

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: SCOTT WESTROPE, INTERIM FIRE CHIEF
FIRE DEPARTMENT
ANNA MCAULIFFE, RESEARCH AND PROGRAM
COORDINATOR
SUBJECT: WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS, MITIGATION AND RESILIENCY
PROJECTS: PROPOSED USES OF PG&E SETTLEMENT
FUNDS

AGENDA ACTION: NO ACTION REQUIRED

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Finance, Fire, and Transportation and Public Works Departments that the Council hold a study session to receive a prioritized report on the proposed uses of PG&E settlement funds for wildfire preparedness, mitigation and resiliency projects.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this Study Session, staff will provide an updated presentation showing the top seven highest priority projects related to wildfire preparedness, mitigation and resiliency, requested to be funded with PG&E settlement funds. This is the fourth presentation highlighting projects that could qualify for the use of the funds.

The seven priority projects total approximately \$30 million of one-time capital needs, which projects are solely under City control, including projects identified in prior presentations.

BACKGROUND

In July 2020, the City received a \$95 million settlement from PG&E to recoup damages sustained from the 2017 Tubbs wildfire that were not recoverable through State, Federal, or insurance reimbursements. At Council direction, City staff solicited input from 2017 fire survivors and the community at large for input on proposed uses for the settlement money. In addition, staff worked internally to develop projects that could bolster the City's wildfire preparedness and make the City more resilient in the event of future wildfires.

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On December 12, 2020, Council held a study session where staff presented the report. That report included approximately \$476 million of one-time capital needs.

Council reviewed the report and provided direction to staff to develop a prioritized list of the highest priority projects with an estimated total project cost near \$25 million.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

Staff presented three prior study sessions for the use of the PG&E settlement funds.

On November 17, staff presented the results of three virtual public input sessions and a Citywide digital survey providing public input for the use of the PG&E settlement funds.

On December 8, Council received a presentation on “Housing Investment Opportunities” for PG&E settlement funds.

On December 15, 2020, staff presented a report on the use of PG&E settlement funds for “Wildfire Preparedness, Mitigation and Resiliency Projects”.

ANALYSIS

City Staff from the Fire and Transportation and Public Works Departments have identified projects to increase the City’s wildfire preparedness and resiliency. These projects have been developed based on critical needs identified during natural disasters over the last three years (the Tubbs Fire, the Kincade Fire, and the Glass Fire), and from Public Safety Power Shutoffs that have occurred each year over the past three years.

These projects would be funded solely by the City. The total one-time capital needs are estimated at \$30 million. The projects are listed below in order of priority.

Move and rebuild Fire Station 5 (\$15,000,000)

To replace and relocate Fire Station 5 that was lost during the Tubbs Fire, staff recommends rebuilding Fire Station 5 at the corner of Stagecoach Road and Fountaingrove Parkway. The rebuild of Fire Station 5 will restore permanent service to the Fountaingrove neighborhood and protection of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The new location will enhance service to the entirety of Fountaingrove and also improve the service level to the northern portions on north Mendocino Avenue and adjacent areas.

Staff has worked tirelessly with consultants to secure federal funding to rebuild Fire Station 5, however have been unsuccessful in that venture largely due to federal policy. The land for the new Fire Station 5 is currently in escrow and CEQA review is underway.

Implementation of a comprehensive Vegetation Management Program (\$5,250,000)

In September of 2020 the City Council unanimously approved the final draft of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). This plan, the first of its kind in our City, is the result of a community-wide planning effort to quantify and evaluate the wildfire threat to the City and develop hazard mitigation strategies that enhance protection of life safety and other community assets from wildfire. Using the latest wildfire science and community input this plan serves to guide the development and implementation of a comprehensive Vegetation Management Program. The Fire Department has proposed a five-year program in our effort to mitigate future wildfire threats to our City. The proposed program will focus on improving evacuation routes, community wildfire education, wildfire and evacuation preparedness, structural hardening of the built environment, vegetation treatments to reduce the wildfire threat, implementation of defensible space standards and increased staffing dedicated to the wildfire mitigation workload. As proposed this program will also provide annual updates to Council and at the conclusion of the five-year period will allow funding to complete an updated CWPP.

Implementation of Wildland Resiliency and Response Strategic Plan (\$2,750,000)

To improve the prevention, mitigation, and response capabilities of the Fire Department using current staffing and stations, staff recommends funding for implementation of the Santa Rosa Fire Department Wildland Resiliency and Response Strategic Plan. This plan was presented to the Public Safety Subcommittee on November 23, 2020 and is a holistic assessment of the Fire Department's wildland fire programs with recommended adjustments to the organization across all bureaus. Implementation of this plan would provide additional resources to legislative efforts, community engagement and education, additional wildland firefighting apparatus and equipment. This plan does not address the need for additional personnel or fire stations; however, it would significantly improve the Fire Department's capacity and abilities to prevent, mitigate, and respond to wildland fires using current staffing and fire stations.

Modernize Radio Infrastructure – (\$3,000,000)

The new digital city-wide radio infrastructure and equipment require a maintenance and software upgrade agreement to remain reliable over the next nine years. This agreement will maintain the new system's highest level of performance and functionality by continually upgrading to the latest hardware and software available. It enables the city to mitigate the risks of security failures as well as falling behind the technology curve, as occurred with the prior radio system and provides professional and seamless system upgrades with minimal interruption to the daily operations, which is critical for all departments that utilize this system.

Evacuation Equipment – (\$150,000)

Barricades and message boards with transport trailer - Public Works has worked closely with Police and Fire to deploy a variety of barricades to assist with evacuations, PSPS

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outages and crowd control of various types. Having a ready-to-go stock of barricades will facilitate easy deployment rather than needing to rely on rental agencies, contractors or mutual aid to provide and transport to the sites. Barricades include a combination of concrete k-rail, plastic waterfilled barrier, lighted a-frame barricades, light towers, message boards and transport trailer.

Build “Hot” Emergency Operations Center (EOC) – (\$550,000)

The City of Santa Rosa’s EOC is currently located at the Utilities Field Office (UFO) building in its three large training rooms. These rooms are multi-purpose rooms that are heavily utilized by numerous departments throughout the City for meetings and trainings. The EOC equipment is kept in a storage closet so that the space is available for these other City purposes. This type of EOC is considered “cold”. Upon notification of an emergency and activation of the EOC, staff are required to shuffle around tables and chairs, pull IT equipment and phones out of the storage closet, and set everything up prior to responding to the emergency at hand. This set-up process can take an hour or more depending on how many staff are available to assist. This results in a loss of valuable time that could be applied towards the emergency response and critical life safety work. As we have seen from 2017 Tubbs and 2020 Glass the first hours of an emergency can be the most critical in getting people to safety and properly coordinating communication and response.

The City continually faces unprecedented disasters, especially no notice fast moving wildfires. However, fire is not the only hazard Santa Rosa faces. The City lies on a major earthquake fault line. The City also regularly responds to Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) initiated by PG&E, as well as floods, mudslides, civil unrest and the ongoing response to the Coronavirus pandemic. The City must also be ready for cyber threats, terrorism, and significant chemical spills or hazardous materials response. The last four years alone have demonstrated the need for an EOC facility that is ready to operate at a moment’s notice in order to save lives, protect property, and support the response to emergencies throughout the City. The proposal for a “hot” - or always equipped and operational - EOC at the Transit Operations Building (TOB)/MSCN buildings will provide the City of Santa Rosa with the opportunity to be even more timely and efficient in its response to emergencies, and in turn will provide for a safer community for its residents.

Traffic signalization to aid evacuation choke points (\$3,300,000)

To improve the evacuation of the WUI areas within the city, staff recommends the addition of quick connections, portable generators and closed-circuit cameras to key intersections as well as a fiberoptic interconnect along key evacuation corridors. These additions will allow Traffic Engineering staff to more effectively assist Police and Fire in managing the evacuation process by ensuring the signals along critical evacuation corridors remain operational and controlled in real-time from the Traffic Operations Center at MSCS. Cameras will allow both the Traffic Engineering and Police dispatching teams to evaluate where physical resources are required to assist with the evacuation process. Some of these activities will occur in the state highway and will require

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coordination in the form of an encroachment permit but should not require a longer more complicated process.

Evacuation Route Flush Plans - \$100,000

Fiber-Optic Interconnect and Closed-Circuit Cameras - \$3,200,000

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact from holding a study session.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This Study Session is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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