increase from $403 to $1,136, which better represents the actual cost of providing booking services. The fee is collected by the Sheriff's Office for support of booking operations. The amount of revenue expected is difficult to predict because it is dependent on how actual bookings for certain offenses relate to averages. Should the averages be exceeded by the same level as they are anticipated to in FY 2024-25, it could generate approximately $162,000 in additional revenue.

Permit Sonoma

Permit Sonoma is proposing increases to 660 fees. Most fees are slated to rise by 3.0%, in line with County cost increases. A few fees are adjusting by higher or lower percentages due to rounding of very small numbers (e.g. a plan check component moving from $0.10 to $0.11 per unit). Should the fee revisions be approved, the department anticipates and additional $632,136 in cost recovery revenue is anticipated in FY 2025-26 based on workload activities similar to the current year. These adjustments do not reduce the previously approved subsidy which will remain in place to continue to subsidize cost of delivering services. Additionally, they are proposing three new fees: one for defensible space inspections related to implementation of Assembly Bill 38, one setting an hourly rate for maintenance worker time tied to Fire Prevention, and one establishing a separate fee of $3,000 for appeals to the Board of Supervisors, to reflect the greater level of staff work required for these appeals compared to appeals to the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Adjustments.

Development impact fees are not included as part of this item. Previously on March 11, 2025 the Board approved a resolution eliminating parks and traffic impact fees for ver low, low, and moderate income housing and approving a backfill of lost revenue. These fees are collected by Permit Sonoma on behalf of the Regional Parks and Public Infrastructure departments.

As part of the Management Review, Permit Sonoma is working on measures to increase efficiency in the department. As changes are implemented fees will be reevaluated based on the revised processes and systems.

Public Infrastructure (Airport)

Sonoma Public Infrastructure operates the Charles M. Schulz - Sonoma County Airport as an enterprise, where revenues are expected to offset costs as well as long-term capital and other needs. The Airport does not

receive any County General Fund support. This year the department is proposing changes to 40 fees, including increases to 30, 4 new fees, and other various changes such as tying certain costs that are passed through to third-party vendors directly to the rates that the County is charged. New fees relate to advance reservations for long term parking and establishing separate rates for ground lease on improved sections of the Airfield as opposed to unimproved sections. For fees that are increasing, the median increase is 6.5%. If approved, fee changes are anticipated to generate $820,000, with most attributed to vehicle parking fees.

Public Infrastructure (Veterans Buildings)

Sonoma Public Infrastructure maintains 7 Veterans Buildings throughout Sonoma County. These facilities are sometimes rented for private events, as well as being utilized for County needs. Rental rates at these facilities have not been adjusted since Fiscal Year 2011/12, while costs of maintaining these facilities have increased significantly. As such, Public Infrastructure is proposing rate increases of between 10% and 50% for rental rates. Staff met with the Veteran Service Officer for each building, and fee increases were supported.

Regional Parks

Regional Parks is proposing adjustments to 174 fees across Regional Parks, including 98 proposed for increases, 24 proposals for new fees, 43 proposals to delete fees that are no longer used, and 9 additional changes to definitions or names that do not impact rates.

Parks submits three separate fee packets for the hearings. One covers fees related to most of the Regional Parks system, and includes 72 modifications. Fees at Spring Lake Regional Park are adopted separately, because the Park is owned by Sonoma Water and managed on behalf of the district by Regional Parks. As such, these fees are adopted by the Board acting as the Board of Directors of Sonoma Water. While they are adopted separately, most fees at Spring Lake park overlap with fees in the Regional Parks system. The primary distinctions are fees that are relevant only to Spring Lake Park, such as those related to the Water Park. The third packet relates to the three marinas operated by Regional Parks around Bodega Bay. These are operated as enterprises, similar to the Airport discussed above.

Within Regional Parks and Spring Lake Park, fees for non-commercial events and athletic field use are generally increasing by around 3%. Day use parking fees are going up between $1 and $2, which amounts to an increase of between 6% and 20%. These are increasing at a higher rate due to the increased costs associated with maintaining parks which have experienced significant wear and tear after several years of high usage. Camping fees are going up between 5% and 14%, similarly reflecting the higher costs of providing services including increases in utilities. Fees remain comparable to other nearby parks systems.

A total of 22 new fees are being proposed. These include fees for rental of synthetic fields Iand rental of paddle boards and kayaks at Spring Lake Park to bring schedule in line with current services. Additionally, new fees are proposed for late cancellations of reservations for summer camps. These fees are needed due to the high volume of late cancellations, which leaves park unable to fill empty slots, hurting cost recovery on camp programs. Additionally, 40 fees related to services that are no longer provided or that would be redundant with modified fees are recommended for deletion.

At the marinas, most fees including berthing, margins on fuel sales, and dock use fees at the Sports Fishing

Center, and storage fees are proposed to increase by around 4% in line with costs at the marinas. Higher increases are associated with electrical hook ups for berthed vessels (20%) due to an increase in electricity prices paid by Regional Parks, as well as a 150% increase in impoundment fees to better recover the costs of this rare process.

If implemented, fee changes are anticipated to result in $472,000 in additional revenue for general Regional Parks, $252,000 related to Spring Lake Park, and $14,000 related to the marinas.

Sheriff's Office

The Sheriff's Office is recommending adjustments of 69 fees, 51 of which are increasing, 18 are decreasing of which are decreasing. Of the fees that are increasing, the majority is set to increase by 3% or less. Those slated to increase by larger amounts, including new and amended concealed carry permits and base morgue use, are tied to specific cost studies including time studies.

The Sheriff's Office is also recommending 12 new fees in the telecommunications unit related to services provided to cities, REDCOM, and other non-county entities that use Sheriff's telecommunications equipment and services.

The proposed changes are estimated to increase revenue by $15,000. This is the net total of $102,000 related to new and increasing fees and a decrease of $87,000 related to fees that are decreasing.

Strategic Plan:
N/A

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?
No

Prior Board Actions:
March 26, 2024 - Fiscal Year 2024-25 Consolidated Fee Hearing

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	**FY24-25 Adopted**	**FY25-26 Projected**	**FY26-27Projected**
Budgeted Expenses		$2,633,382	
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures		**$2,633,382**	
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other		$2,633,382	
Use of Fund Balance			

General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources		**$2,633,382**	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:
If all fee packages are adopted as recommended the total new revenue generated is expected to be $2,633,382, which will support increased costs in the various departments. Information on individual departmental revenues is found in the following items.

Staffing Impacts:

Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):
N/A

Attachments:
Summary of fee changes
Numerical summary of fee changes

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:
None