

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION UPDATING THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES FOR THE
REMOVAL OF UNLAWFUL CAMPSITES, BULKY ITEMS, AND PERSONAL
BELONGINGS**

WHEREAS, Salinas is a Charter city organized and operating pursuant to Article 7 of the California Constitution; and

WHEREAS, through previous legislative enactments (Ordinance No. 2564, Ordinance No. 2567, Ordinance No. 2599 and Resolution Nos. 20884 and 20908), the City Council declared its intent to prevent the misappropriation of City property for personal use and the proliferation of encampments on public property that have a significant adverse effect on public health, safety, and welfare and impede or entirely obstruct access by emergency responders when responding to emergencies; and

WHEREAS, through its previous legislative enactments, the City Council made clear its intent to prevent the misappropriation of City property for personal use and to promote the public health, safety, and welfare by ensuring that City property remains accessible and usable by all members of the public for the purposes for which such public property is intended and by ensuring that City property remains in a clean, sanitary, and accessible condition; and

WHEREAS, the public areas within the city, including streets, sidewalks, parks, public buildings, and public land, should be readily accessible, free from obstruction, and available to the public at large for use in a safe and healthy manner; and

WHEREAS, the use of these areas for overnight camping purposes interferes with the ability of residents and the public at large to use the areas in the healthy and safe manner for the uses intended; and

WHEREAS, such camping activity can constitute a public health and safety hazard, which adversely impacts other members of the public, neighborhoods, industrial, agricultural, and commercial areas; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the proliferation of camping and encampments on public property in the city of Salinas which has obstructed access by pedestrians and users of City facilities, individuals camping on public property and/or residing in encampments on public property frequently urinate and defecate on City property (and nearby private property) and have been observed using and distributing narcotics and alcohol causing unsafe and unsanitary conditions to persist around and within the areas of the camps and/or the encampments creating an environment for the spread of disease and bacteria and an environment which prevents Salinas's residents from using and accessing City facilities, including the City libraries and recreation centers; and

WHEREAS, City employees and members of the public at large have reported that overnight camping on City property has specifically interfered with their use of public buildings, public sidewalks, public streets, parking lots, parking garages, and other open spaces, including the public space surrounding the library and the public space in front of City Hall; and

WHEREAS, City employees leaving City Hall have been confronted by overnight campers screaming, yelling, and displaying other aggressive and erratic behavior that has made those employees fear for their safety upon egress of the building; and

WHEREAS, City employees have been confronted by overnight campers subjecting them to unwanted sexual comments; and

WHEREAS, City employees have observed individuals around the City Permit Center and the adjacent parking structure engage in sexual activity, as well as illegal drug use; and

WHEREAS, members of the public as well as City employees have complained about the smell of public places, including the area in front of City Hall and the areas around the City libraries (particularly the John Steinbeck Library) and City Permit Center and adjacent parking structure, as a result of individuals loitering in and around those areas and as a result of overnight camping activity, including urination and defecation by overnight campers; and

WHEREAS, drug paraphernalia has been found at the site of the overnight camp in front of City Hall; and

WHEREAS, it has been reported that public spaces can no longer be used by residents and the public at large for the manner and uses in which they were intended, including specific complaints that outdoor public spaces, including, but not limited to, the space in front of City Hall, the space around the City Permit Center and adjacent parking structure, and the space around the John Steinbeck Library, including the grass areas in front of the John Steinbeck Library, that were once used by residents and the public at large to recreate, eat lunch, and take breaks can no longer be used for those purposes as a result of the litter, urine and feces left by individuals loitering in and around those areas and as a result of the overnight campers in those areas; and

WHEREAS, the lawn areas and other spaces on or around City property, including most-notably the lawn areas in front of City Hall and in front of the John Steinbeck Library are frequently used by persons in such a manner that they have been damaged and or destroyed and in some cases present a danger to the health and safety of the community and of the patrons of those facilities; and

WHEREAS, City employees must regularly clean up and remove human waste from areas used for overnight camping including, but not limited to, the space in front of City Hall, the space

surrounding the John Steinbeck Library, recreation centers, public parking lots, and public parking garages; and

WHEREAS, residents and the public at large are prevented from the use of the public areas within and around the city, including streets, sidewalks, parks, public building and public land when those areas are obstructed by a gathering preventing the free passage by use of any street, sidewalk, alley, public way, ingress to any public building, or place used by members of the public to go from place to place; and

WHEREAS, the abuse or mutilation of trees, plants, and lawn prevents residents and the public at large from the reasonable use and enjoyment of those items while costing the City substantial money and resources for the restoration of those items; and

WHEREAS, urination and defecation outside of urinals, toilets, or commodes located in bathrooms, restrooms, or other structures specifically designated for the purpose of urination and defecation poses a significant health and safety problem to residents and the public at large as well as costing the city substantial money and resources to clean; and

WHEREAS, from 2020-2023, an encampment within the Carr Lake area grew to over one hundred separate encampments causing the degradation of waterways through trash accumulation. The adjacent neighborhoods saw an increase in criminal activity during this same time period including, but not limited to, acts of indecent exposure and gang-related crimes (homicides, drug dealing, human trafficking, and gambling). In November 2023, the City removed approximately two hundred tons of debris from this area. A wooden walkway (commonly known as the “boardwalk”) that runs along East Laurel Drive on Carr Lake’s south end suffered structural damage by unsheltered individuals removing the wooden planks and digging underneath the boardwalk to establish encampments, thereby undermining the structural integrity of this pedestrian walkway; and

WHEREAS, encampments along the Alisal Creek have caused degradation of water quality due to human feces and trash entering the waterway; and

WHEREAS, between 2020-2023, the waterway near Casentini Street and Main Street 2020-2023, became polluted as a result of trash and human waste being deposited into the waterway. The City cleaned out approximately ten tons of debris from this waterway. During this same time period, multiple fires occurred that were caused by individuals living in encampments along this waterway endangering nearby residential structures. Accumulated flammable debris have heightened fire risks within this area; and

WHEREAS, during the period 2020-2025, the number of unsheltered individuals living in encampments in the Circle Drive and Cesar Chavez Park areas has significantly increased and impacted adjacent residential neighborhoods. Criminal activity including drug trafficking and

residential theft has increased as a result, in addition to incidents of indecent exposure and evidence of drug use; and

WHEREAS, numerous shopping carts and camping paraphernalia routinely block the dead end of East San Luis Street as a result of the growing unsheltered population establishing encampments in this area; and

WHEREAS, the number of encampments in the CreekBridge area, from Veterans Parkway at East Laurel Drive to the rear of the Safeway grocery store on Constitution Boulevard has grown substantially. Public defecation and disposal of trash by the unsheltered living in these encampments into the waterway have caused degradation of water quality. Drug sales, drug use, and human trafficking are common within this encampment area. Residential theft and robberies have risen as a result of the growing encampment area; and

WHEREAS, the roadway underpass at Market Street is a focal point for unsheltered encampments leading to significant public health, safety, and quality of life concerns for nearby residents and commuters. The underpass' location along a major roadway creates an intensified risk for residents of the encampment and for drivers as individuals from the encampment frequently walk into the roadway into traffic, endangering themselves and drivers. Fires started within the encampment cause damage to the roadway underpass threatening the structural integrity of the roadway. The proximity of this encampment to residential neighborhoods has lead to increased theft and vandalism, coupled with an increased insecurity among residents of the neighborhood. The visual blight of encampments adjacent to and within the residential neighborhood diminishes the quality of life for residents of the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, during the period 2020-2023, the number of encampments within the Chinatown area has increased significantly resulting in an equally significant deterioration of the neighborhood due to increased crime; increased threats to public health from the presence of human waste, trash, rodents and vermin, drugs, and toxic waste. Police operations within this area during this time period and to the present have uncovered extensive drug use and possession (including methamphetamine and fentanyl), possession of dangerous weapons (including knives, guns, and a hand grenade), and signs of gang control (where gangs exploit the unsheltered population by imposing "taxes" and coercing unsheltered into drug trafficking and other criminal activities). Local business are impacted by the presence of encampments by the blockage of sidewalks and entryways, which deter customers and visitors; and

WHEREAS, the waterway on the Rico Street and West Lake Street area has been plagued by encampments leading to significant environmental issues. The waterway, vital for local agricultural and natural systems, has suffered contamination due to widespread drug use and the presence of human waste; and

WHEREAS, activities within Sherwood Park have been negatively affected by the presence of encampments, rendering it unsafe for use by the community. Widespread defecation and urination have created unhealthy conditions within the area set up with tables and benches for

park users. Drug paraphernalia is present throughout the park posing a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of park users; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds and determines that it is necessary to maintain public and private lands, streets, sidewalks, alleys, ways, creeks, waterways, parks, playgrounds, recreation areas, plazas, open spaces, lots, parcels and other public and private areas within the city, in a clean, sanitary and accessible condition and to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community, while recognizing that, subject to reasonable conditions, camping and camping facilities associated with special events can be beneficial to the cultural and educational well-being of the city; and

WHEREAS, private property owners have complained to the City about the scope, size, and number of encampments on their property and the negative health and safety consequences associated with those encampments and have regularly requested the City's assistance in cleaning up those encampments; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary and urgent for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety of the residents of the city and the public at large to enact an emergency measure to address the negative health and safety consequences associated with overnight encampments, including, but not limited to the health and safety consequences created by the accumulation of human waste, the accumulation of garbage, including used needles used for the administration of drugs intravenously, and the safety of city employees from aggressive behavior and unwanted sexual comments; and

WHEREAS, updates to the Salinas Municipal Code are necessary in order to address issues associated with individuals loitering in and around public spaces and also associated with overnight camping within the city and the establishment of encampments on public property and private property; and

WHEREAS, the potential destruction of, damage to, or interference with, infrastructure that is critical to the provision of public services such as law enforcement, fire prevention, transportation, and utilities, including water and waste disposal is a principal threat to the public health, safety, and welfare. Destruction of, damage to, or interference with, critical infrastructure is caused by fire, contamination, restricting access, or other causes. Destruction of, damage to, or interference with, critical infrastructure is often caused by persons whose activities are not permitted or authorized in, on, or near critical infrastructure.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF SALINAS as follows:

1. The Administrative Procedures for the Removal of Unlawful Campsites, Bulky Items, and Personal Property attached hereto are hereby approved.
2. All resolutions and parts of resolutions and all administrative procedures in conflict herewith are hereby repealed as of the effective date of this resolution.

PASSED AND APPROVED this ____ day of _____, 2026, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

APPROVED:

Dennis Donohue, Mayor

ATTEST:

Patricia M. Soratos, City Clerk

Attachment A:

Administrative Procedure: Removal of Unlawful Campsites, Bulky Items, and Personal Belongings; Administrative Procedure