

Resolution No. 2024-XXX N.C.S.
of the City of Petaluma, California

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PETALUMA AFFIRMING SUPPORT OF FARMS, RANCHES, AND AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS AND BUSINESSES IN PETALUMA AND SONOMA COUNTY AND OPPOSING MEASURE J

WHEREAS, Sonoma County and Petaluma have a rich farming history dating back more than a century, including invention of the artificial incubator in the 1880s, and thriving poultry and dairy farms, with 30,000 cows in the Petaluma area and production of 3.5 million pounds of butter and 379,776 pounds of cheese annually in 1910, and production of millions of eggs annually in the 1920s, making Petaluma famous as the “Egg Basket of the World,” with the Petaluma area hosting in the 1920s the three largest creameries on the west coast, producing over 4 million pounds of butter annually, and

WHEREAS, Sonoma County’s agricultural heritage continues to be celebrated annually, from the Petaluma Butter and Eggs Day and Sonoma-Marin Fair to the Cloverdale Citrus Fair, with numerous other Sonoma County ag and fair events in between; and

WHEREAS, the agricultural sector in Sonoma County and Petaluma proved resilient during the depression while shifting toward larger farms after World War II; and

WHEREAS, modern agriculture in Sonoma County and Petaluma has embraced organic farming and specialty produce, supporting farm to table restaurants and numerous farmers’ markets, and hosting storied food producers like Clover Sonoma, Strauss Family Creamery, and Petaluma Poultry, with their Rosie and Rocky Free-range chickens; and

WHEREAS, Sonoma County farming accounts for significant economic activity and food production for the region, with Sonoma County hosting 50 dairies, 84% of them certified organic, milking an average of 350 cows and comprising nearly 41% of California’s certified organic dairies and certified organic mature dairy cattle producing 42.4 Million gallons of milk annually valued at \$114 million, with Sonoma County producing 13% of the national volume of organic milk in 2022, and annual values produced of almost \$33 million in poultry, \$30 million in eggs, \$20 million in cattle and calves, and \$5 million in sheep, with livestock and poultry production alone responsible for \$418 million in total output, \$80 million in labor income and almost 1,400 jobs annually; and

WHEREAS, Sonoma County dairies currently graze over 45,000 acres and farm 8,100 acres, managing over 53,000 acres, and lands managed by dairies sequester almost 23 million tons of carbon dioxide more than they would otherwise; and

WHEREAS, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District has worked with owners of working farms and ranches throughout Sonoma County, especially those most at risk for conversion to non-agricultural uses, through purchase of conservation easements to preserve the scenic and natural resources of agricultural lands, and has invested approximately \$126 million in local sales tax proceeds to conserve more than 90 farms and ranches totaling nearly 60,000 acres, and 16 of the District’s agricultural easements are on dairy land or land that supports dairy operations, and seven of the eight active dairy farms protected by the District could be impacted by Measure J; and

WHEREAS, Sonoma County dairy and poultry farms follow animal care standards of the National Organic Program or third party welfare certification programs, and comply with Proposition 12 specifying space minimums for egg-laying hens, veal and breeding hog farms; and

WHEREAS, Sonoma County Dairies are not considered point source polluters and are regulated by the North Coast and San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Boards subject to regulations prohibiting pollution and specifying water quality standards dairies must meet; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding or because of Sonoma County’s rich agricultural history, a coalition of animal rights activists and others, including a Berkeley-based group called Direct Action Everywhere, some of whose supporters have been arrested and prosecuted for unlawfully trespassing on Petaluma area-poultry farms and entering production facilities, have qualified an initiative measure entitled Sonoma County Prohibition on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, designated as Measure J, for the November, 2024 Sonoma County general election; and

WHEREAS, if approved by the voters, Measure J would prohibit new farms and phase out within 3 years existing Sonoma County farms that qualify as Concentrated Animal Feeding operations, as defined in Environmental Protection Agency pollution discharge regulations, in all zoning districts in unincorporated Sonoma County outside the coastal zone, and apply to cattle, veal calves, swine, horses, sheep, lambs, turkeys, chickens and ducks, subject to penalties of \$1,000 for the first day, \$5,000 for the second day, and \$10,000 for the third and subsequent days, creating a private cause of action with attorneys fees awards to enforce violations, and imposing new, unfunded regulatory and administrative mandates on Sonoma County government to enforce Measure J’s prohibitions against local farms; and

WHEREAS, the website of Measure J’s proponents lists 21 Sonoma County farms that would be outlawed under Measure J, including 15 poultry farms and 6 dairies, with most of the targeted farms in south Sonoma County in the vicinity of Petaluma; and

WHEREAS, some Sonoma County families have been operating farms targeted for closure under Measure J for three and four generations, some for more than a century, and the three-year period for farms to close under Measure J would be inadequate for such long term farm operators to recover the value of generations and decades of investment in land management, livestock and animal husbandry, buildings, equipment, vehicles, financing, and other investments, including generations and decades of farming expertise;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Petaluma as follows:

1. **Recitals Made Findings.** The above recitals are hereby declared to be true and correct and are incorporated into this resolutions as findings of the City Council.
2. **Measure J Opposed.** The City Council of the City of Petaluma hereby joins together in opposing Measure J on the Sonoma County 2024 general election ballot, and urges all Sonoma county voters to vote “no” on measure J. A “no” vote on Measure J will:
 - a. Support the region’s farms that have been providing dairy, poultry and other agricultural products for the region and the state for more than a century, and that are still celebrated throughout Sonoma County with fairs, farmers markets, and other community events celebrating regional agriculture;
 - b. Protect Sonoma County’s agricultural economy providing milk and other dairy products, eggs and poultry for the region and the state, comprising nearly 41% of California certified organic dairies and

as much as 13% of the nation’s organic milk, and accounting for hundreds of millions of dollars in agricultural products sales and revenues for ag supporting businesses, and almost 1,400 agricultural and agriculture support jobs for the local economy;

- c. Preserve the decades and generations long investments of Sonoma County farming families in their dairy, poultry and other farming operations, and avoid the permanent loss of 15 poultry operations and 6 dairy operations in Sonoma County targeted for closure under Measure J;
- d. Safeguard the benefits of local, high quality agricultural production serving local markets, keep agricultural products affordable and reduce the cost of transporting local agricultural products, reduce the region’s reliance on imported agricultural products and avoid generation of greenhouse gases as well as support local food security and avoid reliance on imported agricultural products;
- e. Maintain Sonoma County’s urban separators, green belts and open spaces and the scenic beauty, fire safety, wildlife corridor and other important benefits they provide to the region through preservation of managed agricultural lands sequestering almost 23 million tons of carbon dioxide more than they would otherwise; and
- f. Avoid the imposition of costly, unfunded regulatory and enforcement mandates on Sonoma County government - traditionally responsible for supporting the agricultural sector - directing scarce public funds at policing the closure of important local food producers and away from other important public service needs.

3. **Effective Date.** This resolution shall become effective immediately upon its passage by a majority of a quorum of the City Council.

Under the power and authority conferred upon this Council by the Charter of said City.

REFERENCE:

I hereby certify the foregoing Resolution was introduced and adopted by the Council of the City of Petaluma at a Regular meeting on the 15th day of July 2024, by the following vote:

Approved as to form:

Eric Danly City Attorney

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

ATTEST:

Caitlin Corley, City Clerk

Kevin McDonnell, Mayor