



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: Public Works/Flood Control
Department No.: 054
Agenda Date: February 24, 2026 (for 4/7/26 on the Dept agenda and 04/21/26 on the Admin agenda)
Placement: Set-Hearing
Estimated Time: 15 minutes on 4/7/26
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Director: Chris Sneddon, Public Works Director
Contact: Walter Rubalcava, Deputy Director – Flood Control
SUBJECT: **Set Hearings to Amend Chapter 15A of the Santa Barbara County Code relating to Floodplain Management, All Supervisorial Districts**

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

Set a hearing for the April 7, 2026, Departmental Agenda (ESTMATED TIME: 15 MINUTES) to consider recommendations regarding an Ordinance amending Chapter 15A of the Santa Barbara County Code relating to Floodplain Management as follows:

On April 7, 2026, your Board's actions should include the following:

- a) Consider the introduction (first reading) of "An Ordinance amending Chapter 15A, of the Santa Barbara County Code Relating to Floodplain Management";
- b) Read the title of the Ordinance and waive further readings;
- c) Continue the hearing to the Administrative Agenda of April 21, 2026; and

On April 21, 2026, your Board's action should include the following:

- i. Consider and approve the adoption (second reading) of "An Ordinance amending Chapter 15A, of the Santa Barbara County Code Relating to Floodplain Management" (ordinance introduced on April 7, 2026); and

- ii. Determine the proposed actions do not constitute a “project” under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15378(b)(2) as they consist of general policy and procedure making, and 15378(b)(5) as they consist of organizational and administrative activity of the government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda to set hearings to adopt an Ordinance amending Chapter 15A of the Santa Barbara County Code relating to Floodplain Management (Attachment A).

The ordinance amendment is necessary to improve clarity and for Chapter 15A to remain in compliance with the State of California Department of Water Resources model floodplain ordinance and the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program and Community Rating System requirements.

The ordinance amendment also supports the County of Santa Barbara’s ability to apply provisions of Ordinance 15A to development within FEMA Preliminary Special Flood Hazard Areas.

Discussion:

The revisions include added definitions, expanded provisions, and clarifying language for existing development standards within special flood hazard areas, to remain in compliance with the State of California Department of Water Resources (DWR) model floodplain ordinance and FEMA’s National Flood Insurance Program and Community Rating System requirements.

County residents, in the unincorporated area, are currently eligible to receive a 20% discount on their annual National Flood Insurance Program flood insurance due to the County’s favorable rating in the Community Rating System program, in part due to the County’s adoption of standards higher than the minimum federal requirements and using the FEMA maps recommended for adoption.

On July 15, 2025, your Board approved the adoption of the FEMA Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Map to be used in conjunction with the FEMA Effective Flood Insurance Rate Map. This ordinance amendment will allow for the application of any FEMA Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps once publicly issued by FEMA.

The amendment of Chapter 15A of the Santa Barbara County Code relating to Floodplain Management is an organizational and administrative activity of the government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment and is therefore not considered a “project” under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15378(a) and 15378(b)(5). The amendment to Chapter 15A is not related to any particular project or development; and possible future projects subject to Chapter 15A will be subject to CEQA compliance as applicable.

Background:

In 1979, the County of Santa Barbara became a participant in FEMA’s National Flood Insurance Program. A goal of the National Flood Insurance Program is to enable property owners in participating communities to purchase flood insurance as a protection against flood losses. To

participate in the program a community must adopt and enforce a floodplain management ordinance to reduce future flood risk to new construction developed in floodplain areas. In exchange, FEMA provides floodplain identification and mapping, floodplain regulations, and makes flood insurance available to residents in the community. Additionally, in being a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program; the unincorporated County is eligible for disaster assistance and additional federal grant programs.

This ordinance amendment is necessary to improve clarity and for Chapter 15A to remain in compliance with the DWR's model floodplain ordinance and the FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program and Community Rating System requirements.

This ordinance amendment also supports the County's ability to apply provisions of Ordinance 15A to development within FEMA Preliminary Special Flood Hazard Areas.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

There are no fiscal impacts associated with the proposed actions.

Special Instructions:

After the February 24, 2026, Hearing, direct the Clerk of the Board to:

1. Publish the hearing notice of the April 7 2026, hearing pursuant to section 6061 of the Government Code in the Santa Barbara Independent (once, ten days before the hearing).

After the April 21, 2026, Hearing, direct the Clerk of the Board to:

1. Email a copy of the signature page of the Ordinance and minute order to the Flood Control District, Attn: Christina Lopez;
2. Publish a copy of the ordinance with names and members of the Board of Supervisors for or against the amendment in the Santa Barbara Independent within 15 days of adoption of the ordinance pursuant to Government Code section 25124.

Attachments:

Attachment A – An Ordinance amending Chapter 15A

Attachment B – An Ordinance amendment Chapter 15A (track changes)

Attachment C – Notice of Public Meeting

Contact Information:

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