

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: PAUL LOWENTHAL, DIVISION CHIEF FIRE MARSHAL  
SUBJECT: INCREASE IN FIRE PERMIT ADMINISTRATION AND CERTIFIED  
UNIFIED PROGRAM AGENCY (CUPA) FEES

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Fire Department that the Council hold a Public Hearing to receive comments and recommendations relating to updating Fire Department fees and, by resolution: 1) approve a 5% increase in Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) permit fees; and 2) approve an increase of micrographic and technology fees by 1.5%, for a total of 4% of fire permit fees, all increases to be effective July 22, 2025.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite significant changes in program demands and operational requirements, permit fees have not been adjusted in nearly twenty years. Over the past two decades, advancements in technology have improved service delivery but also introduced higher costs for software, equipment, and system maintenance. Additionally, the complexity and volume of permits associated with the CUPA program have increased, requiring more staff time and specialized expertise. A fee adjustment is necessary to maintain a sustainable, efficient, and responsive permitting program that meets current industry standards.

Council will hold a public hearing to receive public comment and recommendations prior to the City Council acting on the request to increase fire permit administration and Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) fees.

BACKGROUND

The Fire Department administers several programs including operational fire, Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) and fire construction permits. These programs are funded with permit, inspection and other fees established by Council resolution. The micrographics and technology fees were established in July 2006, by Resolution No. 26584, at 2.5% of the permit fees to help cover the costs of the administrative portion of the permit programs. The administrative functions and technological requirements have

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increased significantly since 2006. This includes permit processing, billing, scanning, filing and administration of software programs to process the permits.

Fire construction permit fees include permitted operations specified in the California Fire Code (CFC) and include fire sprinkler and alarm system installations and other similar fire related permits. Construction permits are required for all new installations or when modifications to existing systems takes place. The fees associated with construction permits cover the costs of plan review services and a set amount of field inspections. Annual operational permits are issued to business that conduct one of the listed operations found in Chapter 1 of the CFC. Common examples of such permits include, compressed gases, flammable spray booth, public assembly and an annual permit is applied to ongoing Fire Code regulated operations such as the operation of a flammable spray booth, public assembly use and other hazardous operations.

The Fire Departments's CUPA program is the local agency certified by CalEPA to implement and enforce six state hazardous waste and hazardous materials regulatory management programs. Examples of facilities regulated by the CUPA are fuel dispensing stations containing an underground storage tank that contains hazardous substances (gas stations), automotive repair facilities, manufacturing facilities, etc. The program is fully funded by program fees and the State requires an annual fee accountability report to ensure program fees are utilized specifically for administration of the program.

#### PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On June 15, 2006, the City Council by Resolution No. 26584, approved a new micrographics fee to be added to the Fire Fee Schedule in the amount of 2.5%. The last fee increase approved by Council for CUPA permit fees was in 2005, with the exception of the Above Ground Petroleum Storage Tank Act (APSA) fees, which were approved as a new inspection fee in 2011.

#### ANALYSIS

Since 2006, program administrative and operational costs have increased, and although the consumer price index (CPI) adjustment has been applied, the micrographics and technology fees have remained stagnant.

The Fire Department evaluated the current fee structure and identified proposed adjustments to the Council adopted fee schedule to provide fee recovery for increased program costs and continue the administration of effective fire and environmental safety programs.

The Fire Department is requesting an adjustment to the CUPA annual permit fees, attached as Exhibit A to the Resolution, by 5% of the current fee.

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Additionally, the Fire Department is requesting an adjustment to the micrographics and technology fees by increasing the current fees by 1.5% for a total of 4% of the permit fees.

The proposed fee increases account for the increased costs of providing the administrative services over the past twenty years. The fee adjustment represents a responsible approach to modernizing the department while upholding its mission to protect life, property, and the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed fee increases will not have a financial impact to the City. The increase will simply aid our department in covering the cost to administer these programs.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Council finds that Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, the proposed action is not a “project” subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it does not have a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. In the alternative, the proposed action is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the project may have a significant effect on the environment.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Notice of Public Hearing was published on July 12, 2025.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 - Proposed Fee Schedule
- Resolution / Exhibit A –Fee Schedule effective July 22, 2025

PRESENTER

Kemplen Robbins, Interim Division Chief Fire Marshal