Board of County Commissioners

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Equine Business Code Update

September 15th, 2026

Background

- Equine business code update prioritized by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC)
- Response to public feedback regarding challenges encountered establishing and running equine businesses/commercial stables

Process

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Equestrian Code Update Timeline

Phase 0 Outreach
Introductory survey, workshops, and research

2024

Phase 1 Outreach
Kickoff, sharing Phase 0 results, sharing project plan

Jan '26

Drafting
Planning staff coordinates with other agencies to create initial draft

Feb-Mar '26

Phase 2 Outreach
Webinar, survey, and public focus groups for draft review

Apr '26

Adoption
Public hearings for adoption of revised draft

Summer '26

Current Regulations

- In most places, “commercial stables” use type (boarding or training of 3 or more horses) allowed with a special use permit (SUP)
  - Requires public hearing process
  - Must operate from commercial structure with a permanent bathroom
- Warm Springs planning area allows boarding stables with permitting based on number of horses per acre
- Commercial stables a commercial use
  - Requires a business license
  - Triggers commercial parking, landscaping, and lighting standards

Proposed Changes

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- Updating use definitions to divide equine facilities into **three tiers**, replacing the current "one size fits all" definition. The tiers are:
  - Small equine facility – **1 through 8 horses**
  - Medium equine facility – **9 through 20 horses**
  - Large equine facility – **21 or more horses**

Use Type	LDR	MDR	HDR	LDS/LDS2	TC	PR	GR	GRA
Small Equine Facility	A	A	A	AR*	AR	AR	A	A
Medium Equine Facility	AR	AR	AR	S_2	S_2	AR	AR*	AR
Large Equine Facility	S_2	S_2	S_2	S_2	S_2	AR	S_2	S_2

Key: -- = Not allowed; A = Allowed; AR = Administrative Review; P = Administrative Permit; PR = Park Commission Approval pursuant to Section 110.104.40(c); S2 = Board of Adjustment Special Use Permit

Note: *See Section 110.342.10(k) for alternate permitting requirements.

Article 342

- **Minimum lot size** of 35,000 square feet, **hours of operation** from 7:00 a.m. through 9:00 p.m., and excluding **livestock shelters** from setback areas
- Additional review and mitigation as needed for impacts to **source water** or **regulated waterways**
- Allowance for the use of **temporary bathroom facilities** for small and medium equine facilities not operating out of a structure
- **Reduced landscaping requirements**, including buffers along streets and buffers adjoining residential uses when within 100 feet of the equine facility
- Allowances for medium equine facilities by right on **general rural (GR) parcels that are at least 35 acres** when such facilities are located at least 100 feet from adjoining property lines and **low density suburban (LDS) parcels when less than three horses** are associated with the facility
- Standards related to compliance **animal welfare** regulations and coordination with Washoe County Regional Animal Services

Other Amendments

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- Modify agricultural parking requirements, **allowing unpaved parking** for uses with 20 or less parking spaces.
- Modify **parking area landscaping requirements** to only require a buffer along the parking area (rather than the entire shared property line)
- Allow Director's Modification requests to be combined with administrative review permits
- Modify time frames for processing administrative review permits:
  - 10 days to deem an application complete and mail a notice to affected property owners (aligns with changes to NRS during the 2023 legislative session)
  - 15 calendar days for the applicant to respond to property owner comments
  - 15 working days for a written decision to be issued after the public comment response period

Identified Barriers/Challenges

- Challenges referenced throughout public engagement that were outside of the scope of planning and zoning regulations
  - Water rights requirements
  - Fire sprinklers
  - Commercial Septic
- Discussed in June multi-agency stakeholder meeting
- Staff creating a permitting guide for equine facilities to improve understanding of the applicable requirements

Public Engagement

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- **Phase 0** public outreach (2024) provided a general understanding of where county residents think equine business uses are appropriate, which regulations are appropriate, and what the permitting requirements should be.
  - **1,898** questionnaire responses
  - **110** open house attendees
- **Phase 1** public outreach (2026) included feedback on existing equine business models, needs, potential tier thresholds, other agency requirements (water rights, commercial septic, and fire), and more.
  - Approximately **48** participants who were generally directly involved in equine activities

Public Engagement

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- **Phase 2** public outreach (2026) focused on draft review and included a webinar, survey, and eight scheduled focus groups
  - **54** survey respondents
  - **20** focus group participants
- **Revised draft review** public outreach (2026) provided an opportunity to provide comments on a draft revised based on Phase 2 outreach
  - **18** survey respondents
- Summary of public engagement in the staff report, with links to more extensive outreach summaries for each phase
- Proposed draft is fundamentally a response to public input

Motion - Approval

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"Move to **adopt** Ordinance Number [insert Ordinance number provided by the County Clerk], which is an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 110 (Development Code) within Articles 300, 302, 304, 342, 400, 410, 412, and 809 as shown in Attachment B.

In making this motion, the Board is affirming the Planning Commission's findings of fact included in the Planning Commission's recommendation and included in Washoe County Code Section 110.818.15(e)."

Thank you

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