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Board Advances Proposal to Update No Camping Ordinance

Action In Keeping with Sheriff's Request to Modernize Ordinance to Allow Enforcement

Stockton, CA – At its meeting today, the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors advanced a proposal that will update the County’s no camping ordinance to allow more effective enforcement of public property in the jurisdiction. The proposal had the support of the San Joaquin County Sheriff’s Department, with Sheriff Patrick Withrow speaking in favor of the proposal. The proposed ordinance change would prohibit camping on public property. It would also prohibit people sleeping in their car for more than an hour. Law enforcement would have the discretion to allow occupants of cars to rest for safety purposes. With this action and in keeping with the rules governing ordinance changes, the Board will consider final adoption of the changes at its next meeting on September 24, 2024. If approved, the ordinance would go into effect 30 days after adoption.

“After the recent Supreme Court decision, our Board pledged to work with our local law enforcement to clean up and reclaim public spaces in San Joaquin County. This ordinance is one piece of that puzzle to allow our families to once again safely use parks and public facilities,” commented Board Chairman Miguel Villapudua. “We are providing the services that people need at local shelters and through the behavioral health department. This revised no camping ordinance is an essential tool for law enforcement and our non-profit partners to encourage the unsheltered and incentivize using those resources, getting help to live healthy and productive lives.”

The proposed amendments would specifically prohibit erecting a tent or other form of shelter for the purpose of sleeping, arranging bedding for the purpose of sleeping, and using a standing or parked vehicle for the purpose of sleeping if done so beyond 60 minutes or within 300 feet of any previous stopping point in a 24-hour period. The current versions of these Sections allow camping on public property between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. and have a more limited and vague definition of “camping”. As part of the staff report, the Sheriff’s Office stated that the requested amendments will allow its deputies to more effectively and judiciously enforce restrictions against camping on public property within the county. The objective of this amendment is to further define, restrict, and deter illegal camping activity on public property within San Joaquin County, thereby enhancing public health, enjoyment of public property, and public safety. The Sheriff indicated that he would be sharing this proposed ordinance with other local law enforcement partners to allow for continuity of enforcement across jurisdictions.

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