

Special Event Permitting Reform

**Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Public Workshop
August 31, 2021**



Project Goals



- Make events in the public right-of-way safer;
- Improve community event calendar so event planners can minimize conflicts;
- Make events more sustainable with waste diversion requirements; and
- Enhance intergovernmental communication and collaboration.

Background: Special Events in Sonoma County

- From 2016-2019, annual event averages were:
 - 55 events in the right-of-way
 - 108 special events on private property through the Fire Marshal
 - 7 athletic events with 2,500 or more participants

Background: Special Events in Sonoma County

- The largest event in 2019, Levi Leipheimer's King Ridge Grand Fondo, had 5,500 competitors and countless spectators and support staff.
- Events also include smaller community events like Penngrove's July Fourth "Biggest Little Parade in Northern California"
- 2017 Ironman race "generated \$2.8 million of total economic impact for Sonoma County businesses and residents"

Background: Current Code

- After adoption in 1985, Chapter 15, Article VI of the county code required permits for groups encroaching on the right-of-way
- Permit Sonoma requires special event permits to protect health and safety
- The last code revisions were in 1993

Making Events in the Public Right-of-Way Safer

- The current Special Events Ordinance has an exemption for bicycling events, no matter the size, that obey the California Vehicle Code (CVC)
- Unpermitted events prevent collaboration with law enforcement and first responders to protect public safety.
- Permitting allows agencies to recover their costs.

Making Events in the Public Right-of-Way Safer

- With Board direction potential ordinance revisions that Permit Sonoma could explore include:
 - Make events in the public right-of-way safer;
 - Improve the community event calendar to minimize conflicts;
 - Require more sustainable events with waste diversion requirements;
 - Make events more sustainable with waste-diversion requirements; and
 - Enhance intergovernmental communication and collaboration.

Improve Community Event Calendar to Minimize Conflicts

- The Special Event Calendar provides a centralized repository for special events
- Permitting a greater percentage of events makes the calendar more effective
- Currently event promoters can apply for a permit one year in advance
- Allowing event promoters to reserve dates up to five years in advance helps plan accordingly

Make Events More Sustainable with Waste-Diversion Requirements

- Permit Sonoma is working with Zero Waste Sonoma, Sonoma County's Waste Management Agency, to implement Zero Waste Event best practices:
 - Implementing waste diversion requirements at events,
 - Requiring large events to hire a Zero Waste greener
 - Creating a Zero Waste events how-to guide,
 - Developing an annual Zero Waste best practices training for event promoters and event contractors.

Make Events More Sustainable with Waste-Diversion Requirements

- Zero Waste Sonoma and Permit Sonoma will be working with municipalities to align regulations.
- Permit Sonoma will work with Zero Waste Sonoma to consider whether to delegate regulatory authority or enshrine changes in the ordinance.

Enhance Intergovernmental Communication and Collaboration

- Permit Sonoma will consider implementing a multi-department and agency standing committee to create best practice standards and apply them to permits.
- Other jurisdictions like San Francisco and Seattle reported that the centralized committee improved communications.
- 100% of permittees survey respondents said that such a committee would either be helpful or very helpful.

Guidance from the Board

- Which bicycle event thresholds for permits should be implemented?
- How long in advance should an applicant be able to reserve dates? Should there be additional requirements to secure multiple years of dates?
- Are there other environmental regulations the Board would like Permit Sonoma to consider?
- Does the Board have guidance on operation or formation of the Intergovernmental Committee?
- Are there additional areas the Board would like Permit Sonoma to consider?

Next Steps

- Community Engagement – Fall 2021
- Identify Accompanying Internal Process Improvements – Fall 2021
- Draft Ordinance – Winter 2022
- Planning Commission – Spring 2022
- Board of Supervisors – Spring 2022

Questions?

