



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 10/06/2020

ITEM NO: 3

DATE: September 29, 2020
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Approve the Mayor's Recommendation to Create and Appoint a Town Council Ad Hoc Committee to Study Wildfire Mitigation in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Mayor's recommendation to create and appoint a Town Council Ad Hoc Committee to study wildfire mitigation in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

BACKGROUND:

Over the last several years the Town Council has taken policy and budgetary action to address the Town's significant risk of wildfire. Of note, the following recent actions were taken:

- April 2019: Town adopts Annex 9 of the Santa Clara County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).
- October 2019: Town Council accepts Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Evacuation Assessment Report.
- November 2019: Town Council amends Chapter 11 (Garbage, Refuse, and Weeds) of the Town Code, expanding the definition of weeds.
- January 2020: Town Council takes several actions:
 - Amends Chapter 9 (Fire Protection and Protection) of the Town Code and adopts a 5-foot nonflammable zone requirement around new structures in the WUI. Council also adopts language which require defensible space beyond property lines in certain circumstances.

PREPARED BY: Arn Andrews
Assistant Town Manager

Reviewed by: Town Manager and Town Attorney

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BACKGROUND (continued):

- Amends Chapter 11 of the Town Code (Garbage, Refuse, and Weeds) and increases required weed abatement along roadways from 5 feet to 10 feet.
 - Amends Chapter 29 of the Town Code (Tree Protection) and categorizes trees removed or maintained in the furtherance of defensible space as exceptions to tree protections.
- April 2020: Council authorizes the sale of property at Winchester and Lark to the Santa Clara County Fire District. Transaction sets the stage for County Fire to build a state-of-art fire station at the location and house significant wildfire fighting equipment in Town.
 - June 2020: Council budget actions include:
 - \$250,000 toward 11 miles of roadside fuel reduction in the WUI
 - \$1.5 million toward rehabilitating portions of Shannon Road
 - \$500,000 toward ecological assessment and first year of fuel removal in Town owned open space

While the aforementioned actions will serve the Town well, there are additional mitigation efforts the Town could consider. The establishment of a Town Council Ad Hoc Committee to study these issues would give priority attention to the risk of wildfire and provide a comprehensive report of recommendations to the Town Council for subsequent consideration.

DISCUSSION:

The Mayor is requesting this Ad Hoc Committee study a broad variety of wildfire mitigation policy and project options to improve the Town's wildfire resiliency. The Committee would examine best practices of similar WUI communities, lessons learned from recent fires, and other relevant areas of wildfire science. The Committee would compile a report which lists short, medium, and long-range mitigation options. Similar to other Town documents which address deferred street maintenance or unfunded liabilities, this report will provide the Council with an understanding of the types of projects and associated costs that achieve greater wildfire resiliency.

The timeline for the Committee will be completion of the report in December 2020 to align with the annual Strategic Priority and budget development process. The composition of the Committee is recommended to include:

- Mayor Marcia Jensen and Vice Mayor Barbara Spector
- Assistant Town Manager Arn Andrews and Director of Parks and Public Works Matt Morley

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DISCUSSION (continued):

- Two resident members who reside in the WUI and are Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) certified
 - Rob Stump
 - Brad Gordon
- Assistant Santa Clara County Fire Chief Brian Glass

In preparation for the convening of the Committee, staff has already identified the following dates for initial meetings: October 21, 2020, November 9, 2020, and November 16, 2020. Additional meetings will be scheduled as needed to meet the deadline for the completion of the Committee's work.

CONCLUSION:

Approval of the Ad Hoc Wildfire Committee will give priority attention to the risk of wildfire and further the Town's wildfire mitigation efforts.

COORDINATION:

This staff report was coordinated with the Town Manager and Town Attorney.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the creation of the Committee.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.