

Special Event Permitting Reform

**Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
September 20, 2022**



Background: Special Events in Sonoma County

- From 2016-2019, annual event averages were:
 - 55 events in the right-of-way
 - 7 athletic events of 2,500 or more participants
- The largest event in 2019, Levi Leipheimer's King Ridge Grand Fondo, had 5,500 competitors, 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 ministerial special event permits to protect health and safety
- The last code revisions were in 1994

Project Goals

- Make events in the public right-of-way safer;
- Improve the community event calendar so event planners can minimize conflicts;
- Decrease burdens on the community, applicants, first responders, and staff;
- Make events more sustainable with waste-diversion requirements; and
- Enhance intergovernmental communication and efficiency.

Making Events in the Public Right-of-Way Safer

- Eliminates the current Special Events Ordinance exemption for bicycling events larger than 250 participants
- Unpermitted events prevent collaboration with law enforcement and first responders to protect public safety.
- Eliminated exemptions for events with more than 100 participants with mass starts of 50 or more riders per five minutes, award a winner, or give time-based prizes

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.
- New District specific special event email lists will help keep the public informed about upcoming special events.

Improve Community Event Calendar to Minimize Conflicts

- Allows event promoters to apply for events to five years in advance helps plan accordingly.
- Events that have substantially similar routes, number of participants, and time of year will be evaluated together, reducing costs.
- Permits may be conditioned to require check in closer to event (30-60 days) to account for hazards like construction.

Make Events More Sustainable with Waste-Diversion Requirements

- Update allows for Permit Sonoma to regulate the sustainability of events.
- Permit Sonoma will work with Zero Waste Sonoma, Sonoma County's Waste Management Agency, to implement Zero Waste Event best practices
- Zero Waste Sonoma and Permit Sonoma will work with municipalities to align regulations.

Enhance Intergovernmental Communication and Collaboration

- Currently, permittees and staff must coordinate separately with multiple jurisdictions, agencies, departments and events often need multiple permits.
- Making the permits discretionary allows for more flexibility to work with partner agencies and promoters to tailor permit conditions to the specific event
- A new permit wizard will assist applicants in ensuring that they get all the permits required in one application and reduce staff work.

Enhance Intergovernmental Communication and Collaboration

- Permit Sonoma will implementing a multi-department and agency committee to provide comments and collaborate on special event 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 be helpful or very helpful.

Questions?

