Legislation Text

File #: 2026-0810, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma
Staff Name and Phone Number: Scott Orr, Director (707-565-1925); Doug Bush, Planner (707)565-5276
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

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

Recommended Action:
Staff recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt the Ordinance introduced on July 7, 2026, 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."

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 amendments, 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 defines 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 the Planning Commission.

On July 7, 2026, the Board held a public hearing and adopted a Resolution introducing, reading the title of, and waiving further reading of the proposed Chapter 2 amendment, and waived a second hearing on the matter. This item requests final adoption of the ordinance. 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 Conditional Use Permit (CUP) were reviewed by the Board of Zoning Adjustments (BZA). In 2025, the BZA was eliminated from the Zoning 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, and no facts or circumstances exist to support an exception listed in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2.

Staff Recommendation
Staff recommends the Board adopt the Ordinance introduced on July 7, 2026, 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."

Strategic Plan:
N/A

Racial Equity:

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

Prior Board Actions:
July 7, 2026: the Board held a public hearing and adopted a Resolution introducing, reading the title of, and waiving further reading of the proposed ordinance amending Chapter 2, and waived a second hearing (2026-0642 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=8123228&GUID=1395A3D0-1372-4BB4-8244-1040BD059649&Options=&Search=>).
May 19, 2026, the Board adopted Ordinance No. 6567, 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:
There are no fiscal impacts related to this item.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):
There are no staffing impacts related to this item.

Attachments:
Attachment 1: Ordinance Amending Chapter 2
Attachment 2: Ordinance Amending Chapter 2 Exhibit A
Attachment 3: BOS Resolution July 7, 2026
Attachment 4: July 7, 2026 Board Summary Report
Attachment 5: May 19, 2026 Board Summary Report

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