Legislation Text

File #: 2026-0642, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma
Staff Name and Phone Number: Scott Orr, Director; Doug Bush, Planner (707) 565-5276
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:
Wireless Telecommunications Facilities Permit Review Authority - Chapter 2 Amendment (First Reading)

Recommended Action:
Hold a public hearing and adopt a Resolution introducing, reading the title of, and waiving further reading of a proposed ordinance amending Chapter 2 of the Sonoma County Code to direct Use Permits for Wireless Telecommunications Facilities to the Zoning Administrator.

Executive Summary:
On April 16, 2026, the Planning Commission recommended adoption of an updated wireless telecommunications facilities ordinance and the Board subsequently adopted the ordinance which amended the County's Zoning Code at a public hearing on May 19, 2026.

During the May 19, 2026, hearing on the zoning code change, the Board also discussed whether the Planning Commission should retain jurisdiction over telecommunications conditional use permit (CUP) applications or if the Zoning Administrator should have initial jurisdiction over these permit applications, aligning telecom CUPs with the hearing structure of general CUPs. Chapter 2 of the County Code states the jurisdiction of the Planning Commission and Zoning Administrator. Because Chapter 2 is not part of the Zoning Code, the proposed code amendment does not require consideration by or recommendation from Planning Commission.

This item introduces and holds a public hearing on the Chapter 2 amendment. The proposed ordinance will come back to the Board for final action at the Board's regular meeting scheduled for August 4, 2026. If adopted, the code change would eliminate the automatic referral of all telecommunications facilities CUPs to the Planning Commission.

Discussion:
Historically, discretionary telecommunications applications requiring a CUP, were reviewed by the Board of Zoning Adjustments (BZA). In 2025, the BZA was eliminated from the County Code and the Zoning Administrator (ZA) role was created, which held its first meeting on December 11, 2025. Because the telecommunications ordinance was being updated concurrently, the Board temporarily assigned review authority for telecommunications CUPs to the Planning Commission while the appropriate long-term review body was determined.

The proposed amendment removes the language in Chapter 2 that requires the ZA to automatically refer

telecommunications CUPs to the Planning Commission. As with other CUPs, the ZA will retain the ability to refer potentially controversial permit applications to the Planning Commission. Similarly, a Board member's ability to request original jurisdiction over these and other land use permits would remain unchanged. Routing telecommunications CUPs to the ZA is consistent with the County's broader approach to use permit review. Additionally, utilizing the ZA is consistent with the required streamlining of telecommunications CUPs that are subject to strict federal processing timelines.

General Plan and Zoning Consistency

The proposed amendment addresses administrative permitting procedures that do not conflict with any General Plan policy. The amendment supports the County's ability to effectively process wireless telecommunication facility permits provided for in the Zoning Code.

Environmental Review

The proposed ordinance modifies which body will review telecommunications CUP applications and does not authorize any development projects. This action would have no effect on the type of permit required for such facilities, or the nature or depth of review of such projects. Permit Sonoma has determined that the proposed amendment is not a project under CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3), because it will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable physical environmental impact. The proposed ordinance will not authorize any development projects and any future projects under the ordinance will be required to undergo CEQA review prior to authorization. Alternatively, if adoption of the proposed ordinance constitutes a project, this would be exempt under CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that the proposed ordinance will have no significant effect on the environment.

Staff Recommendation
Hold a public hearing and adopt a Resolution introducing, reading the title of, and waiving further reading of an ordinance titled "An ordinance of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, State of California, amending Sonoma County Code Chapter 2 to direct Use Permits for Wireless Telecommunications Facilities to the Zoning Administrator"; and scheduling the ordinance for final action at the Board's regular meeting of August 4, 2026.

Strategic Plan:
N/A
Racial Equity:

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

Prior Board Actions:
May 19, 2026: the Board adopted Ordinance No. 6567 <https://library.municode.com/ca/sonoma_county/ordinances/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=1426034>, updating the telecommunications ordinance (Chapter 26) (Zoning Ordinance) and took a non-binding straw vote in support of amending Chapter 2 to assign telecommunications use permit review to the Zoning Administrator. (2026-0532 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=8027700&GUID=BFD0000F-D0AA-4288-BEC4-860C242A0D0C&Options=&Search=>)

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:
N/A

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

Attachments:
Attachment 1: Resolution Introducing, Reading the Title of, and Waiving Further Reading of an Ordinance Amending Sonoma County Code Chapter 2
Attachment 2: Ordinance Amending Chapter 2
Attachment 3: Ordinance Amending Chapter 2 Exhibit A
Attachment 4: May 19, 2026 Board Summary Report

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:
N/A