

CITY OF OAKLAND

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AGENDA REPORT

TO: Sabrina B. Landreth
City Administrator

FROM: Darin White
Fire Chief

SUBJECT: Report and Possible Action on
Inspection Personnel and Vegetation
Clearance

DATE: November 13, 2017

City Administrator Approval

Date:

12/28/17

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That City Council Accept This Report And Possible Action On The Following: 1) Status Of Filling Vegetation Management Inspector Positions, 2) The Status And Timeline For Clearing City-Owned, Private, And Non-City Owned Public Parcels In The Wildfire District, And 3) A Proposal To Review And Analyze The Creation Of A New Classification For Inspectors Interchangeable Between Fire Code And Vegetation Management Inspection Units.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the Rules Committee Meeting on October 12, 2017, Vice Mayor Campbell-Washington and Councilmember Kalb requested that the Oakland Fire Department prepare a report regarding staffing of the Fire Prevention Bureau's Vegetation Management Unit and the clearance of City-owned parcels. This Council Agenda Report is responsive to that request.

BACKGROUND/LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The Oakland Fire Department, Fire Prevention Bureau (FPB) is responsible for the inspection of public and privately-owned properties in the California Department of Forestry and Fire (Cal Fire) designated Very High Fire Severity Zone (VHFSZ) and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas within the City of Oakland. These areas are concentrated in the Oakland Hills and contain the areas that were burned during the 1991 Oakland Fire Storm. The FPB also oversees vegetation clearance in 400 City-owned properties and between 50 to 100 miles of roadside abatement annually as funding allows. This year 51 miles of roadside clearance was completed between May 2017 and November 2017 before funding was exhausted. \$100,000.00 from this fiscal budget has been held in reserve for Spring 2018 (May/June) goat grazing as the current goat grazing contract expires December 31, 2017. The remaining vegetation management fund balance of \$69,965.00 from Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-2018 will be used to begin abatement on City properties in May 2018.

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ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Status of Filling Vegetation Management (Fire Suppression District) Inspector Positions

The following table shows the full-time equivalent (FTE) and part-time equivalent (PTE) positions authorized in the Vegetation Management Unit's adopted budget for FY 2017-18, and their current vacancy status:

| Job Classification/Title | FY 2017-18 Authorized Positions | FTE or PTE | Filled |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------|---------------|
| Vegetation Management Supervisor | 1.0 | FTE | 1.0 |
| Fire Suppression District Inspector | 4.0 | FTE | 2.0 |
| Fire Suppression District Inspector | 2.0 | PTE | 2.0 |

Two (2) Vegetation Management Unit staff members recently accepted positions in the Fire Prevention Bureau Inspector, Civilian classification and relocated to another unit. The two (2) vacancies to replace these recently promoted staff members are expected to be filled by either late Winter or early Spring 2018.

Status and Timeline for Clearing City-owned, Private, and Non-City Owned Public Parcels

City-owned parcels – these parcels must be evaluated each Spring to determine the volume of potential hazardous vegetation present. This varies from year to year due to annual Winter and Spring rainfall. These evaluations begin in late April and continue throughout the declared fire season. In most years those parcels which experience the most sun exposure based on their slope and position are cleared first. These properties typically face to the South East and are located below the intersection of Skyline Blvd. and Joaquin Miller Rd. to the city's South East border with San Leandro and Castro Valley. The Vegetation Management Unit is currently creating its abatement contracts, roadside clearance contracts and goat grazing RFQ for FY 2018-2019, with the intent of prioritizing which parcels will be cleared and in which specific order. Historically City-owned parcels along the Skyline Boulevard ridge are cleared at the beginning of the fire season due to their exposure and aspect. Roadside clearances of egress routes such as Skyline Boulevard, Joaquin Miller Road, Keller Avenue, and Redwood Road are typically completed between June and mid-July. Goat grazing starts in King Estates open space first due to its lack of tree canopy and then progresses into Knowland Park and Joaquin Miller Park. All other parcels and properties are then evaluated and cleared as fuel moisture contents diminish and those parcels fuels dry up. Parcels or roadside clearances which have overhead power lines present are given priority.

Non-City Owned Public Parcels – these parcels are abated by their respective entity ownership. The Vegetation Management Unit makes recommendations to the responsible agency regarding when, and to what extent vegetation abatement is required. Active partners in prevention include the East Bay Utilities District (EBMUD), who consistently clear their 78 parcels in the area, Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) who owned 23 parcels, and California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) who conducts roadside clearing on Hwy 580 from 106th Ave. to High Street Hwy 13; from the intersection at Hwy 580 North to Hwy 24; Hwy 24 from College Avenue to the Caldecott Tunnel. Other public agency-owned parcels include Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), and the Peralta

Community College District are issued annual inspection notices by the Vegetation Management Unit when hazards are observed. East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD) properties located within Oakland are managed by that agency's own fire department and vegetation management unit.

Private Properties – an annual inspection notice detailing the defensible space requirements, is mailed to private property owners in early spring. Inspections traditionally begin on or about May 15th, which generally coincides with the beginning of fire season, as declared each year by the Office of the State Fire Marshal. The Oakland Fire Department's eleven (11) engine companies within the area conduct approximately 20,000 residential inspections annually. The Vegetation Management Unit inspectors simultaneously begin inspecting vacant lot parcels. It is the Department's goal to have all annual and re-inspections for non-compliant properties completed by mid-July. It should be noted that based on historical records, at any given time during the fire season approximately 12-15 percent of all properties will be non-compliant due to lack of owner maintenance, re-growth, or ownership change.

A New Classification for Inspectors

Staff analyzed the possibility of creating a new combination inspector (code and vegetation management) classification of inspector in the Fire Prevention Bureau. The current fully-burdened salaries for each classification at Step 3 are as follows:

| Job Classification/Title | Fully Burdened Salary |
|--|-----------------------|
| Fire Suppression District Inspector | \$113,212.11 |
| Fire Prevention Bureau Inspector, Civilian | \$132,533.17 |

At this time, OFD staff does not believe such a change is appropriate or fiscally prudent for the following reasons:

Potential Fiscal Impact – If all existing four (4) Full Time Equivalent (4.0 FTE) Fire Suppression District Inspector positions were upgraded to Fire Prevention Bureau Inspector, Civilian, the burden on the Fire Prevention Bureau Vegetation Management Unit's FY 2017-18 staffing budget would increase in the amount of \$77,284.24. Currently, the Oakland Fire Department does not have the funding to support such an increase.

Potential Incumbent Impact – The Fire Prevention Bureau Inspector, Civilian classification has a minimum qualification that requires the employee to obtain a valid International Code Council (ICC) Fire Inspector Certification by the completion of probation. The City would be obligated to meet and confer in good faith with the appropriate employee union before implementing such change.

Based upon these findings, staff recommends the Fire Prevention Bureau Inspector, Civilian classification be rewritten to include vegetation management inspections. This would allow management to allocate resources to the Vegetation Management Inspection Unit as needed during the peak of the fire season, as specified by CalFire, while retaining the existing Fire Suppression District Inspector classification. Furthermore, Fire Suppression District Inspector's workloads increase to their maximum in direct correlation to the aforementioned time period, and typically lasts six (6) months. Maintaining both classifications in the FPB and including vegetation management inspections to the Fire Prevention Bureau Inspector, Civilian

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classification, would allow management the flexibility in staffing the Vegetation Management Unit accordingly by increasing and decreasing staff fittingly to the workload throughout the year.

Revisions to the Fire Prevention Bureau Inspector, Civilian classification would require the City to meet and confer with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 1021. Upon agreement between City and SEIU, Local 1021, the matter would be presented to the Oakland Civil Service Board for review. The last step in completing the revisions would be the review and ratification by the Oakland City Council. It is estimated that the revision to the classification would take approximately six (6) months to a year to complete.

FISCAL IMPACT

This is an informational report; there is no fiscal impact to the City as a result of this report.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

This is an informational report; there was no public outreach requested used to prepare this report.

COORDINATION

The FPB coordinates its vegetation management efforts with other City of Oakland departments, including Public Works, the Parks, Recreation & Youth Development, as well as with other public entities such as CalTrans, EBMUD, PG&E, OUSD, Peralta Community College District, BART, and EBRPD.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: There are no economic opportunities associated with this informational report.

Environmental: There are no environmental opportunities associated with this informational report.

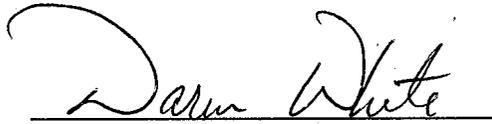
Social Equity: There are no social equity opportunities associated with this informational report.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff recommends City Council accept this report and possible action on the following: 1) status of filling Wildfire Inspector positions, 2) the status and timeline for clearing City-owned, private, and non-City owned public parcels in the Wildfire District, and 3) a proposal to review and analyze the creation of a new classification for Inspectors to be interchangeable between Fire Code and Vegetation Management Inspection Units.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Miguel Trujillo, Fire Marshal at (510) 238-4051.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darin White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Darin White
Fire Chief

Reviewed by:
Angela Robinson Piñon, Chief of Staff
Oakland Fire Department