



Council Agenda Report

From: Darcy Delgado, Associate Planner

Subject: Continued from April 7, 2026 meeting - Introduce First Reading by Title Only an Amendment to Chapter 21.52 of the Paso Robles Municipal Code Updating Standards Related to Temporary, Prohibited, and Nonconforming Signs (RZN25-07, P25-0117)

CEQA Determination: The proposed ordinance is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it does not qualify as a “project” under CEQA. State CEQA Guidelines §15060(c) provides that “[a]n activity is not subject to CEQA if ... the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378.” Even if the proposed ordinance is considered a “project” subject to CEQA, it is categorically exempt pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15320 (Class 20).

Date: April 21, 2026

Facts

1. The City of El Paso de Robles regulates signs as specified in Chapter 21.52 (“Signs”) of the Paso Robles Municipal Code.
2. Signs significantly affect the aesthetic appeal of the City and its streetscapes, influence the quality of the visual environment, and shape perceptions of local economic conditions, as well as present safety, traffic, and circulation issues.
3. The City has a reputation as a community with native beauty, unique visitor attractions such as wineries, and distinctive architecture with a historic downtown, all of which makes tourism a staple of the City’s economy. Updating the sign code helps balance community design goals with free speech protections, providing clearer guidance for applicants, staff, and enforcement while supporting orderly development.
4. Best practices and relevant constitutional case law emphasize regulating signs based on objective, “time, place, and manner” standards—such as size, height, location, lighting, and duration—rather than the message displayed on the sign. Therefore, it is appropriate to amend the existing sign rules from time to time to keep up with best practices.
5. This zoning code text amendment would update Chapter 21.52 (“Signs”) to align with best practices in a content-neutral manner that safeguards fundamental free speech rights, while also protecting the community’s aesthetic and safety objectives, enhances the City’s visual environment so as to foster commerce and tourism, minimize visual clutter, and serves the public health, welfare and safety and traffic safety and circulation concerns.
6. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on March 10, 2026, and considered the facts as presented in the staff report prepared for this project, and accepted public testimony regarding the project, and on four-consecutive votes of 4-0-3 (Commissioners Christensen, Marlow, and Lorenz were absent) voted to recommend the City Council approve the zoning code text amendment.
7. The City Council originally held a public hearing on April 7, 2026. As a result of public testimony provided during the hearing, the City Council voted to continue this item to April 21, 2026 to allow the public additional time to review the proposed changes.

Options

1. Take no action;
2. Introduce for first reading by title only Ordinance XXXX amending Chapter 21.52 of the Paso Robles Municipal Code;
3. Provide alternative direction to staff.

Issued Raised at April 7, 2026 hearing

During the April 7, 2026 hearing's public testimony, a number of questions were raised about the City's **Portable Sign** standards (also referred to as sidewalk signs, sandwich signs or A-frame signs). Portable signs are **not regulated** under the Title 21 Zoning Code - Sign Ordinance but have been regulated since 1993 as "street furniture" under the Title 11, Streets and Sidewalk Code. The proposed Sign Ordinance amendments do not make any changes to the City's Portable Sign regulations.

11.30.013 - Maximum dimensions and design of portable signs.



Portable signs located as street furniture along the public sidewalk, shall be limited to no more than one sign, single-or double-sided, per adjacent property street frontage. The maximum size of any sign face shall not exceed twelve square feet.

Portable signs shall be limited in content to advertising businesses, goods and/or services licensed to be sold in the immediately adjacent property. All portable signs shall be constructed of durable materials; lettering, colors and design and shall be prepared in a professional manner.

All portable signs shall be subject to design approval by the DRC; DRC shall establish written design guidelines for signage in the public right-of-way, prepared in consultation with the Main Street board of directors or their designee.

(Ord. 667 N.S. (part), 1993)

Staff will meet with stakeholders who raised questions during the April 7 City Council meeting in advance of the April 21 meeting. Any feedback or discussions resulting from those meetings will be included as part of the staff presentation for this item.

Analysis and Conclusions

The proposed amendment to the Zoning Code Sign Ordinance is intended to preserve the City's ability to regulate signage in a manner that benefits the community as a whole, while also safeguarding constitutionally protected free speech. The update addresses regulations related to prohibited signs, temporary signs, and nonconforming signs, and includes minor revisions to Section 21.52.110, "Administration and Enforcement." Overall, the amendment is considered a "cleanup" action designed to clarify existing provisions and bring the City's sign regulations into alignment with current case law and industry best practices.

The ordinance proposes revisions to the "prohibited signs" provisions in Section 21.52.040 by expanding and refining the definitions of "Flashing or Moving Signs" and "Vehicle or Trailer-Mounted Signs." It also introduces new definitions for "Obsolete Signs," "Obstruction of Ingress or Egress," and "Signs in the Public Right-of-Way," which are intended to address common enforcement challenges and provide clearer guidance to property owners, businesses, and staff.

In addition, the ordinance reorganizes and clarifies the City's regulations on "temporary signs" under Section 21.52.090 to improve usability and ensure consistent application. Minor clarifications are also included for administrative and enforcement procedures in Section 21.52.110 to enhance transparency and effectiveness in implementation.

The proposed amendments are content-neutral and reflect "time, place, and manner" regulations that are consistent with applicable legal standards. The City Council is being asked to approve the proposed text amendments, which are provided with track changes in Attachment 1. A recommended action is included in Attachment 2, Exhibit A, where the amendments to Chapter 21.52 are presented in a clean (non-tracked) format.

Fiscal Impact

This Zoning Code amendment would not directly impact the City's fiscal resources.

CEQA

The proposed ordinance is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it does not qualify as a "project" under CEQA. State CEQA Guidelines §15060(c) provides that "[a]n activity is not subject to CEQA if ... the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378." Even if the proposed ordinance is considered a "project" subject to CEQA, it is categorically exempt pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15320 (Class 20).

Recommendation

Introduce for first reading by title only Ordinance XXXX, amending Chapter 21.52 of the Paso Robles Municipal Code.

Attachments

1. Chapter 21.52 Amendments with Redlines
2. Ordinance XXXX – Sign Ordinance Amendment
 - a. Exhibit A – Amended Chapter 21.52
3. Legal Notice