




BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

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

Submitted on:  
(COB Stamp)

Department Name:	Sheriff
Department No.:	032
Agenda Date:	Administrative (set hearing): December 9, 2025 Departmental (first reading): January 13, 2026 Administrative (second reading): January 27, 2026
Placement:	Set-Hearing
Estimated Time:	30 MINUTES ON JANUARY 13, 2026
Continued Item:	No
If Yes, date from:	N/A
Vote Required:	Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors  
FROM: Department Director: Bill Brown, Sheriff   
Contact: Joe Schmidt, Lieutenant  
SUBJECT: Amendments to Santa Barbara County Code Chapter 6, Article VI – Outdoor Festivals and Chapter 36 – Public Nuisances

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 December 9, 2025:

- Set a hearing for January 13, 2026 to consider the introduction (first reading) of an Ordinance amending Chapter 6, Article VI of the Santa Barbara County Code regarding Outdoor Festivals and Chapter 36 regarding Public Nuisances; and
- Determine that the activity is not a "Project" subject to CEQA review per CEQA Guideline Section 15378(b)(5), since the activity is an organizational or administrative activity of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

On January 13, 2026:

- a) Receive and file a presentation regarding an Ordinance amending Chapter 6, Article VI of the Santa Barbara County Code regarding Outdoor Festivals and Chapter 36 regarding Public Nuisances;
- b) Consider and approve the introduction (First Reading) of an Ordinance amending Chapter 6, Article VI of the Santa Barbara County Code regarding Outdoor Festivals and Chapter 36 regarding Public Nuisances;
- c) Read the title of the Ordinance and waive full reading of the Ordinance;
- d) Continue the hearing to the Administrative Agenda of January 27, 2026 to consider the adoption (Second Reading) of an Ordinance amending Chapter 6, Article VI of the Santa Barbara County Code regarding Outdoor Festivals and Chapter 36 regarding Public Nuisances; and
- e) Determine that the activity is not a "Project" subject to CEQA review per CEQA Guideline Section 15378(b)(5), since the activity is an organizational or administrative activity of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

On January 27, 2026:

- a) Consider and approve the adoption (Second Reading) of an Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Barbara amending Chapter 6, Article VI regarding Outdoor Festivals and Chapter 36 regarding Public Nuisances; and
- b) Determine that the activity is not a "Project" subject to CEQA review per CEQA Guideline Section 15378(b)(5), since the activity is an organizational or administrative activity of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

**Summary Text:**

This item is on the agenda to amend Chapter 6, Article VI, Outdoor Festivals, and Chapter 36 of the Santa Barbara County Code regarding outdoor festivals and public nuisances.

The proposed revisions to Chapter 6, Article VI of the County Code would extend the prohibition on Outdoor Festivals and similar activity during the unsanctioned "Deltopia" street party that occurs each spring in Isla Vista, by:

- Expanding the areas by which an "outdoor festival" is defined including all properties in the unincorporated area of Santa Barbara County located on Ocean Meadows Lane, including APN:073-910-001 through APN:073-910-033 (known as The Cove Santa Barbara).
- Increasing the time of the outdoor festival restriction from 13 hours/day (6pm-7am) on Deltopia weekend, to 72 continuous hours starting at 12:00am on Friday and ending at 11:59pm on Sunday of the first week of the Spring Quarter of the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) Academic Calendar.

The proposed revision to Chapter 6 would deter unsanctioned parties with amplified music from occurring in the residential areas of Isla Vista during Deltopia. Historically, these parties draw large crowds and occur in the daytime before the current festival ordinance becomes enforceable at 6pm. The proposed revision of Chapter 36 of the County Code would extend the enforcement of public nuisances to all properties in the unincorporated area of Santa Barbara County located on Ocean Meadows Lane, including APN:073-910-001 through APN:073-910-033 (known as The Cove Santa



Barbara). This would provide an additional enforcement option to mitigate disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace calls which are commonly associated with The Cove. The current ordinance is not enforceable at The Cove.

**Background:**

Founded in the early 2000s, Floatopia was an event where partygoers met on the beaches of Isla Vista to celebrate spring break. On Saturday, April 4, 2009, an estimated 12,000 people crowded onto Isla Vista beaches and into the ocean to celebrate Floatopia. This created immense challenges for first responders who were understaffed and ill-equipped to deal with an unsanctioned event that had no safety measures in place. During Floatopia 2009, multiple patients were transported to the hospital by ambulance, two people fell off the cliff, and several others sustained injuries from broken glass. Some were struck by bottles and other objects thrown from balconies.

Environmentally, Floatopia 2009 was disastrous to Isla Vista beaches and the Pacific Ocean. An assistant professor of ecology at UCSB described Floatopia as "the most egregious events of dumping I have ever seen in this state." Due to Floatopia being unsanctioned, there was no accountability for cleaning up the thousands of pounds of trash left behind on the beach by partygoers. Additionally, large amounts of trash washed into the Pacific Ocean at high tide.

In response to Floatopia 2009, Santa Barbara County utilized ordinance §26-11 to close Isla Vista beaches during Floatopia weekend. In response to the beach closure, attendees moved the party to Del Playa Drive and changed the name to Deltopia. Deltopia remains unsanctioned where no accountability is taken to safely manage the event or clean up the environmentally damaging aftermath. Additionally, following the Deltopia riot in 2014, the Board of Supervisors approved an amendment to ordinance 6-70.01(a). Previously only applicable to Halloween in Isla Vista, this amended ordinance allowed enforcement of outdoor festivals from 6pm to 7am during Deltopia. The Board of Supervisors approved this on February 17, 2015.

Deltopia draws thousands of non-residents to the unincorporated community of Isla Vista for a street party spanning several blocks. Deltopia takes over county streets and parks, damages public and personal property, leads to drug and alcohol overdoses, overwhelms medical centers, and causes violent and sexual assaults. Driven by alcohol consumption, the event gains momentum on Saturday, peaking between approximately 12pm (noon) and 4pm. The event leads to dozens of preventable medical emergencies, many resulting from alcohol and drug abuse. The exponential increase in patients puts a significant strain on first responders and medical resources while drawing lifesaving resources away from other areas of Santa Barbara County.

Large crowds in the streets of Isla Vista prevent emergency vehicle access, including law enforcement, ambulances, and medical personnel. This results in prolonged delays for patients needing emergency treatment and law enforcement to respond to crimes in progress. Additionally, the crowd surge in Isla Vista overwhelms local cell towers. Most cell phones in Isla Vista are unable to call 9-1-1 to report an emergency during Deltopia.

Interpersonal violence, lawlessness, and tragic accidents are commonly associated with Deltopia. In some cases, it's escalated to serious bodily injury or death, including a residential balcony collapse and cliff fall death of a Cal Poly student during Deltopia 2013, the riot during Deltopia 2014, and the fentanyl overdose death of a UCSB student during Deltopia 2023. During Deltopia 2024, multiple alcohol and drug overdose patients had to be transported to a medical tent in Sheriff vehicles because there were no ambulances available.

The financial burden of Deltopia on Santa Barbara County taxpayers is significant. Between 2023 and 2025, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office and Santa Barbara County Fire Department spent \$465,607 in overtime to manage Deltopia. This does not include regular salary costs for Sheriff and Fire personnel assigned to Deltopia. The cost continues to grow exponentially each year because the staffing of law enforcement and fire personnel needs to be commensurate with the large crowds to maintain public safety. In 2025, approximately 320 law enforcement officers were assigned to Deltopia.

Santa Barbara County Sheriff		Santa Barbara County Fire	
FY 2022-23	\$55,497	FY 2022-23	\$5,580
FY 2023-24	\$135,956	FY 2023-24	\$8,730
FY 2024-25	\$233,744	FY 2024-25	\$26,100
Total = \$425,197		Total = \$40,410	
Total Sheriff & Fire Overtime 2023-2025 = \$465,607			

Santa Barbara County Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMSA) is another partner required to manage the surge of patients needing medical treatment due to Deltopia. EMSA staffs medical reserve personnel, AMR ambulances, and mutual aid medical professionals due to the lack of adequate resources to manage an unsanctioned event that continues to gain momentum and grow in crowd size.

Santa Barbara County Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMSA) – Deltopia Costs					
Year	EMSA Cost	Medical Reserve Corps*	Ambulance (AMR)*	Mutual Aid*	Total
2023	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$20,000	0	\$23,000
2024	\$2,400	\$1,800	\$16,500	0	\$20,700
2025	\$2,700	\$3,200	\$27,000	\$17,400	\$50,300
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,100</b>	<b>\$6,000</b>	<b>\$63,500</b>	<b>\$17,400</b>	<b>\$94,000</b>

\*Medical Reserve Corps, American Medical Response ambulance services (AMR), and mutual aid costs were donated by the respective agencies. The final cost incurred by EMSA during Deltopia 2023, 2024, and 2025 was \$7,100 (EMSA cost).

Past efforts and messaging to discourage large crowds from participating in Deltopia have failed. In fact, Deltopia has experienced increasing crowd numbers in the past three years. Deltopia has gained



so much attention that out-of-town DJs will set up stages and large PA systems, using the Isla Vista community and private residences as their concert venue.

At Deltopia 2023, a DJ concert held at 6653 Del Playa Drive drew thousands of people who crowded the street, preventing emergency vehicles from accessing this area. Residential balconies were also overcrowded, creating a hazardous condition. The title of this video is, **DELTOPIA 2023 WAS CRAZY! #1 Party School in America ISLA VISTA, CA.**



In 2024, Deltopia drained available county emergency services, causing a major strain on our local hospital and emergency medical systems. In 2024, there were 256 citations and 32 arrests. In 2025, there were 485 citations and 84 arrests with an estimated crowd size of approximately 30,000. Consistent with past practice, Deltopia is a predeclared Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) due to the surge of patients requiring emergency medical treatment, mostly from alcohol and drug abuse. The overwhelming need for medical resources in Isla Vista during Deltopia drains these resources from other areas of the County, creating prolonged delays for other communities who need emergency medical assistance.

Numerous open parties, mostly on Del Playa Drive, host DJs, amplified music, and musical performances to attract attendees. Loud music and dance parties during Deltopia can draw thousands of people onto the streets and into residences not designed to safely accommodate so many people. Santa Barbara County Ordinance §6-70.01(a) currently prohibits outdoor festivals during Deltopia weekend between 6pm and 7am. Although this time restriction significantly reduces crowds in the evening, it does not mitigate the harmful impact of crowds in Isla Vista during the day.

This ordinance is also in effect in Isla Vista on Halloween and dates surrounding Halloween. Historically, Halloween in Isla Vista was an unsanctioned evening street party that also drew large out-of-town crowds and created dangerous conditions, like Deltopia. However, because §6-70.01(a) is enforced between 6:00pm and 7:00am, large crowds have been deterred from visiting Isla Vista on Halloween in recent years. Halloween in Isla Vista is now primarily attended by locals and is no longer

impacted by large, out-of-town crowds. Over the years, people have been deterred from visiting Isla Vista during Halloween because there are no parties with amplified music.

### **Discussion:**

The proposed amendments to Santa Barbara County Chapter 6, Article VI would allow a 72-hour ban on Outdoor Festivals, starting at 12:00am on Friday and ending at 11:59pm on Sunday during the weekend Deltopia is held. Traditionally, Deltopia occurs on the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of each year of the first week of Spring Quarter at UCSB. However, knowledge of the exact dates is not always readily known to law enforcement. As such, it's difficult to predict the exact timing to have appropriate resources available to manage alcohol violations, violent activity, medical emergencies, and general lawlessness. Much of the hype around Deltopia has been coordinated by word of mouth or social media outlets.

Identifying the actual date(s) Deltopia occurs can be a moving target. The passing of this ordinance may encourage Deltopia promoters to identify an alternative date to circumvent these restrictions, as occurred in 2010 when Floatopia turned into Deltopia after the beaches were closed. In 2010, the party was re-located to Del Playa Drive to circumvent the beach closure, allowing the unsanctioned event to continue as Deltopia.

Therefore, going forward, if credible intelligence demonstrates that Deltopia is being planned for an alternative date, the Sheriff's Office will consider the use of Government Code §25123 et seq, which authorizes the Board of Supervisors, by four-fifths vote, to consider an urgency ordinance to allow enforcement of the festival ordinance on alternative dates not presently covered in the County Code.

Chapter 36 of the County Code declares nuisance parties bound by, and including, El Colegio Road, Camino Majorca to Storke Road, Ocean Road to Stadium Road and the Pacific Ocean in the unincorporated area of Isla Vista.

Northwest of Isla Vista and just outside the boundaries set forth in Chapter 36 is a residential property in unincorporated Santa Barbara County known as The Cove Santa Barbara. The Cardinal Group owns The Cove, located at 568 Ocean Meadows Lane. The Cove opened in 2025 and is occupied by numerous Santa Barbara City College and UCSB students.

From September 5, 2025 to October 26, 2025, The Cove generated 36 calls to the Sheriff's Office reporting disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace. Most of these calls are reported by residents living in the City of Goleta, north of The Cove, who report disorderly conduct consistent with nuisance parties commonly found in Isla Vista. However, Section 36 of the County Code is not enforceable in this area northwest and outside the boundaries of Isla Vista.

Expanding Section 36 of the County Code to these areas northwest of Isla Vista will provide a mechanism to enforce nuisance parties in this residential area and restore peace to the community. Additionally, allowing enforcement of ordinance §6-70-01(a) at The Cove will also help to prevent Deltopia from being relocated to this residential area.



**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

There are no direct fiscal impacts associated with the recommended actions. However, it is anticipated that the reduction of public safety personnel and the associated overtime costs listed above will be significantly reduced as the culture of Deltopia changes by deterring out-of-town crowds, similar to the evolution of Halloween in Isla Vista.

**Special Instructions:**

After the Set Hearing, direct the Clerk of the Board to publish the notice of public hearing before the first reading date (January 13, 2026) in the Santa Barbara Independent and Santa Maria Times in accordance with Government Code section 6062 and 6066.

Clerk of the Board shall post a copy of the Ordinance on the County's internet website or post a certified copy of the full text in the office of the Clerk of the Board five days before the First Reading.

After the Second Reading on January 27, 2026, direct the Clerk of the Board to:

1. Send a copy of the Minute Order of these actions to the SBSO, attn: Lt. Joe Schmidt – [jws3741@sbsheriff.org](mailto:jws3741@sbsheriff.org)
2. Publish a summary of the ordinance in the Santa Barbara Independent and Santa Maria Times within 15 days of the adoption of the ordinance in accordance with Government Code section 25124.

**Attachments:**

**Attachment A** – Ordinance amending Chapter 6, Section 6-70.01(a) with additions highlighted

**Attachment B** – Ordinance amending Chapter 36, Section 36-6 with additions highlighted

**Attachment C** – Map of The Cove Santa Barbara

**Contact Information:**

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