

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: SCOTT ALONSO, GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS OFFICER
COMMUNICATIONS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
OFFICE
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION TO SONOMA COUNTY MEASURE J

AGENDA ACTION: MOTION TO OPPOSE

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Communications and Intergovernmental Relations Office that the Council, by motion, oppose Measure J on the Sonoma County ballot for the November 5, 2024 general election. If the Council adopts a formal position on Measure J, staff will send an advocacy letter to the proponents and opponents of the measure expressing the Council's official position on the measure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A county-wide initiative entitled "Prohibition on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations" was placed on the November 5, 2024 general election ballot via the initiative process. The ballot initiative is also known as Measure J. The proposed ordinance before the electorate would require a simple majority to enact Measure J into law. The measure if enacted would phase out the operation of certain existing Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and prohibit any future CAFO from being approved. The measure would apply to the unincorporated areas of Sonoma County outside of the coastal zone.

BACKGROUND

In 2023, organizers supporting the now Measure J started to collect signatures from registered voters in Sonoma County to place this initiative on the ballot. In April 2024, the Sonoma County Registrar of Voters certified the initiative after the necessary number of signatures were verified.

On May 14, 2024, the County Board of Supervisors adopted an official opposition position while also placing the measure on the November 2024 ballot.

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At the state level, in 2022 legislation, AB 2764, was introduced by Assemblymembers Alex Lee and Adrin Nazarian to enact a statewide moratorium on CAFOs. The legislation never received a hearing and was not enacted into law.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

Not applicable.

ANALYSIS

If adopted by the voters, Measure J would phase out all CAFOs in the unincorporated part of the County and prohibit the establishment of future CAFOs. According to the Sonoma County Counsel's Title and Summary of Measure J, CAFOs are defined under the measure in accordance with federal Environmental Protection Agency regulations as follows:

The animals covered would be cattle or cow/calf pairs, mature dairy cattle, veal calves, swine, horses, sheep or lambs, turkeys, chickens, laying hens or broilers, and ducks. CAFOs would be categorized as large, medium, or small, depending on the number and type of confined animals and other factors such as waste disposal systems. A small CAFO is one that is smaller than a medium CAFO and designated by the permitting agency as a significant contributor of pollutants. The proposed ordinance would consider animals confined if stabled or confined and fed or maintained for a total of 45 days or more in any 12-month period, and when crops, vegetation, forage growth, or post-harvest residues are not sustained in the normal growing season over any portion of the lot or facility. Two or more operations could together be considered a CAFO if certain criteria are met.

If Measure J passes in November, existing CAFOs would have three years to cease operations. The proponents formed a campaign committee to support the Measure known as "Coalition to End Factory Farming, Yes on Measure J, sponsored by animal rights and environmental justice organizations." The Sonoma County Farm Bureau is one of the main opponents of Measure J.

If Measure J were enacted into law, there would be daily penalties for any farm out of compliance with the new county code. The penalties would be as follows: \$1,000 for the first day, \$5,000 for the second day, and \$10,000 for the third day. The Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner would be charged with overseeing compliance with Measure J.

In May 2024, the County received analysis from multiple county agencies to report on the impacts of Measure J. According to analysis conducted by the County Economic Development Board, Measure J would result in \$259 million loss in agricultural products in the County and \$38 million in the reduction of spending. While there are no CAFOs

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within the City of Santa Rosa City limits and the measure does not regulate CFOs in incorporated parts of the County, the broader economic impacts to the City could be significant if the measure passes. The County's May 2024 analysis notes up to 60 farms and businesses County-wide would be negatively impacted by Measure J.

The County Economic Development Board noted the supply chain for the local agricultural sector would be harmed. This economic analysis noted that 80 local businesses -- including businesses in Santa Rosa -- as part of the supply chain would be impacted in a negative manner if Measure J is enacted.

Due to the importance of the agricultural sector for the county and for our city, staff recommends the Council formally oppose Measure J to support the County's agricultural operations and support businesses.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is potential for lost tax revenue in the City of Santa Rosa due to the job and revenue loss the region will experience if Measure J passes.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines 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 no further environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Ballot Title and Summary, Measure J, Sonoma County
- Attachment 2 – Text of Measure J, Sonoma County

PRESENTER

Scott Alonso, Government Affairs Officer