



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Parks, Open Spaces, and Cultural Services

Subject: Approve in Concept an Ordinance Amending Chapter 4.65.060 of Santa Cruz County Code

Meeting Date: May 20, 2025

Formal Title: Consider approving in concept an “Ordinance Amending Section 4.65.060(A)(3) of the Santa Cruz County Code Relating to the Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, And Wildlife Protection Act”, and take related actions

Recommended Actions

1. Accept and file the status report on the Measure Q implementation update; and
2. Approve the Bylaws of the Measure Q Citizens Oversight Advisory Board (Bylaws); and
3. Approve in concept an “Ordinance Amending Section 4.65.060(A)(3) of the Santa Cruz County Code Relating to the Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, And Wildlife Protection Act” (Ordinance) related to the publication date of Vision Plan, as set forth in attachment, incorporated herein by reference; and
4. Schedule the Ordinance for a second reading and final adoption on June 10, 2025; and
5. Direct the Clerk of the Board to publish the Notice of Proposed Ordinance Summary in a newspaper of general circulation, pursuant to Government Code Section 25124; and
6. Direct staff to return on or before November 18, 2025 with an update.

Executive Summary

In November 2024, Santa Cruz County voters approved the Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction and Wildlife Protection Act—commonly referred to as Measure Q. In December 2024, Measure Q was codified in the Santa Cruz County Code and the Ordinance outlines key implementation milestones, including the approval and publication of a Five-Year Vision Plan by July 1, 2025. Since the Board received its last update on January 28, 2025, the Department of Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Services (Parks) and Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience (OR3) have secured consultant support, held the first two Citizen Oversight Advisory Board (COAB) meetings and developed a Vision Plan development schedule. To ensure a robust and inclusive outreach and engagement process, staff recommends amending the ordinance to extend the deadline of Vision Plan adoption to October 15, 2025. This additional time will allow for a more comprehensive stakeholder and community engagement effort and ensure that the Vision Plan reflects diverse and broad input as it will guide grant and funding allocation expenditures for the next five years. The proposed date shift has the support of the COAB.

Discussion

COAB Development & Actions

Following voter approval of Measure Q, implementation efforts began promptly and focused on several key areas. The first was the establishment of the Citizens Oversight Advisory Board (COAB) specified in the Measure Q language. The Board and cities have selected and appointed the nine members of the COAB. The Board appointed eight members on the March 25, 2025 Agenda with the last member appointed on April 29, 2025.

The COAB first met on April 16, 2025. The COAB has established and approved a Regular Meeting schedule with additional frequency over the next six months in support of the Vision Plan development. The COAB meeting schedule is now publicly posted on the County's Measure Q website (<https://www.santacruzcountyca.gov/MeasureQ>). The COAB also selected Land Trust of Santa Cruz County as the Land Stewardship Implementation partner on April 16, 2025. County Code requires that all County commissions and committees such as the COAB adopt bylaws outlining the procedures for conducting official business and submit them to the Board of Supervisors for final approval. The COAB formally adopted bylaws on April 30, 2025 and Parks and OR3 are included for approval.

Vision Plan Consultant Selection

Parks and OR3 are focused on the creation of the Five-Year Vision Plan. This includes developing a strong outreach and engagement plan to ensure voices from the public, community partners, agencies and organizations working in complimentary Measure Q spaces can share their vision for the expenditure of the funds raised to meet the objectives of the Measure. To balance with the existing work in Parks and OR3, procurement of consulting services was identified as a means to support the timeline for Vision Plan adoption. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued for consultant services to develop the Vision Plan in late January 2025 with a deadline to publish the Vision Plan by the deadline included in the Measure Q language of July 1, 2025. No responses were received for the RFP, and County staff received feedback from prospective consultants that the July 1 deadline was challenging to achieve without compromising process and engagement. Staff extended the Vision Plan adoption completion date in an RFP addendum and then received one proposal. The County has since entered into a contract with PlaceWorks, a firm with extensive experience in public engagement and long-range planning in Santa Cruz County and the region. Placeworks most recently provided support for the North Coast Facilities Management Plan on behalf of the Parks Department.

Vision Plan Development Status Update

The Vision Plan development process is actively moving forward. Parks and OR3 in collaboration with Placeworks have completed and made progress in the following areas:

- Developed an accelerated project timeline with stakeholder engagement, community engagement, and draft plan development, COAB review, and final plan review and approval.
- Stakeholder identification, outreach and survey development and distribution

kickoff.

- Performed an initial, Artificial Intelligence (AI) supported, literature review of 19 existing local and regional plans relevant to the Measure Q funding priorities and that will form the basis for the Vision Plan. This analysis is available on the Measure Q website at <https://www.santacruzcountyca.gov/MeasureQ/Library>.
- Stakeholder kick-off meeting was held on May 9, 2025 with robust participation.
- Targeted stakeholder meetings will be held late May and June with two sessions of thematically-grouped meetings with stakeholders self-selecting their area in the following groups:
 - Water Resource Management
 - Parks, Recreation and Public Access and Equity
 - Wildfire Risk Reduction and Forest Health
 - Agricultural and Working Lands Protection
 - Wildlife and Habitat Protection
 - Coastal Protection and Adaptation
- Public engagement opportunities including a survey and community meetings to gather input from a broad cross-section of County residents will be in June with three in-person and one virtual meeting.

To build broad support and a shared 5-year vision, the stakeholder and community engagement will be inclusive and meaningful. Close coordination with the COAB, cities, and Measure Q partners (Resource Conservation District and Land Trust of Santa Cruz County) during Vision Plan development is also important as it is required by the Measure.

With the Vision Plan development workplan in place, accelerated schedule refinement, and outreach and engagement plans in motion, there is a strong plan and schedule in place to ensure the Vision Plan is supported by the public, partner agencies, non-profits, and stakeholder groups. This will help ensure that the Vision Plan's defined priority geographies and project types are supported by prospective grantees, thereby leading to the overall success of the measure.

It is recommended that to achieve these goals the current July 1 deadline for Vision Plan publication noted in the Measure Q language be amended. Staff presented this issue to the COAB on April 30, 2025, and the COAB supported staff's recommendation to request that the Board extend the Vision Plan approval deadline to no later than October 15, 2025. This expanded timeline will allow Parks, OR3, the COAB and PlaceWorks to complete the stakeholder and community engagement phases; synthesize and integrate that input; and draft the Vision Plan into a well-informed and actionable Vision Plan for final review and approval in September/Early October.

Given that the July 1, 2025 deadline is codified in County Code as part of the original Measure language, changing the deadline requires amending County Code. Staff therefore recommends amending Santa Cruz County Code Section 4.65(A)(3)(f)(i) to reflect the new Vision Plan publication date of October 15, 2025. The Ordinance is attached.

Measure Q Implementation Next Steps

Parks and OR3 are working with County Executive Office (CEO) leadership on a proposed staffing plan to support the COAB and Measure Q grant program and will be bringing that forward as part of the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget process.

Parks and OR3 are also tracking existing staff time, consultant costs and other expenses to seek Measure reimbursement to the General Fund once revenues have been realized next fiscal year.

In a concurrent effort, Parks and OR3 are beginning to outline staffing support for the grant program as well as systems and processes needed to implement the grant program. Current feedback from the COAB and stakeholders indicates a strong desire to review and award as soon as possible. Parks and OR3 will leverage the Vision Plan stakeholder engagement process to seek feedback and input on grant program elements including but not limited to grant period of performance (how long awardees have to spend the funds), grant amounts, application process, reporting process, and fund dispersal and reimbursement processes. Parks and OR3 will also evaluate existing local, regional and State grant programs to glean best practices and lessons learned to improve the Measure Q grant program.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact with the recommended actions.

Strategic Initiatives

Equity Framework - County Facilities & Infrastructure, Plans, Policies & Budgets, Community Voices & Partnership

Operational Plan - Comprehensive Health & Safety, Sustainable Environment

Climate Action - Water, Natural & Working Lands, Wildfire Prevention, Government Operations

Submitted By:

Jeff Gaffney, Director of Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Executive Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.