



PROPOSED CHANGES TO ALLOW INDUSTRIAL HEMP CULTIVATION

PURPOSE

Adopt a resolution recommending changes to Zoning Code (Chapter 26) to limit cultivation of industrial hemp within certain zoning designations and clarify definitions and allowed uses related to industrial hemp cultivation, processing, and manufacturing. Specifically prohibit industrial hemp cultivation in Rural Residential and other residential zoning designations in the county. Restrict industrial hemp production in Agriculture and Residential (AR) zoning designations by creating setbacks from structures on adjacent parcels. Restrict industrial hemp production in Resources and Rural Development (RRD) zoning designations to prohibit tree removal and grading for industrial hemp cultivation without appropriate permits for site preparation work. Clarify Agricultural Production and Agricultural Processing in Sonoma County Code to specify which activities are incidental to crop production and allowed by right, and which processing activities would be allowed through a use permit. These proposed changes include the establishment of a county industrial hemp registration program through Chapter 37 (Industrial Hemp) and provide for the regulation of industrial hemp cultivation practices.

BACKGROUND

Federal, State and local authority recognizes industrial hemp as an agricultural crop and, as such, its cultivation and associated post-harvest handling and processing activities should be allowed in the county wherever agriculture is allowed to occur as specified in Sonoma County Zoning Code. Industrial hemp has unique physical characteristics that are similar to psychoactive cannabis, which raises compatibility issues with residential use priorities in specific zoning designations. These proposed changes recognize and address compatibility issues with residential uses and provide for industrial hemp cultivation in zoning designations where agricultural activity is specifically prioritized or allowed by right.

Included in the proposed zoning code changes is the development of Chapter 37 provisions for regulating industrial hemp cultivation in the county of Sonoma, which include compatibility elements as well as enforcement mechanisms to prevent fraud. Industrial hemp represents a viable economic opportunity for farmers to diversify their crop production and stabilize farm income. We want to insure that this is accessible to Sonoma County farmers while we address any compatibility issues associated with the adoption of this crop in Sonoma County.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES

- Prohibit industrial hemp cultivation in Rural Residential (RR) zoning
- Restrict hemp cultivation in Agriculture and Residential (AR) zoning and Resources and Rural Development (RRD) zoning
- Clarify post-harvest handling practices of industrial hemp that are ancillary agricultural activities
- Clarify allowances for industrial hemp extraction activities in agricultural zones
- Create a county registration process for industrial hemp cultivation
- Regulate cultivation practices for industrial hemp

