

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JOHN CREGAN, POLICE CHIEF
POLICE DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: INTRODUCTION OF AN ORDINANCE TO THE SANTA ROSA
CITY CODE ADDING CHAPTER 10-26 SIDESHOWS

AGENDA ACTION: ORDINANCE INTRODUCTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Police Department that the Council introduce an ordinance to the Santa Rosa City Code adding Chapter 10-26 Sideshows for citing Participants, Spectators and Organizers of Sideshow events in Santa Rosa.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Santa Rosa Police Department (SRPD) wishes to propose a new City ordinance for illegal sideshows that includes the ability to cite spectators, participants, and organizers. This new ordinance will address the City Council goal to “ensure a healthy and safe community for all - ensure the public's safety by engaging residents and using a broad range of proactive approaches.” Sideshows present a significant public safety concern for residents and visitors of Santa Rosa and have substantially increased in number and size over the last several years.

BACKGROUND

Over the last few years, Santa Rosa has experienced an increase in reckless driving exhibitions on City streets. These contests, known as “sideshows” (involving activities such as drifting, burnouts, and donuts) are held throughout the city, several times per month, usually in the late night or early morning hours. Hundreds of illegal street racers and spectators converge on various public streets and off-street parking lots in both commercial and residential neighborhoods. These juveniles and adult participants block the streets with their cars, set up exhibition areas for reckless driving and spectators will act as human guard rails. When patrol cars descend on an illegal sideshow site, spectators jump back into their cars and caravan to other locations, where a new sideshow is started until the police locate and move them along. The sideshow participants, traveling at high speeds from location to location, cause traffic congestion and dangerous conditions for other drivers. The high speeds and reckless driving that

SIDE SHOW ORDINANCE

PAGE 2 OF 4

characterize sideshows endanger participants, members of the public, and police officers.

In recent months, sideshows have become significantly worse and present much like riotous behavior. With organized sideshows growing to hundreds of cars and becoming more violent, it frequently requires massive police responses that have pulled in officers from all over the city and county. These events have caused an increase in overtime for upstaffing police officers in anticipation of a sideshow event. They have been increasingly violent toward the responding officers as bottles, rocks and other dangerous items are thrown at them and their patrol cars. Fire trucks and ambulances have also been surrounded and damaged when trying to administer medical aid to persons involved in or around the sideshow events.

Sideshows effect all areas of Santa Rosa. Some of the primary locations for sideshow activities have included:

- Sebastopol Road and West Avenue
- Hoen, Yulupa and Summerfield Avenues
- Corporate Center Parkway near Sebastopol Road
- Wilson and 7th Street
- Dutton Avenue at W. 9th Street
- Hwy 12 and Fulton Road

ANALYSIS

Sideshow participants and organizers evolve and change tactics for “successful” sideshows, and in doing so, law enforcement has also had to change and evolve tactics in preventing the event from taking place. SRPD has incorporated multiple strategies to prevent sideshows from taking place or taking enforcement action when they assemble anywhere in Sonoma County. Strategies have included;

- SRPD has towed over 70 vehicles over the past 18 months during sideshow traffic stops and from court ordered tows associated with sideshow activity
- Incident Management Team (IMT) is utilized to detect upcoming events for resource planning - frequently requiring overtime
- Upstaffing when information points to an anticipated sideshow event in the area - costs of over 35k so far this year in overtime operations
- Training officers in specialized enforcement codes
- Use of advanced technology such as drones to monitor activity and identify vehicles
- Collaboration with Sonoma County law enforcement partners
- Focus on Enforcement/Education/Engineering
- California Assembly Bill 3 is upcoming legislation which would suspend licenses of drivers participating in a sideshow but will not take effect until 2025

SIDE SHOW ORDINANCE

PAGE 3 OF 4

- SRPD has developed well organized techniques and tactics to resolve sideshow incidents with maximum safety and efficiency, and to create universal procedures that enable consistent responses to sideshows with a county-wide protocol.

The massive, coordinated sideshow events happening in the past few years are not spontaneous; they are organized, planned, and promoted on social media. Given the scale of these illegal events, focusing on deterring the promotion of these events by extending penalties to those who incite such illegal activity will be an effective strategy. To effectively dissuade those who promote and encourage these illegal events, SRPD has worked with the City Attorney's Office to develop a Sideshow Ordinance that will provide criminal and civil sanctions for event organizers, spectators and participants. At the District Attorney's or City Attorneys discretion, a misdemeanor charge may be dropped down to an infraction and any jail time or fines may amount to community service.

It is the conclusion of the Santa Rosa Police Department that with the adoption of a city sideshow ordinance, police officers will have the ability to cite sideshow spectators, participants and organizers, providing an additional tool for law enforcement to respond to and dissuade this illegal behavior. It is clear that additional tools and resources are needed to adequately respond to the escalation of sideshow events happening on city streets and in neighborhoods in Santa Rosa.

After adoption of the sideshow ordinance, SRPD will continue to employ strategies to discourage sideshow activity in Santa Rosa, along with this additional tool to deter sideshow behavior.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for overtime resources are allocated in the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year adopted budget.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Council finds that the proposed action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under section 15061(b)(3) and 15378 in that there is no possibility that the implementation of this action may have significant effects on the environment, and that no further environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Public Safety Subcommittee on August 17, 2022; recommend new ordinance

ATTACHMENTS

- Ordinance

SIDE SHOW ORDINANCE
PAGE 4 OF 4

CONTACT

Lieutenant Jeneane Kucker at jrkucker@srcity.org, 707-543-3573