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DATE: September 16, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council through City Manager

FROM: Nick McGowan, Deputy Police Chief  
Jeremy Walsh, Police Lieutenant  
Kate McCoy, Senior Management Analyst

SUBJECT: Resolution Approving the Continuation and Extension of the Existing Partnership with the Sonoma County Abandoned Vehicle Abatement (SCAVASA) Reimbursement Program

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the City Council adopt the attached Resolution Approving the Continuation and Extension of the Existing Partnership with the Sonoma County Abandoned Vehicle Abatement Service Authority (SCAVASA) Reimbursement Program.

### **BACKGROUND**

In 1990, the California State Legislature enacted legislation that allowed for the creation of county-based vehicle service authorities under Section 22710 of the California Vehicle Code (CVC). In 1995, the Sonoma County Abandoned Vehicle Abatement Service Authority (SCAVASA) was established, funded by a one-dollar annual vehicle registration fee imposed on vehicles registered within Sonoma County.

These fees are collected by the Department of Motor Vehicles and subsequently allocated to the Sonoma County Abandoned Vehicle Abatement Service Authority (SCAVASA) by the State Controller, as per Section 9250.7 of the CVC. The funds are distributed among ten participating entities, including the City of Petaluma, based on a formula considering both population percentage and the number of vehicles abated.

The current participating entities include the County of Sonoma, and the cities of Cloverdale, Cotati, Healdsburg, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Sonoma, and the Town of Windsor. Since the program's inception, the funds have assisted the City of Petaluma in offsetting costs of both equipment and personnel required to address the issue of abandoned vehicles. In March 2014, the City formally established a full-time Abandoned Vehicle Abatement (AVA) Officer position within the Police Department (Resolution 2014-043).

The legislation permits the renewal of local service authorities every ten years, contingent on the approval of the county and a majority of the cities that represent a majority of the population within the incorporated areas. The City of Petaluma approved a resolution for this purpose on December 6, 2004 (Resolution 2004-223) and on September 8, 2014 (Resolution 2014-139), and it is now necessary to pass a new resolution to ensure the continuation of this essential program.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Petaluma Police Department has actively participated in the SCAVASA for nearly three decades. The current SCAVASA program is set to expire in April 2025. To ensure its continuation and renew the program in coordination with the County of Sonoma and the California Highway Patrol, all participating agencies need to have a resolution to extend their participation approved by City Council by October 1, 2024. If approved and renewed, the program is managed by the County of Sonoma and the City does not incur any additional costs associated with its participation.

The Police Department's core service priorities include reducing crime, increasing traffic safety, improving quality of life, and fostering community engagement. Continued participation in SCAVA program is crucial to achieving these objectives by providing necessary funding for resources to address abandoned vehicles across residential, industrial, and commercial areas of the City. The presence of abandoned vehicles not only diminishes the aesthetic quality of these areas but also presents significant health and safety concerns.

In recent years, the demand for services related to abandoned vehicles has remained high. The Police Department frequently receives complaints from community members, residents, and business owners about abandoned vehicles. These complaints often involve vehicles that are not operable, visibly abandoned, causing obstructions on roadways, or leaking hazardous fluids. This program plays a vital role in offsetting the costs associated with responding to and resolving these issues, thereby maintaining and increasing the safety and cleanliness of Petaluma's neighborhoods and business districts.

The adoption of this resolution is necessary for the City of Petaluma to both renew and continue to participate in Sonoma County Abandoned Vehicle Abatement Service Authority (SCAVASA).

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This agenda item appeared on the City's tentative agenda document on September 16, 2024, which was a publicly-noticed meeting.

## **COUNCIL GOAL ALIGNMENT**

This effort aligns with and achieves the City Council’s goal of “A Safe Community That Thrives.”

### **CLIMATE ACTION/SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS**

There is no climate action or sustainability impacts associated with this item.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This item is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15061 (Common Sense Exemption) of the CEQA Guidelines as it can be seen with certainty that entering into a funding agreement for the removal of abandoned vehicles, which the Petaluma Police Department already addresses as part of its routine operations and Vehicle Code enforcement and is authorized by the California Vehicle Code, will not have any significant impact on the environment.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACTS**

The City of Petaluma has relied on Sonoma County Abandoned Vehicle Abatement Service Authority (SCAVASA) funds to offset the financial burden associated with the management of abandoned vehicles for the past 30 years. In 2013, the City of Petaluma approved the hire of a full-time AVA officer to further enhance our ability to manage abandoned vehicles.

In FY 2023-24, SCAVASA contributed \$93,655.82 to support the City of Petaluma’s efforts in towing and abating vehicles. This financial support has been instrumental in offsetting the costs associated with the AVA program, including personnel, towing, and other related expenses.

By offsetting a significant portion of the costs, these funds have assisted in ensuring that the program remains sustainable and effective, directly contributing to the overall quality of life in Petaluma.

This financial impact underscores the importance of ongoing support from SCAVASA, as it allows the city to manage abandoned vehicles efficiently while minimizing the strain on local budgets. As we move forward, maintaining this level of funding will be crucial in continuing to address the challenges posed by abandoned vehicles and ensuring that our AVA program remains sustainable.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

There are no other recommended alternatives.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Resolution