

Mitigation Grant and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, \$4 million and \$3 million respectively for eligible projects, with a 25% cost match from awardees. With support from City Administration, Public Works and Developmental Services, the Fire Department submitted project applications for each grant to secure mitigation funds for vegetation management.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Environmental Notice

The Project qualifies for a Class 4 Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines.

Environmental Determination

The Director of Development Services has reviewed the proposed project for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the project qualifies for a Class 4 Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) of the State CEQA Guidelines because the project consists of vegetation management to limit the adverse effects of fire on vegetation and property. Thus, no further environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Not Applicable.

DISCUSSION

Since 2000, San Diego County has experienced hundreds of wildfires (>100 acres in size) that have burned well over one million acres. The October 2003 and October 2007 wildfires were significant, as they forced the evacuation of over 500,000 San Diego County residents, burned thousands of structures and hundreds of thousands of acres and resulted in the loss of life. Uncontrolled wildfires pose a significant threat to public health and safety, property, and critical infrastructure, requiring emergency measures be taken in response. These reasons, along with Chula Vista's abundant vegetation throughout open space areas, provided the basis for the City to declare wildfires as the greatest disaster threat facing the community. This was formally done via resolution in the City's adopted Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Throughout our community, there is a significant amount of wildland urban interface (WUI) where residential or commercial properties are contiguous to open space areas. Chula Vista's WUI is composed of 1,000 plus acres, among 40 fire department designated open space areas, needing routine inspection along with varying degrees of vegetation management. Most of the open space areas in the center of the city are in need of urgent brush management. It is also important to note that not only does the City own the respective open space property, but the districts established to maintain the open space areas are not supported financially to perform the minimum requisite vegetation management.

Fire prevention efforts are the key to limiting the adverse effects of fire on vegetation and property. Understanding our circumstances, the City has taken many steps to better prepare for future wildfire events:

- Since 2004, the Fire Department's Fire Prevention Division requires Fire Protection Plans (FPP) for all new development where open space and development intermix. These FPPs evaluate the open space areas (e.g., fuel types, fuel density, slope aspect, weather) and prescribe defensible space parameters and construction requirements to limit the impacts of vegetation fires, should one occur. These newly developed areas have ongoing vegetation management performed as part of each development's Community Facility District. Further,

the Fire Department has operationally pre-planned wildfire vegetation response specific to each of the designated open space areas.

- The Fire Department was previously successful in acquiring two vegetation management grants that allowed for critical work to be done in two open space areas.
- Currently, the City is in the draft stages of creating an encroachment permit that would afford private homeowners permission to perform vegetation management on the City's open space property.
- From an educational standpoint, the Fire Department adopted and customized a "Ready, Set, Go!" wildfire education program.

To continue mitigating the City's wildfire threat, the Fire Department actively pursues opportunities to implement vegetation management activities. Most recently, the Fire Department became aware of two new grant opportunities where vegetation management is an eligible activity. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) released the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, \$4 million and \$3 million respectively for eligible projects, with a 25% cost match from awardees. With support from City Administration, Public Works and Developmental Services, the Fire Department submitted project applications for each grant to secure mitigation funds for vegetation management.

If awarded, these grant funds will allow the City to complete the necessary vegetation management in several open space areas. There are seventeen (17) open space areas identified as the priority for vegetation management (please see Attachment #2 - Canyon Grants Aerial). The initial vegetation management activities are the most challenging aspect as it requires the most clearing. Following the initial vegetation management, the City will implement a maintenance scheduled that is much more manageable in terms of cost and labor. City forces and contractors will be able to effectively manage the vegetation in the open space areas and maintain the required defensible space and brush management zones outlined in the City's Multiple Species Conservation Plan (MSCP).

DECISION-MAKER CONFLICT

Staff has reviewed the property holdings of the City Council and has found that, Councilmember Aguilar and Mayor Mary Casillas Salas have real property holdings within 500 feet of the boundaries of the property which is the subject of this action. Consequently, pursuant to California Code of Regulations Title 2, sections 18700 and 18702.2(a)(11), this item presents a disqualifying real property-related financial conflict of interest under the Political Reform Act (Cal. Gov't Code § 87100, et seq.) for the above-identified member.

Staff is not independently aware, and has not been informed by any City Council member, of any other fact that may constitute a basis for a decision maker conflict of interest in this matter.

LINK TO STRATEGIC GOALS

The City's Strategic Plan has five major goals: Operational Excellence, Economic Vitality, Healthy Community, Strong and Secure Neighborhoods and a Connected Community. A vegetation management supports the Citywide strategy to enhance prevention efforts and prepare communities for natural disasters and other emergencies. Establishing a vegetation management program will undoubtedly enhance prevention efforts as it relates to wildfire damage to structures, and it will also lead to increased community awareness and education about the threat of wildfire.

CURRENT YEAR FISCAL IMPACT

There are no current year fiscal impacts. The anticipated award dates for both grants is December 30, 2018 in fiscal year 2018-19.

ONGOING FISCAL IMPACT

Federal and State hazard mitigation grants require a 25% cost match. The City has committed to match 25% of any funds awarded. A final funding source has not been determined as all options are still being explored; however potential funding sources include administration funding types such as the Measure P Fund, Open Space District Funds, and General Fund reserves. The City will also seek to maximize in-kind services to offset the City's cost match requirement.

Cost match requirements are \$1,153,125 for the PDM grant and \$999,986.30 for the HMGP grant, for a total of \$2,153,111. The grants carry performance periods of 42 and 36 months respectively. The City's cost match will be divided over the life of the grants.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Canyon Grant Aerial

*Staff Contact: Justin Gipson, Fire Division Chief
Marlon King, Emergency Services Coordinator*