



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY COUNSEL

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 24, 2026
TO: Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Brina A. Blanton, Assistant County Counsel
SUBJECT: Noise Ordinance

On September 24, 2024, the Board gave direction to staff to work on the drafting of a noise ordinance. Since that time, the County Counsel's Office has worked with the Sheriff's Office and Code Enforcement to draft a proposed noise ordinance.

The proposed ordinance would prohibit "disturbances", defined as: "the playing or operating of any radio, loudspeaker, sound amplifier, or other musical device or instrument, or noise produced by any machine, or device, or by any other means, which impacts any residential property and which exceeds sixty (60) dBA, constant or seventy-five (75) dBA intermittent, as measured from an adjacent residential property line using a sound decibel meter, if occurring between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m." A violation of the proposed ordinance would be an infraction.

This proposed ordinance would be enforceable by the Sheriff's Office or Code Enforcement. Because most noise complaints are received outside of normal business hours, and the proposed ordinance only regulates noise occurring between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., staff believe that most enforcement pursuant to the proposed ordinance will likely fall to the Sheriff's Office. The proposed ordinance is designed to allow for enforcement by the Sheriff's Office through the issuance of infraction citations. Staff believe that enforcement of the proposed ordinance through infraction citations will require less resources than civil enforcement mechanisms because infractions are processed through the Superior Court.

The ordinance also provides for enforcement through civil mechanisms, including administrative fines and penalties, nuisance abatement or other civil remedies. Civil enforcement may be more effective for repeat offenders. The proposed ordinance also provides that if the same property is cited more than three times during a ninety (90) day period, the property may be deemed a public nuisance.

The proposed ordinance provides for several exceptions including:

- School activities
- Activities conducted in conformance with other County regulations
- Activities conducted by public entities or schools on property owned by those entities
- Activities connected to a declared emergency
- Activities protected by the County's Right to Farm and Right to Industry ordinances
- Activities the regulation of which is preempted by state or federal law

- Work done by a public entity, or public or private utility that must be done during the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

Planning and Building Services has also prepared a memorandum regarding consistency review for the proposed ordinance, which is included with this item.

BAB/jc