

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: GABE OSBURN, DIRECTOR
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF THE REVISED PUBLIC STORM DRAIN
STANDARDS AND DELEGATION OF APPROVAL AUTHORITY
FOR FUTURE REVISIONS TO THE BOARD OF PUBLIC
UTILITIES

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Economic Development and Water Departments recommend that the Council, by resolution, adopt the revised Public Storm Drain Standards, with an effective date 30 days from the date of adoption, and delegate authority to the Board of Public Utilities to adopt future revisions to the standards. This item has no impact on current fiscal year budget.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Storm Drain Standards (Standards) set forth the design policies and construction methods associated with additions and modifications to the public storm drain infrastructure for both private development and capital improvement projects. The standards, details, and specifications require routine revisions to ensure that new installations and modifications are consistent with various regulations, references, industry best practices, industry needs, and operational needs to serve the community's urban environment. The delegation of approval authority is consistent with the general policy and management authority over the public storm drain infrastructure granted to the Board under Section 25 of the Charter of the City of Santa Rosa (City) and City Council Resolution RES-2017-177, which delegated approval authority of the Potable Water, Recycled Water, and Sewer Design Standards, Construction Standards, and Construction Specifications to the Board of Public Utilities (BPU).

GOAL

This item relates to Council Goal #2 - Invest in the Development and Maintenance of the City's Infrastructure. This item ensures new installations and modifications of City

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infrastructure is consistent with various regulations, references, industry best practices, industry needs, and operational needs to serve the community's urban environment.

BACKGROUND/PRIOR COUNCIL REVIEW

The City's current Standards were last adopted in April 2005 by resolution 26247. The Standards govern design and construction of over 350 miles and counting of publicly owned and maintained storm drain pipes. The proposed revisions bring the Standards current with various regulations, references, industry standard practices, industry needs, operational needs, and to adequately serve the community's modern urban environment.

The proposed revisions have been routed for public comment, including to the American Council of Engineering Companies – North Coast Chapter (ACEC), the Northern California Engineering Contractors Association (ECA), and the American Society of Civil Engineers – Redwood Empire Branch (ASCE). Sonoma Water and Marin/Sonoma Mosquito & Vector Control District were also included in the public comment process. City staff routed responses to the commenting parties. The comments were either incorporated where City staff agreed or responses were provided where staff did not incorporate the comments.

Pursuant to Santa Rosa City Code §18-04.070, the City Council may, by resolution, adopt City standard plans and specifications.

The amendment to Section 25 of the City's charter delegating authority of the City's stormwater systems from City Council to the Board of Public Utilities was ratified by the voters of Santa Rosa on November 8, 2022. The amendment was accepted and filed by the California Secretary of State on July 25, 2023, becoming effective on the same date. Delegating authority to adopt future revisions to the Standards from the City Council to the BPU aligns with City Council resolution RES-2017-177, which delegated the same authorities to the Board of Public Utilities for potable water, recycled water, and sanitary sewer.

ANALYSIS

The Planning and Economic Development (PED) Department regularly meets with ECA and ACEC to discuss challenges meeting existing standards. They have requested changes to the standards, including clarifications to specific requirements and additional standard details.

The PED and Water Departments have recognized the need to revise the standards due to outdated guidelines, changes in regulation, operation and maintenance needs, changes in materials and products, improve transparency, and update design policies.

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The proposed revisions to the standards were developed through a collaborative approach involving input and participation from City staff in the PED, Water, and Transportation and Public Works Departments; ACEC; ECA; ASCE; Sonoma Water; and Marin/Sonoma Mosquito & Vector Control District.

To support more timely processing of future revisions, it is recommended that the authority to approve future revisions of the Standards be delegated to the BPU, consistent with authorities granted under Section 25 of the City's charter and City Council resolution RES-2017-177, which delegated the same authorities to the BPU for potable water, recycled water, and sanitary sewer.

It is also recommended the revised Standards become effective 30 days from the date of adoption by the City Council and only apply to new public improvement plans and encroachment permits submitted on or after the effective date. Creating a delay in the effective date and applying the revised Standards to newly submitted applications avoids any redesign requirements for existing projects currently in review with the City.

FISCAL IMPACT

Adopting the revised Standards will affect existing design policies, construction practices, and allowed construction materials. Although the standards are typically designed to reduce long-term maintenance costs associated with the storm drain infrastructure, the additional requirements may increase the design and construction costs associated with capital improvement projects. Additional costs will be determined through the scoping and design phases of capital projects and will be addressed through future budgetary discussions.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed action is not considered a "project" under CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(4), as it involves the establishment and revision of government regulations and administrative policies that do not involve any commitment to specific physical projects or improvements that could result in a significant environmental impact.

Additionally, the action qualifies for the common sense exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), as it can be seen with certainty that the adoption of storm drain design standards, in itself, will not have any direct or indirect physical effect on the environment. Any actual construction or improvements undertaken in the future pursuant to these standards would be subject to separate discretionary approvals and, if applicable, environmental review.

Accordingly, no further environmental review is required.

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BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On June 5, 2025, the BPU recommended, by motion, the City Council adopt, by resolution, the revised Public Storm Drain Standards as presented with an effective date 30 days from the date of adoption and delegate authority to the Board of Public Utilities to adopt future revisions to the standards.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Color Coded – Proposed Public Storm Drain Standards and Details
- Attachment 2 – Full Redlined – Proposed Public Storm Drain Standards
- Attachment 3 – Simplified – Proposed Public Storm Drain Standards
- Attachment 4 – Redlined Details Only – Proposed Public Storm Drain Standards
- Resolution
- Exhibit A - Proposed Public Storm Drain Standards and Details

PRESENTER(S)

Gabe Osburn, Director, Planning and Economic Development
Flannery Banks, P.E., Supervising Engineer, Engineering Development Services
Cleve Gurney, P.E., Deputy Director, Engineering Development Services