



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
County Counsel



Date: April 13, 2016
Board Meeting Date: June 7, 2016
Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: John C. Beiers, County Counsel

Subject: Ordinance establishing standards for use of the official County seal and logo.

RECOMMENDATION:

Adoption of an Ordinance adding Chapter 2.05 to Article 2 of Title 2 of the San Mateo County Ordinance Code regarding use of the County seal and logo, previously introduced on May 24, 2016, and waive reading of the Ordinance in its entirety.

BACKGROUND:

As authorized by Government Code section 25004, the County of San Mateo ("County") adopted the official seal of San Mateo County in 1963:



The County has also used a logo for situations where use of the official County seal is not required. The most recent version of the County logo is described in the February 2014 County of San Mateo Style Guide:



Generally, a logo is used for marketing, branding and identification purposes. In contrast, a seal is generally used to establish authenticity of certain official documents. To date, the County has not adopted formal requirements for use of the official seal or logo. Adopting such requirements is quite common. See e.g., San Francisco Admin. Code § 1.6; Kern County Ordinance Code § 2.05.030.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed Ordinance would define proper and improper uses of the seal and logo. Specifically, the Ordinance would authorize use of the official seal and logo by the County and County departments for purposes directly connected with official business of the County. The official seal and logo could also be used for matters authorized by the Board of Supervisors or the County Manager. The Ordinance also defines improper uses of the County seal and logo, including use for commercial purposes, or use to falsely imply County sponsorship or approval. Lastly, the Ordinance would also authorize the County Manager or his or her designee to draft further policies governing use of the official seal or logo that are consistent with the Ordinance as adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

In the age of websites, scanners and electronic images, it has become much easier to appropriate the seal and logo. This Ordinance protects the community by decreasing the likelihood that a person or entity will attempt to mislead the public into believing that the County has endorsed a matter or activity. Further, it makes it less likely that a person or entity will use the logo or seal and then claim that the County is acting arbitrarily in ordering cessation.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with adopting this Ordinance.