



VENTURA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Dustin Gardner

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May 14, 2024

Board of Directors
Ventura County Fire Protection District
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT:

Public Hearing Regarding Approval of the Fire Protection District's 2024 Fire Hazard Reduction Program (FHRP); Adoption of a Resolution Identifying Out-of-Compliance Properties for Weed Abatement; Consider Objections and Protests to the Implementation of the 2024 FHRP and Proposed Weed Abatements; and Authorization for the Fire Chief to Abate Said Properties.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In accordance with the Fire Protection District (Fire District) Ordinance No. 32, Chapter 49, and California Health and Safety Code sections 14875-14931, it is recommended that your Board:

1. Approve the Fire District's 2024 Fire Hazard Reduction Program (FHRP) as described herein;
2. Adopt and authorize the Chair to sign the attached Resolution declaring that (a) public nuisances exist on the properties described in the Fire District's 2024 Weed Abatement Listing (Exhibit 1); and (b) said nuisances arise from weeds on the properties that are "seasonal and recurrent" and must be abated every year without a further hearing;
3. Conduct a public hearing to consider objections or protests (if any) to the implementation of the 2024 FHRP and proposed weed abatements; and
4. Direct the Fire Chief to abate these nuisances pursuant to the 2024 FHRP and in accordance with the 2024 Weed Abatement Listing maintained by the Fire District.

FISCAL/MANDATES IMPACT:

Mandated: Yes

Source of funding: Fire District's Budget Unit 2711:

Fees are derived from property owners billed both the administrative fee and the actual cost of weed abatement. Administrative costs of the weed abatement program that are not recovered through property owners are funded by the Fire District's Budget Unit 2711.

Funding Match Required: None

Impact on Other Departments: Minimal

Summary of Revenue and Total Costs:	Estimated FY 2023-24	Projected FY 2024-25
Revenue:	\$ 339,539	\$ 451,400
Cost:		
Direct	\$ 549,722	\$ 716,026
Indirect Department	\$ 129,405	\$ 172,562
Indirect County CAP	\$ 6,192	\$ 8,065
Total Cost:	\$ 685,319	\$ 896,653
Net District Cost Including Indirect:	\$ 345,780	\$ 445,253

Current FY 2023-24 Budget Projection for the Fire District – BU 2711				
	Preliminary Budget	Adjusted Budget	Projected Budget	Estimated Savings/(Deficit)
Appropriations	5,656,284	5,798,815	5,824,489	(25,674)
Revenue	5,902,613	5,902,613	6,117,916	215,303
Net Cost	(246,329)	(103,798)	(293,427)	189,629

Pursuant to the Board of Directors' objective for the Fire District to recoup its enforcement cost for abating fire nuisances on non-compliant parcels, property owners are billed both an administrative fee and the actual cost of abating the weeds on their property.

The enforcement fees are calculated on a per-parcel basis and are intended to cover the administrative costs of the program, which include coordination and management. The remaining program costs are for the notices, inspections, and the educational component of the program. There are sufficient revenues and appropriations for this item. The net Fire District cost of \$345,780 is based on actual costs and revenue up to this point in time, plus estimated costs and revenue for the remainder of the current fiscal year.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This item contributes to the Board of Supervisors 2024-2027 strategic priority to invest in *Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities*. The Fire Protection District will ensure the appropriate implementation, control, monitoring, and review of Fire Protection and Life Safety systems are operating as designed for the safety of the community.

DISCUSSION:

Because of the potential for wildland fires within the Fire District, the Fire Hazard Reduction Program is essential in the prevention and control of fires, as well as reducing property and personal losses. The benefits are evident when brush fires threaten homes protected by the clearance required by this program. The unique fire conditions found in Southern California, caused by a combination of Santa Ana winds, along with fuels and topography, create the need for a program to protect life and property from devastating fires. Ventura County's Fire Hazard Reduction Program has been studied and implemented by agencies throughout California.

On April 20, 2024, approximately 18,800 "Notice to Abate Fire Hazard" notifications, with a compliance deadline of June 1, 2024, were mailed to property owners. The notices also include links to the Fire District's VCFD.org website, which has information and recommendations on how property owners can better protect their home and property during a wildfire.

Property owners who have registered an e-mail address with the Fire District will receive a notification e-mail when the parcel is approved and if there is any additional work needed prior to the final approval.

When a notice is returned as undeliverable, the Fire District makes every effort to identify and notify the appropriate property owner. Property owners are responsible for getting the necessary clearance accomplished themselves; however, for those who do not clear their parcels as required, the Fire District contracts with a weed abatement contractor to do the work. Your Board's approval to contract this work at the Fire District's direction is requested.

The cost of the contracted work, plus a \$1,744 administrative fee, will then be placed on the property owner's tax bill as a special assessment. (See California Health and Safety Code sections 14912–14922.) Communication with property owners by the Fire District should maintain the trend of clearing fewer properties while preserving standards set for Ventura County.

The County Executive Office, the Auditor-Controller's Office, and County Counsel have reviewed this letter. If you have any questions, please contact me at (805) 389-9704



Dustin Gardner
Fire Chief

DG/LW:mm

Attachments: Resolution Pertaining to the 2024 FHRP
Exhibit 1 – FHRP 2024 Weed Abatement Listing
Exhibit 2 – FHRP 2024 Notice to Abate Fire Hazard – Sample Notice