



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER**

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:

**Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)**

Department Name: County Executive Office
Department No.: 012
Agenda Date: May 12, 2026: Set Hearing
June 9, 2026: 1st Reading
June 23, 2026: 2nd
Reading
Placement: Set-Hearing
Estimated Time: 20 minutes on June 9,
2026,
Adoption on June 23,
2026
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Director(s): Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Contact Info: Brittany Odermann, Deputy CEO
SUBJECT: Amend Chapter 50 of the County Code – Licensing of Cannabis Operations

DocuSigned by:

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County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors on May 12, 2026 set a public hearing on the Departmental Agenda for June 9, 2026 to consider recommendations, as follows:

On June 9, 2026:

- a) Consider the introduction (First Reading) of an Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Barbara amending Chapter 50 to the Santa Barbara County Code, Licensing of Cannabis Operations pertaining to replacement of the County of Santa Barbara Sheriff Office (“Sheriff”) role in cannabis business licensing activities specific to site security plan review and live scan check responsibilities as required in §50-11 with staff from the Cannabis Licensing Division;
- b) Read the title and waive further reading of the Ordinance in full; and
- c) Set a hearing on the Administrative Agenda of June 23, 2026 to consider recommendations, as follows:

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On June 23, 2026:

- a) Consider adoption (Second Reading) of an Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Barbara amending Chapter 50 to the Santa Barbara County Code, Licensing of Commercial Cannabis Operations pertaining to removal of the County of Santa Barbara Sheriff Department (“Sheriff”) from cannabis business licensing activities specific to site security plan review and live scan check responsibilities as required in §50-11 with staff from the Cannabis Licensing Division; and
- b) Determine for the purposes of CEQA that:
 - i. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15168(c), these actions are within the scope of the Cannabis Land Use Ordinance and Licensing Program, and the Cannabis Land Use Ordinance and Licensing Program Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) (17EIR-00000-00003, State Clearinghouse No. 2017071016) adequately describes this activity for the purposes of CEQA.
 - ii. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15162(a), after considering the PEIR certified by the Board of Supervisors on February 6, 2018, that no subsequent EIR or Negative Declaration is required because: i) no substantial changes are proposed which require major revisions of the PEIR due to the involvement of new significant environmental impacts or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; ii) no substantial changes have occurred with respect to the circumstances under which the ordinance is undertaken which require major revisions of the PEIR due to the involvement of new significant environmental impacts or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; and iii) no new information of substantial importance concerning the ordinance’s significant effects or mitigation measures, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time that the PEIR was certified, has been received that shows any of the elements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15162(a)(3) apply.

Summary:

This amendment recommends changes to Chapter 50 of the Santa Barbara County Code, Licensing of Commercial Cannabis Operations to address: 1) replacement of the County of Santa Barbara Sheriff Office (“Sheriff”) role in cannabis business licensing activities specific to site security plan review and live scan check responsibilities as required in §50-11 with staff from the Cannabis Licensing Division. The Sheriff’s Office would continue to promote a culture of compliance via site visits and conduct enforcement activities including desk audits, and inspections.

Discussion

Staff recommends this ordinance change to further right-size the Cannabis Licensing process given the maturity and stabilization of the program, budgetary constraints and need to reduce duplicative efforts and staff time associated with administering the program. The proposed amendment will remove the County of Santa Barbara Sheriff Office (“Sheriff”) from licensing activities in Chapter 50, §50-11, of the Santa Barbara County Code, Licensing of Commercial Cannabis Operations. CEO staff recommends an ordinance amending Chapter 50, Licensing of Commercial Cannabis Operations reducing the number of County Departments directly involved in cannabis business licensing review and approvals to simplify the application process. Presently the following eight departments are part of the cannabis business license application process: the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, the

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County Executive Office (CEO), County Health - Environmental Health Services (EHS), Fire, Planning and Development (P&D), Sheriff, Community Services Department - Sustainability Division, and the Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office (TTC). Upon program inception in 2018, staff crafted robust regulatory requirements with overlapping cross-departmental reviews to ensure compliance. In response to program stabilization and maturation staff has identified opportunities to adjust the program according to current needs and budgetary constraints. Staff has developed this option regarding Sheriff's Office licensing activities removal, or the Board may request further options be evaluated.

Presently Chapter 50, §50-11, "application review by the Sheriff's Office and ongoing requirements" lists the Sheriff as the lead reviewer for all applications and compliance or renewal site visits of cannabis business licenses for distributor and retail operations including microbusiness. In addition, the Sheriff's Office participates in reviewing site security plans and criminal history backgrounds for all cannabis business license applications and renewals. Cannabis business license activities fall into two categories: licensing and compliance. Staff recommends removal of the Sheriff's Office from licensing activities for the following reasons: 1) site security plans are reviewed and approved during the Planning and Development Department land use entitlement process, prior to cannabis business licensure making a second review duplicative; and 2) criminal background checks are no longer required for all permanent employees and third-party labor; live scans are only required for business owners with greater than 20% ownership. The number of owner required live scans has declined proportionally with the decline in new cannabis business license applications.

This reduction in responsibilities eliminates the Sheriff role in licensing activities. Cannabis Licensing Division staff will assume site security plan and live scan coordination responsibilities. The Sheriff will continue their cannabis compliance activities funded by the Proposition 64 Grant Program as Cohort 3 awardees from the California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC). This 5-year grant to the Sheriff's Office totaling \$2,997,976.00 for cannabis compliance activities is active for the award period commencing on May 1, 2023, and continuing through April 30, 2028.

A more detailed Board Letter with all necessary attachments and details of proposed changes will be prepared and provided prior to the June 9, 2026 hearing.

Background

In May 2018, the Board adopted Chapter 50 of the Santa Barbara County Code, Licensing of Cannabis Operations. Since the effective date of the cannabis ordinances (June 2018 in the inland area, November 2018 in the coastal zone), cannabis operations have been applying for County cannabis land use permits and business licenses. Chapter 50 has since been amended in April, August, December of 2019, January 2020, February, November of 2021, March, November of 2022, July 2023, April 2025, and August 2025.

At the June 3, 2025 Board hearing, the Board approved reductions in cannabis tax revenue spending across cannabis enforcement line items totaling \$1.4 million in savings for FY2025-26. At the June 17, 2025 Board hearing, the Board reallocated the remaining Sheriff Cannabis Enforcement Team monies to higher priority, critical public safety and community needs. During the June 2025 Budget Hearings, the Board indicated that countywide FY 2026-27 budget cuts would be required to offset future budget deficits. With this in mind, staff identified replacement of the Sheriff Office role in cannabis business licensing activities as one efficiency and cost saving measure to meet this need. Staff

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presently proposes reducing the number of departments involved in the licensing process. The current recommendation is timely as it optimizes efficiencies and reallocates dwindling resources.

Special Instructions:

The Clerk of the Board shall publish the ordinance in accordance with Government Code section 25124.

Authored by:

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