

ORDINANCE NO. 6537

AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SONOMA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, ADDING ARTICLE X TO CHAPTER 4 OF THE SONOMA COUNTY CODE ESTABLISHING A CANNABIS BUSINESS LICENSE

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, State of California, ordains as follows:

Section I. Purpose and Authority. The propose of this Ordinance is to establish a business license requirement for cannabis business throughout the unincorporated County (excluding the Coastal Zone) that enables the County track active cannabis businesses to help ensure they operate in a manner that maintains the public health, safety, and welfare of each community and the county as a whole. This Ordinance is adopted pursuant to California Business and Professions Code § 16100 and California Government Code § 25131.

Section II. Findings.

- A. While a land use ordinance and permit requirements are appropriate for determining suitable locations for cannabis operations, an annual business license is necessary and desirable to track compliance of active cannabis businesses on an ongoing basis, particularly where no land use permit is required.
- B. The annual cannabis license will aid in tracking the locations and responsible parties of active cannabis businesses, enabling annual inspections, ensuring compliance with the County's cannabis business tax ordinance, and verifying cannabis businesses possess the appropriate state licensing, in addition to educating on and verifying compliance with other local requirements.
- C. Prior to adoption of the Cannabis Program Update, County Code required cannabis operators to notify the County in event of an operator change and this requirement was further imposed as permit terms for ministerial permits and conditions of approval for use permits. When such permits expire or are terminated and the use continues by-right without planning approval, or when an existing permit is amended or extended under the new land use ordinance, these notification requirements will no longer be imposed and the cannabis license will become necessary to track operations and compliance.

Section III. Cannabis Business License Ordinance. Article X is added to Chapter 4 of the Sonoma County Code as set forth in Exhibit 4-A, attached and incorporated by reference.

Section IV. Existing Cannabis Operations.

- A. An existing cannabis operation must obtain a cannabis business license upon expiration, renewal, major modification, or termination of its existing cannabis

land use permit. A major modification includes one that requires a new land use permit application under Chapter 26 and any modification that removes term limits, operator notification, compliance with the business tax ordinance, or the requirements for an active state license.

- B. An existing cannabis operation is a cannabis operation with a valid approved land use permit issued by the County as of the effective date of this Ordinance.
- C. All other cannabis operations, including those with pending land use applications on the effective date of this Ordinance, must obtain a cannabis business license prior to operation.

Section V. Environmental Determination. This Ordinance was environmentally reviewed as part of the Comprehensive Cannabis Program Update Environmental Impact Report. By separate Resolution (No. 25-), incorporated herein by reference, the Board of Supervisors certified that the Final Environmental Impact Report prepared for the Comprehensive Cannabis Program Update project: (a) reflects the Board's independent judgment and analysis, (b) was presented to and reviewed and considered by the Board of Supervisors, and (c) was completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §21000 et seq.) (CEQA), the CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., Title 14, §15000 et seq.) and the County's local CEQA Guidelines. By the same resolution, the Board of Supervisors further adopted findings of fact and a statement of overriding considerations for the project. The mitigation measures identified in the Environmental Impact Report were incorporated into the zoning ordinance and the mitigation monitoring and reporting program for the project were adopted by Ordinance No. 25_, incorporated herein by reference.

Section VI. Severability. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portion of this Ordinance. The Board of Supervisors hereby declares that it would have passed this Ordinance and every section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase thereof irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses or phrases be declared unconstitutional or invalid.

Section VII. Effective Date. This Ordinance shall be and the same is hereby declared to be in full force and effect on July 1, 2026, and shall be published once before the expiration of fifteen (15) days after said passage, with the names of the Supervisors voting for or against the same, in *The Press Democrat*, a newspaper of general circulation published in the County of Sonoma, State of California.

In regular session of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, introduced on the 28 day, of October, 2025, and finally passed and adopted this 9 day of December, 2025, on regular roll call of the members of said Board by the following vote:

SUPERVISORS:

Hermosillo: Aye Rabbitt: No Coursey: Aye Gore: Aye Hopkins: Aye

Ayes: 4

Noes: 1

Absent: 0

Abstain: 0

WHEREUPON, the Chair declared the above and foregoing Ordinance duly adopted and

SO ORDERED

Chair, Board of Supervisors
County of Sonoma

ATTEST:

M. Christina Rivera,
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Chapter 4, Article X, Cannabis License is added as follows:

Chapter 4. Article X – Cannabis Licenses

Sec. 4-300. – Title

This article is known as the cannabis license ordinance.

Sec. 4-301. – Purpose

The purpose of this article is to establish a cannabis license program for cannabis uses in unincorporated Sonoma County to ensure the uses operate in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, to protect the regulated industry from competing illicit market operations, and to maintain the public health, safety, and welfare of each community and county as a whole.

Sec. 4-302. – Administration

- A. Administrative authority. This section will be administered under the direction of the board of supervisors, by and through the County Administrator’s Office (“department”) subject to the standards and criteria contained in this section. The department is authorized to develop application forms and procedures and require all information necessary to verify compliance with this article.**
- B. Enforcement. The director of Permit Sonoma, in conjunction with the department, is the enforcing officer for purposes of enforcing this article under Chapter 1.**
- C. Review. Except as provided in Section 4-304, all decisions made by the department under this article are final, subject only to judicial review.**
- D. Other Laws and Permits. Nothing in this section eliminates the need for a licensee to comply with local, state, or federal law, or to obtain other permits, approvals, or authorizations required by this code or state or federal agencies.**

Sec. 4-303 – License requirements.

- A. License Required. A cannabis use regulated under Chapter 26 must be licensed under this article. Personal cultivation exempt from the land use permit requirement under Chapter 26 is also exempt from this cannabis license requirement.**
- B. Compliance Generally.**
 - a. State cannabis license. A licensee must hold an active state license as required by the California Department of Cannabis Control.**
 - b. County zoning authorization. A cannabis use licensed under this article must be operated and maintained in compliance with Chapter 26, including obtaining a zoning permit or use permit as required.**
 - c. Ongoing violations. To obtain, renew, or maintain a license, the site cannot have any unresolved violations related to the cannabis operation issued by Sonoma County.**
- C. Property Owner Authorization. Authorization from the property owner or landlord must be provided.**
- D. Consent to Inspections. A licensee must consent to inspections that may be conducted at any time during normal business hours, with or without prior notice.**
- E. Tax Compliance. A licensee must comply with Sonoma County Cannabis Business Tax Ordinance, Sonoma County Code Chapter 35.**

- F. Term and renewal. A license expires one year from the date of issuance and must be renewed annually.

Sec. 4-304 – License suspension or revocation.

- A. Suspension or Revocation. The department may suspend or revoke a license in the event of 1 or more of the following:
1. License issuance was based on inaccurate or incomplete information.
 2. Licensee has operated in non-conformance with this article or license.
 3. Licensee has failed to pay permitting or licensing fees or civil penalties associated with the cannabis use.
- B. Notice of Suspension or Revocation. To suspend or revoke a license, the department must issue a written notice to the licensee. The notice must include:
1. The address of the cannabis operation;
 2. License number;
 3. License holder; and
 4. Reason for suspension or revocation.
- C. Service of Notice. A notice of suspension or revocation must be sent via email and certified mail to the licensee address on file with the local authority.
- D. Appeals.
1. Right of Appeal. A notice of suspension or revocation may be appealed by the licensee to department.
 2. Form and Timing. An appeal must be made in writing and submitted to the department within 10 calendar days from the date of the notice.
 3. Failure to Appeal. Failure to file a timely appeal makes the suspension or revocation final and constitutes a waiver of the right to an appeal hearing and adjudication of the suspension or revocation.
 4. Appeal Hearing. An appeal hearing must be noticed, conducted, and decided in accordance with the rules and timelines established by Section 1-7.3 of the Sonoma County Code and any administrative procedures established by the department.
 5. Consolidation. The department may consolidate an appeal hearing for a notice of suspension or revocation with an appeal hearing for a related administrative enforcement action under Chapter 1, in which case the appeal provisions of the relevant enforcement section apply.
- E. Effect of Suspension or Revocation.
1. License Suspension. If a license is suspended, the corresponding cannabis operation cannot operate until the suspension expires. If the license expires during the suspension a license application will not be accepted for the cannabis operation until the suspension expires. An application for a new licensee will be accepted.
 2. License Revocation. If a license is revoked, a new license cannot be issued for the same land use within the same premises for 1 year from the date of revocation. "Premises" has the same meaning as the term "cannabis premises" as defined in Chapter 26.

Sec. 4-305 – Fees.

The board of supervisors will establish a schedule of fees for services provided under this section. Services subject to fees may include, but are not limited to, licensing, license renewal, monitoring, annual inspections, and enforcement. Fees may be changed from time to time by a resolution of the board of supervisors.