



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: May 25, 2010

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Fire Prevention Division, Fire Department

SUBJECT: Renewal Of Levy For Fiscal Year 2011 For The Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt, by reading of title only, A Resolution of the Council of the City of Santa Barbara Declaring Its Intention to Continue Vegetation Road Clearance, Implementation of a Defensible Space Inspection and Assistance Program, and Implementation of a Vegetation Management Program Within the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones; Declaring the Work to be of More Than General or Ordinary Benefit and Describing the District to be Assessed to Pay the Costs and Expenses Thereof; Approving the Engineer's Report, Confirming Diagram and Assessment, and Ordering Levy of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District for Fiscal Year 2011.

DISCUSSION:

On July 11, 2006, the City Council adopted Resolution 06-064 which declared the Council's intention to order expansion of vegetation road clearance, implementation of a defensible space inspection and assistance program, and implementation of a vegetation management program within the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones. The Resolution described the special benefit to be assessed and approved an Engineer's Report, confirmed the diagram and assessment, and ordered levy of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District for Fiscal Year 2007. As provided by the Resolution, the Assessment may be renewed annually by the Council. The City has renewed the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment for the past three years (Resolutions 07-048, 08-048 and 09-038).

Services

This year, Assessment funds continued to reduce the risk and severity of wildland fires through the reduction of flammable vegetation. The assessment provides three primary services:

Vegetation Road Clearance: Each year the assessment provides approximately 14 miles of road clearance in the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones. The frequency is such that most roads in the District are cleared of impeding vegetation every three years. Clearing vegetation from the roadways is required by law and allows for safer egress of residents and ingress of first responders during an emergency.

Defensible Space Inspection and Assistance: This element of the assessment provides assistance to property owners in creating defensible space around their homes. Defensible space assistance will again involve scores of site visits to assist homeowners. In addition, the assessment provides chipping services to residents of the District after the vegetation has been cut. Chipping services provide a cost effective way for homeowners to dispose of cut material. The chipped vegetation may be reused as a ground cover in landscaping.

Vegetation Management: Vegetation Management reduces the overall fuel load in given units by selectively thinning brush and trimming trees in a wildland area. The goal is to lessen the severity of a fire in the event that one occurs. In Fiscal Year 2010, vegetation management projects were completed in Skofield Park and near Saint Mary's Seminary, thinning the fuel load in the path of the Jesusita Fire and reducing the severity of the fire in that neighborhood. The Vegetation Management program continued in the Ontare Road area, a project that will resume at the end of the summer. Also planned for this fiscal year is the completion of 18 acres near Las Canoas Road.

Assessment

The Wildland Fire Assessment may be annually increased by the Consumer Price Index in an amount not to exceed 4%. Although the Consumer Price Index rose 1.83% this year, Staff is not recommending an increase in the assessment for Fiscal Year 2011. The rate for Fiscal Year 2011, as suggested in the Engineer's Report, will therefore be set at the annual rate of \$69.83 per single family parcel in the Foothill Zone and \$86.58 in the Extreme Foothill Zone, the same rates as Fiscal Year 2010. The estimated Fiscal Year 2011 cost of providing services is \$221,484.

Engineer's Report

As required in Resolution 06-064, an updated Engineer's Report has been prepared and includes the proposed budget and assessment rate. The updated Engineer's Report must be considered by the City Council at a noticed public hearing and serves as the basis for the continuation of the assessments. The updated Engineer's Report is available for review at Fire Department Administration, 925 De La Vina Street and the City Clerk's Office at City Hall at 735 Anacapa Street.

Hearing

On May 4, 2010 the Council adopted Resolution 10-026 to renew the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District within the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones and set a time of 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 25, 2010, in the City Council Chambers for a public hearing on the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District. Staff recommends that the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District be continued for Fiscal Year 2011 to fund and deliver these successful mitigation programs.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The estimated \$221,484 Fiscal Year 2011 cost of providing services is paid for through revenues from the resident-approved Wildland Fire parcel assessment and is already included in the Fire Department's proposed FY 2011 budget.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

Vegetation removed through vegetation road clearance or the inspection and assistance program is chipped and spread back on to the ground or spread in areas of local parks. The goal is reuse at least 80% of all chipped material locally avoiding the cost of disposal fees, extra vehicle trips and landfill use. Non-native pest plants are not chipped and hauled off site to be disposed of properly.

PREPARED BY: Joe Poiré, Fire Marshal

SUBMITTED BY: Andrew DiMizio, Fire Chief

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office