



ALAMEDA COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Chris Bazar
Agency Director

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January 8, 2019

Albert Lopez
Planning Director

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County Administration Building
1221 Oak Street, Fifth Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

224
West Winton Ave
Room 111

Hayward
California
94544

Dear Board Members:

phone
510.670.5400
fax
510.785.8793

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF ANIMAL CONTROL REGULATIONS PERTAINING TO RODEO ACTIVITIES

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept the report and provide direction to staff on any proposed ordinance changes.

BACKGROUND:

Rodeo activities currently operating in Alameda County are regulated under Chapter 5 of the Ordinance Code, administered by the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (ACSO). Adopted in 1993, language specific to rodeos was presented to the Board of Supervisors for adoption, as concerns were raised at the time related to the treatment of animals. Certain activities were prohibited as can be seen in the ordinance, excerpted below:

Article III - Rodeo Events or Other Activities Prohibited

5.08.160 - Equine animals.

No person shall intentionally trip or fell any equine animal (including but not limited to, any horse, mare, pony, ass, donkey, burro, mule, or hinny) by the legs by any means whatsoever for the purpose of entertainment, sport or practice, including a rodeo.

5.08.170 - Bovine animals.

No person shall intentionally trip, drag or fell any bovine animal (including but not limited to, any steer, calf, bull, ox, heifer or cow) by the tail by any means whatsoever for the purpose of entertainment, sport or practice, including a rodeo.

5.08.180 - Violation—Penalty.

Any violation of the provisions of this article is a misdemeanor.

Although the County has a long history of agriculture and rodeo activities have occurred regularly for decades, recent concerns have been raised, mostly through individual citizens and animal-rights organizations, that the current regulations are not adequate to address on-going rodeo activities that are considered unnecessarily cruel and/or inhumane to farm animals. These concerns are particular to two types of activities; mutton busting and wild cow milking. Mutton busting involves having young children ride sheep for entertainment purposes, and wild cow milking is a contest to see how quickly a wild cow (usually a beef cow) can be milked. Examples of these activities are easily seen with a simple internet search, the description above is meant to be for identification purposes only.

DISCUSSION/SUMMARY:

Active rodeos in the County are mostly found at the Alameda County Fairgrounds, City of Livermore, and at the Rowell Ranch Rodeo Park located just outside of the City of Pleasanton. Since the Fairgrounds is owned by the County but within the jurisdiction of the City of Pleasanton, it's unclear how any amendments to the County Ordinances would impact activities there. Rowell Ranch Rodeo Park, owned and operated through the Hayward Area Recreational District (HARD) is within the unincorporated area, and would be required to abide by any new ordinance.

Staff has received much correspondence expressing a concern for animal safety and treatment, some of which goes beyond the objection to just mutton busting and wild cow milking. Although these two activity types seem to be the primary area of concern, other activities may also be brought up during public hearings. Staff has received a number of communications on the treatment of animals at rodeos, and while these are not the focus of this letter, a variety of strong opinions have been expressed against certain types of rodeo activities (mostly stating the events are not necessary, and/or are unsanctioned by the national rodeo association, and/or teach cruelty and animal abuse).

Many of the activities some find objectionable are staples of the modern rodeo event. For instance, mutton busting has been a featured event in rodeos for decades, and is seen by some as harmless entertainment and a way to introduce young people to rodeo events. Similarly, wild cow milking has a long history in where the rodeo event promotes team building and skill in handling difficult farm animals, and can be a necessary practice in some cases.

As mentioned above, the Sheriff's office is charged with administering the current rodeo ordinance and for overseeing rodeo activities. No rodeo permit is required as part of their oversight, and according to the Commander overseeing the Rowell Ranch rodeo, there have been no violations in the past for prohibited activities. The view of the Sheriff's office is that no further changes to the existing ordinance are necessary.

CONCLUSION

The Board may want to consider the current ordinance and determine whether any changes are warranted. Staff recommends the Board accept this report and provide any direction to staff on ordinance changes.

Very truly yours,



Chris Bazar, Director
Community Development Agency