



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, October 28, 2025
TO: CITY COUNCIL
WRITTEN BY: PRINCIPAL MANAGEMENT ANALYST ZAVALA
RECOMMENDED BY: CITY MANAGER VIDES
APPROVED BY: CITY MANAGER VIDES

SUBJECT: PROPOSED ASSESSMENT BALLOTS FOR THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
MOSQUITO AND VECTOR CONTROL MANAGEMENT SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council adopt a resolution to authorize the City Manager to vote “Yes” on the City’s assessment ballots for City-owned parcels for the Santa Cruz County Mosquito, Vector, and Disease Control Proposed Benefit Assessment; and to submit ballots on behalf of the City of Watsonville.

BACKGROUND:

Since 1993, the Santa Cruz County Mosquito and Vector Control Division which is managed by the County Agricultural Commissioner, protects communities from mosquito and vector-borne diseases through surveillance, prevention, and environmentally responsible control of mosquitoes, ticks, rodents, and other pests that can spread disease.

Funding for the Division has relied on a voter-approved benefit assessment. The current assessment is between \$18.69 and \$24.26 per year for single-family homes and has not been updated in nearly 30 years. The Division receives no other County funding beyond this assessment.

Rising operational costs, inflation, and the potential reappearance of invasive mosquito species prompted the Board of Supervisors to direct staff in 2023 to explore a benefit assessment increase. In August 2025, the Board approved a Resolution of Intention to levy the assessment and authorize mailing ballots to all property owners starting September 2, 2025.

DISCUSSION:

To maintain and enhance its ability to respond to public health threats, the Division is proposing a benefit assessment increase. If approved, all funds would remain locally controlled and dedicated exclusively to mosquito and vector control services in Santa Cruz County. Ballots were mailed to property owners the week of September 2, 2025, and must be returned by November 4, 2025.

The proposed assessment would continue support for:

- Monitoring of native and invasive mosquitoes and vector-borne diseases
- Tick and rodent inspection, testing, and prevention services
- Free mosquito-eating fish for ponds and troughs
- Rapid response to resident service requests
- Yellowjacket and wasp control when needed
- Community education on vector prevention and safety

For most single-family homes, the increase would be about \$1 per month (\$11.99 per year). Other property types (multi-family, commercial, agricultural) are assessed based on land use, size, and proximity to vector habitats. Larger property owners may pay between \$11-\$15 per month. All assessments were calculated in accordance with the attached Engineer's Report, which outlines costs, benefits, and funding allocations. If assessment is approved, after the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the maximum allowed assessment rate will only be adjusted for inflation by an amount equal to the change in the Northern California (San Francisco-Oakland – Hayward) Consumer Price Index (CPI), not to exceed 3% per year. These annual increases would first need to be reviewed and approved by the Board of Supervisors yearly.

Property Type	Assessment	Rate
Commercial	\$5.99	Per 1/4 Acre
Office	\$17.03	Per 1/4 Acre
Vacant	\$5.76	Per 1/4 Acre
Parking lot/warehouse	\$0.25	Per 1/4 Acre
Apartment (6 or more units)	\$3.24	Per Unit
Agricultural	\$0.03	Per 1/4 Acre
Mobile home park	\$6.00	Per 1/4 Acre
Single family residence	\$11.99	Per Unit
Residence with 2-4 units	\$5.76	Per Unit
Mobile home on own land	\$6.59	Per Unit
Open space	\$0.01	Per 1/4 Acre

This ballot is specifically for the proposed Mosquito & Vector Control Assessment and is separate from any other election. Benefit Assessments are applied under Proposition 218 and are calculated based on benefits to properties. Thus, the decision of whether or not to add or increase rates to an assessment is decided by the property owners (who would be paying for the assessment charges), not registered voters in the County.

Each property's vote is weighted by the amount of its proposed assessment. If the vote receives a 50% majority, the assessment would go up to the County Board of Supervisors for final approval. Results of the votes will be announced at the public hearing scheduled for Tuesday, November 18, 2025.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) DETERMINATION:

The approval of the assessment is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq. The CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 15000 et. seq.), including without limitation, Public Resources Code section 21065 and California Code of Regulations 15378 as this is not a "project" that may cause a direct, or reasonably foreseeable indirect, physical change in the environment.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Infrastructure & Environment

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The proposed cumulative annual assessment increase for all the City-owned parcels is \$1,037.75. After the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the maximum allowed assessment rate will be adjusted for inflation by an amount equal to the change in the Northern California (San Francisco-Oakland – Hayward) CPI, not to exceed 3% per year, upon review and approval by the County Board of Supervisors.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION:

The City Council may choose not to authorize a "Yes" vote on the assessment ballots, which could contribute to a majority vote against the assessment.

ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (IF ANY):

- A. Assessment Notice and Ballot Information Guide
- B. Engineer's Report
- C. List of City-owned Properties that are impacted by the proposed assessment