

Resolution Number #22-XXX

County of Sonoma  
Santa Rosa, California

August 18, 2022  
ORD21-0001 Doug Bush

RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE COUNTY OF SONOMA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, FINDING GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY, DETERMINING THAT THE PROPOSED ORDINANCE IS EXEMPT FROM CEQA, AND RECOMMENDING ADOPTION OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SONOMA COUNTY CODE, CHAPTER 26, TO REVISE DEFINITIONS (SECTION 04-020), THE TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE (SECTION 26-88-010(m),) VALLEY OAK HABITAT COMBINING DISTRICT (ARTICLE 67), RIPARIAN CORRIDOR COMBINING ZONE (ARTICLE 65), AND MAJOR AND MINOR TIMBERLAND CONVERSION PERMITS (SECTIONS 26-88-140,-160)

WHEREAS, the County of Sonoma General Plan 2020 (GP2020) includes an Open Space and Resource Conservation Element which sets forth goals, objectives and policies to increase protections of native trees, woodlands and forests, and the wide range of ecosystem services they provide, including but not limited to facilitation of groundwater recharge and water quality, stream bank stability, air quality, carbon sequestration, localized climate moderation, wildlife habitat, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value; and

WHEREAS, GP2020 directs that the tree protections set forth in the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element be implemented through zoning; and

WHEREAS, the GP2020 EIR recognized that land uses and development consistent with the plan would result in reduction of existing wildlife or fish habitat, contribute to habitat fragmentation, and result in the obstruction of wildlife movement opportunities, and it is now recognized that greater tree protection would help reduce habitat fragmentation and maintain existing wildlife corridors; and

WHEREAS, in the years since the adoption of the Tree Protection Ordinance and later the General Plan, forest and woodland resources and the benefits they provide to the community have been diminished by a variety of factors including: urban and rural development, agricultural conversion, forestry practices, historical fire suppression, and climate related phenomena including drought, fire, pests and pathogens; and

WHEREAS, forests ecologists recognize that replacing mature trees with 1,3, or 10 one-year-old seedlings does not adequately replace the lost habitat value of large trees, and it has become evident that focusing on mitigation plantings based on a tree to seedling ratio is not a sufficient strategy to ensure the viability of many native species; and

WHEREAS, forests and woodlands absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in different repositories which include trees (both living and dead), root systems, undergrowth, the forest floor and soils and live trees have the highest carbon density, followed by soils and the forest floor, and existing mature trees help sequester carbon at greater volumes than young

trees or sapling planted as mitigation for large tree removal; and

WHEREAS, approximately 23% of Sonoma County's land area has been affected by wildfire since 2017, and though the ecosystems are home to many fire adapted species, the intensity of recent fires has, in some cases decimated local forests and woodlands, and climate change, in addition to post-fire salvage logging and development both challenge the ability of trees, woodlands and related ecosystems to recover; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that it is necessary and appropriate to update Chapter 26 to fully implement natural resource conservation policies of the General Plan 2020; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the provisions of law, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on August 18, 2022, at which time the Planning Commission heard and received all relevant testimony and evidence presented orally or in writing regarding the proposed Ordinance amendments. All interested persons were given an opportunity to be heard; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has had an opportunity to review this Resolution and finds that it accurately sets forth the intentions of the Planning Commission regarding the proposed Ordinance amendments.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Planning Commission makes the following findings:

1. The proposed ordinance amending Chapter 26 (Zoning) is consistent with the County's General Plan in that it incorporates into the Zoning Code and furthers the General Plan's goals, objectives, and policies which provide for the protection of native trees, including the establishment of standards and programs to protect native trees, maintaining connectivity between natural habitat areas, minimizing the removal of trees to reduce impacts to scenic resources and developing regulatory protections to protect and enhance oak woodlands;.
2. Adoption of the proposed Ordinance is a project categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15307 (actions by regulatory agencies for protection of natural resources) and 15308 (actions by regulatory agencies for protection of environment). These exemptions cover actions taken to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of natural resources or the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for the protection of the environment. The proposed Ordinance makes changes to clarify and strengthen existing requirements, standards and definitions in Sonoma County Code Chapter 26, and does not involve construction or any other activity that could degrade or physically change the environment. The proposed Ordinance is also exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed Ordinance will have an adverse effect on the environment. The proposed Ordinance makes changes to strengthen standards in Chapter 26 for the protection of the environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission finds that adoption of the proposed ordinance is exempt from CEQA, for the reasons articulated in paragraph 2 above.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission recommends that the Board of

Supervisors adopt the Ordinance amending Chapter 26 of the Sonoma County Code Code attached as Exhibit A.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission designates the Secretary of the Planning Commission as the custodian of the documents and other material which constitute the record of proceedings upon which the Commission’s decision herein is based. These documents may be found at the office of the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department, 2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403.

THE FOREGOING RESOLUTION was introduced by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_ who moved its adoption, seconded by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, and adopted on roll call by the following vote:

Commissioner	Aye/No
Commissioner	
Commissioner	
Commissioner	
Commissioner	
Commissioner	

Ayes: X    Noes: X    Absent: 0    Abstain: 0

WHEREUPON, the Chair declared the above and foregoing Resolution duly adopted; and

SO ORDERED.