



# County of Monterey

## Item No.3

### Planning Commission

Board of Supervisors  
Chambers  
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor  
Salinas, CA 93901

Legistar File Number: PC 26-059

June 10, 2026

**Introduced:** 6/2/2026

**Current Status:** Agenda Ready

**Version:** 1

**Matter Type:** Planning Item

#### **PLN220125 - MONTEREY COUNTY SHERIFFS POSSE**

Public hearing to consider allowing existing public and private recreational events, including concerts, equestrian and livestock events, and family gatherings at the Monterey County Sheriff's Posse grounds.

**Project Location:** 395 Old Natividad Road, Salinas.

**Proposed CEQA Action:** Find that the project qualifies for Class 1 and Class 23 Categorical Exemptions pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15301 and 15323, and that no exceptions pursuant to section 15300.2 apply.

#### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the County of Monterey Planning Commission adopt a resolution:

1. Finding that the project qualifies for Class 1 and Class 23 Categorical Exemptions pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15301 and 15323, and that no exceptions pursuant to section 15300.2 apply;
2. Approving a Use Permit to allow hosting of eight concerts per year, and memorializing of existing legal-nonconforming public and private recreational events, equestrian and livestock events, and family gatherings at the Monterey County Sheriff's Posse grounds.

A draft resolution, including findings and evidence, is attached for consideration (**Exhibit A**). Staff recommends approval subject to 8 conditions.

#### PROJECT INFORMATION

**Property Owner:** Monterey County Sheriff's Posse

**Agent:** Dale Ellis

**APN:** 211-061-028-000

**Zoning:** Public/Quasi-Public

**Parcel Size:** 47.57 acres

**Flagged and Staked:** Not Applicable

**Project Planner:** Taylor Price, Senior Planner

PriceT1@countyofmonterey.gov, 831-784-2179

#### SUMMARY:

The project site, approximately 47.57 acres, is located at the corner of Natividad Road and Old Natividad Road, within the Greater Salinas Area Plan. The subject property is designated and zoned Public/Quais-Public. Surrounding land uses include agriculturally zoned Farmland parcels, to the west and southwest of the parcel and residentially zoned parcels to the north, east, and southeast zoned Low Density Residential. The project proposes to recognize the Monterey County Sheriff's Posse's

existing legal non-conforming events/land uses that have been occurring at the property (“Monterey County Sheriff’s Posse grounds”) since its founding in 1939. These legal non-conforming events have consisted of public and private recreational uses, such as concerts, equestrian and livestock events, family gatherings, and 4-H events. The Posse grounds also host private events that are hosted by the Sheriff’s Posse staff. These staff-hosted events include the Sheriff’s Posse Car Show, Junior Rodeo, and the Big Hat BBQ, and have been previously recognized by the County as allowed use that may continue (see **Exhibit E**).

In addition to the existing legal non-conforming events, the Posse grounds hosts, on average, six concerts per year with a maximum concert attendance of 2,500 attendees (ranging between 1,200 and 2,500 attendees). These concerts have occurred without the benefit of a Use Permit. However, the Applicant is now seeking approval of a Use Permit to allow up to eight concerts per year.

Public recreational uses that serve the public at large, such as concerts, are allowed in PQP zoning, subject to the granting of a Use Permit. Therefore, the proposal recognizes the previous site’s historical and ongoing public and private recreational events (e.g. equestrian and livestock events, family gatherings, 4-H events, concerts, and Sheriff’s Posse staff events) but increases the allowed number of concerts from six to eight and increases the number of maximum concert attendees by up to 500 (total of 3,000 attendees). This project does not authorize any development, construction, or land disturbance.

This project does not modify or alter the previously authorized legal non-conforming uses. Given the existing legal non-conforming status of these events, staff does not recommend that the Planning Commission reconsider or apply discretion to these existing events. They have been included in this discussion to provide transparency on the total number and types of events that may occur at the Posse Grounds with implementation of this Use Permit.

Based on staff analysis, the project is consistent with all rules and regulations pertaining to zoning uses and all other applicable provisions of the 2010 County of Monterey General Plan, the Greater Salinas Area Plan, and the Inland Zoning Ordinance (Title 21).

DISUCSSION:

*Site History*

The subject property was established as the Salinas Rodeo Rider’s & Sheriff’s Posse (now known as the Monterey County Sheriff’s Posse (MCSP)) in 1939 and has been holding both member events (private) and events where the MCSP facilities are rented by members of the public at large (public). In 1983, the MCSP applied for a Use Permit (PC-4727) to allow mini-bike racing. This Use Permit was approved by the Planning Commission and expired in 1984. In 1992, the County of Monterey Zoning Administrator issued a letter (**Exhibit B**) confirming the legal non-conforming status of the MCSP and noted that, on average, around 100 events per year occur at the facility, with no cap on the number of attendees per event, and that this was in line with the number of historic events that occurred at the facility. Additionally, this letter notes that MCSP may be used for events that have historically occurred at the location, but that concerts would require a Use Permit.

This letter has authorized MCSP to continue to operate the legal non-conforming events that they do today, except for concerts. There is no proposed change in the number or type of legal non-conforming events authorized in the 1992 letter. Although the 1992 letter required the issuance of a Use Permit for the hosting of any concerts, MCSP has hosted numerous concerts since at least 1990 without the benefit of a Use Permit. MCSP provided the County with documentation that between 2017 and 2024 (**Exhibit E**), MCSP hosted on average 5.8 concerts per year. MCSP now seeks a Use Permit to allow for concerts. Granting of this Use Permit would allow the existing concerts to continue, but increase the number of concerts from six to eight and increase the maximum attendees from 2,500 to 3,000 individuals.

#### *Allowed Use*

The proposed use of MCSP for public and private recreational uses, such as concerts, is in keeping with the purpose of PQP zones, which is to allow designated areas for public/quasi public uses and uses that serve the public at large. The MCSP facility currently operates with events for members only and allows rentals of the facility for family gatherings, equestrian and livestock events, fundraisers, and concerts. While some of these events are private members only events, the majority of the events on the MCSP site serve local and regional non-profits, families, companies, and all members of the Monterey County community. These events allow for anyone within the County and region to attend events at the MCSP facility in keeping with the intent of PQP land use and zoning.

#### *Noise*

MCSP operates between 7:00 am and 9:00 pm, with event clean up and breakdown sometimes occurring after 9:00 pm. Sources of noise associated with MCSP are generally associated with amplified human voices associated with pre-recorded and live music and animal noises. The project was analyzed in accordance with Title 10, Chapter 10.60, and the 2010 County of Monterey General Plan Safety Element. The project will not significantly change the site's existing noise generators, will not create any new noise-sensitive land uses, will not entitle any new development or ground disturbance, and will not authorize any construction activities. As the project is not in close proximity to any sensitive receptors and the project does not propose any new significant noise generators, the project is not required to obtain an acoustical analysis. Further, the project memorializes the legal non-conforming use that has been in operation since 1939, and permits the concerts that have been occurring at least yearly since 1990. Finally, Title 10 Section 10.60.040.C exempts outdoor gatherings, dances, and sporting events on commercial and institutional premises from the allowed daytime and nighttime noise thresholds of Title 10, provided that such use is conducted pursuant to applicable rules, regulations, and zoning restrictions. The MCSP facility is zoned PQP, and PQP zoning allows public recreational uses. Therefore, MCSP is exempt from the requirements of Title 10.

Although the applicant is not proposing any new noise generators, new development, or uses that would require MCSP to comply with the requirements of Title 10, the applicant has implemented noise mitigation measures at their facility. The applicant has onsite noise monitoring equipment to ensure that noise levels do not exceed 85 decibels at 50 feet from the noise-generating source. If MCSP is notified that the noise levels of the event exceed 85 decibels at 50 feet from the source the event director and security director are notified and will resolve the issue. The facility is also designed to ensure that amplified human voices are not projected towards the neighboring residential parcels, as the stage is set up facing the neighboring agricultural parcels. The nearest residential parcel is

approximately 470 feet from the stage and approximately 600 feet from the rodeo stands, which would mean that at 85 decibels the sound would likely attenuate to below the requirements in Title 10 Chapter 10.60 for daytime and nighttime noise. Further, HCD-Staff is unaware of any complaints received by neighbors regarding noise, traffic, or other potential nuisances associated with concerts and events at the MCSP facility. Based on the information above, staff believes the proposed use would not introduce a noise that is inconsistent with the allowed uses under existing zoning (public recreational uses) or detrimental to the surrounding residential community.

*Trip Generation, Level of Service, and Safety*

MCSP currently operates as an event facility, which means that it typically operates outside of normal commuting hours and generally has events that occur on the weekends or holidays. This means that the additional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) that the facility generates are occurring during non-peak hours and would dissipate within 20-30 minutes following a maximum capacity event. The existing LOS at the three surrounding intersections near the project site would not be degraded below their current peak hours LOS.

The project is conditioned to ensure that, pursuant to the Operations Plan, all events with more than 400 attendees are required to have Traffic Control points with at least two qualified personnel on-site. The Monterey County Sheriff's Office has reviewed the proposal, raised no concerns, and requested that the Sheriff's Office be notified of any/all events that are occurring at the Posse grounds, regardless of size or whether they are public or private. Accordingly, a Condition of Approval has been applied that requires the requested notification at least 30 days prior to the event.

The original traffic analysis was analyzed under the assumption that the project would be an amendment to the prior Use Permit. As the permit expired in 1984, there is no Use Permit to amend. Therefore, some of the analysis in the Transportation Analysis Report has incorrect assumptions in place, such as a non-existent cap on event attendance of 500 people per event, which is not reflected in the 1992 County of Monterey Zoning Administrator letter (see **Exhibit B**), and a proposed cap on the number of attendees for concerts of 2,500 rather than 3,000. However, that does not change the findings in the Transportation Analysis Report that the project will not result in any impacts on LOS or VMT and the addition of new trips for the proposed project is below the threshold of significant environmental impact of more than 110 trips per day.

*Parking*

MCSP is required to provide 1 parking stall per 4 occupants capacity, pursuant to Chapter 21.58 of the Monterey County Code requirement for "Recreational Enterprises". This means with a maximum capacity of 3,000 attendees, they would be required to provide 750 parking stalls and approximately 8 handicapped parking stalls. MCSP currently provides 3,215 parking stalls, including approximately 48 handicapped parking stalls.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The following agencies have reviewed the project, have comments, and/or have recommended conditions:

- Environmental Health Bureau
- HCD-Engineering Services

HCD-Environmental Services  
Monterey County Regional Fire Protection District  
Monterey County Sheriff's Office

LAND USE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

There is no Land Use Advisory Committee for the project.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

This project qualifies for a categorical exemption from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15301. This exemption applies to the permitting of existing private structures involving negligible expansion of its existing or former use. The Applicant is proposing to operate in line with the facilities existing use with a negligible expansion of its existing use, which consists of hosting private and public events. This project does not propose or authorize any development, land disturbance, or construction.

The facility will be limited to a maximum of eight concerts per year, with a limit on the number of attendees to no more than 3,000 per concert. This would ensure the facility is operating in line with its existing use for private and public events with a negligible expansion to its existing use. Further, the project would ensure that the facility complies with all County of Monterey codes and regulations and is conditioned to ensure that all these requirements have been memorialized as part of its future operations. Therefore, the project is consistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15301. None of the exceptions under CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 apply to this project. Additionally, there would be no significant effects on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Further, there is no evidence that "the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant." Additionally, an action is a "project" only when it is either "directly undertaken by any public agency," "supported, in whole or in part" by financial or other forms of assistance from a public agency, or involves the issuance of an entitlement by a public agency (Public Resources Code, § 21065).

The project qualifies for a categorical exemption from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15323. MCSP has been operating as an event facility since 1939, for almost 87 years. The facility has been designed and operated as a special events facility; this project will recognize the existing operations that have been occurring at the facility and are operations for which the facility was designed. Further, this project will ensure that limitations are placed on future concerts and will ensure that the facility does not expand future operations. The facility will continue to operate in compliance with all of Monterey County Code regulations and has been conditioned to ensure facility operations do not alter the "activity that has been occurring for the last three years". Therefore, the project consists of normal operations of existing facilities for public gatherings for which the facility has been designed, and the facility has a past history of being used for a similar kind of purpose.

Prepared by: Taylor Price, Senior Planner, (831) 784-2179

Reviewed by: Fionna Jensen, Principal Planner

Approved by: Melanie Beretti, AICP, Chief of Planning

The following attachments are on file with HCD:

Exhibit A - Draft Resolution, including:

- Conditions of Approval
- Project Plans
- Operations Plan
- Incident Action Plan

Exhibit B - County of Monterey Zoning Administrator Letter Dated 1992

Exhibit C - Traffic Analysis Report

Exhibit D - Vicinity Map

Exhibit E - Historic Events 2017-2024

cc: Front Counter Copy; HCD-Engineering Services; Environmental Health Bureau; HCD-Environmental Services; Monterey County Regional Fire Protection District; Fionna Jensen, Principal Planner; Taylor Price, Senior Planner; Mike Horsley, Applicant; Dale Ellis, Agent; The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch (Executive Director); Lozeau Drury LLP; Chrstina McGinnis, Keep Big Sur Wild; Holger Kappler, Herman Campos, Interested Parties; Project File PLN220125.