



PRESS RELEASE

COUNTY OF SONOMA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Board of Supervisors Approves Eviction Defense Ordinance

SANTA ROSA, CA – The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, which also serves as the Board of Commissioners for the Community Development Commission, today passed the COVID-19 Eviction Defense Ordinance, effective immediately for 60 days after the end of the local and public health emergency. The new ordinance aligns with the Governor’s Executive Order N-28-20 which authorized local jurisdictions to suspend evictions for non-payment of rent for reasons associated with the coronavirus. At the meeting, the Board also set the date of June 2, 2020 to review the Ordinance to consider additional data and information about the availability of other assistance programs and community needs.

“This is an important step in protecting public health and the well-being of community members who may be experiencing a loss of income or increased medical costs associated with the coronavirus,” said Board of Supervisors Chair Susan Gorin. “The ordinance is designed to help our community comply with local and statewide directives to shelter in place while preventing evictions and utility shut-offs associated with financial and medical losses due to the coronavirus.”

The ordinance creates a legal defense for all renters who can demonstrate that their failure to pay rent is due to the coronavirus pandemic. Tenants who use this defense are required to share that information with their landlord to support claims for any prospective mortgage relief.

The ordinance prevents evictions for the duration of the locally-declared emergency and for 60 days after it ends to allow tenants time to make up unpaid rent. The ordinance also directs the Sonoma County Housing Authority to extend deadlines for housing assistance recipients and applicants to provide stability for community members housed with a critical subsidy. The ordinance is considered urgent based on the closure or extreme restrictions on local businesses, severe loss of income for many residents who depend on wages or business income to pay rent, and substantial medical expenses for some community members. The ordinance highlights the suspension of in-person classes across

all Sonoma County School Districts as an additional hardship for working parents who must adjust work schedules and take time off, whether paid or unpaid.

“This ordinance is a critical part of maintaining economic stability for renters and protecting everyone in our County during this global crisis,” Barbie Robinson, co-director of the County’s Emergency Operations Center, and Interim Executive Director of the Community Development Commission, said. “The County recognizes that without local protection, eviction notices for failure to pay rent are likely to surge. We need to protect families living paycheck to paycheck who are unable to work during school and business closures, and who are doing their part to follow the shelter-in-place health order.”

The Ordinance is available here <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4400248&GUID=A163D704-E675-401E-B3CB-FDAA3D9F69E6&Options=&Search=>.

For the latest information about the coronavirus in Sonoma County and advice from health experts on prevention and care, call 2-1-1, text your zip code to 898-211 or visit socoemergency.org. Updates and videos are also on the County of Sonoma Facebook page and twitter feed @countyofsonoma.

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