

# Agenda Report

**TO: CITY COUNCIL**

**June 7, 2004**

**THROUGH:** Legislative Committee

**FROM:** City Manager

**SUBJECT:** Adoption of a Resolution Supporting the League of California Cities and California State Association of Counties Joint Policy Statement to Decrease Impacts on Public Health and Safety Resulting from Wildland Urban Interface Fires

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that City Council adopt the attached Resolution in support of the League of California Cities and California State Association of Counties Joint Policy Statement to Decrease Impacts on Public Health and Safety Resulting from Wildland Urban Interface Fires.

## **SUMMARY**

The proposed Resolution formally establishes the City Council's support for a multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency cooperative effort to decrease the hazards posed by wildland urban interface fires through standardized and improved mitigation, prevention and response activities. The proposed Resolution and the Joint Policy Statement (Attachment A) from the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) establish a policy direction and three broad categories of action to be undertaken; neither requires the commitment of specific funding or resources on the part of the City.

## **BACKGROUND**

The proposed Resolution endorses the League and CSAC policy to act aggressively to create "a systematic solution to California wildland fires." The League and CSAC will aggressively work with all levels of government to resolve the impediments caused by conflicting regulations, consider legislation to expedite the adoption of statewide wildland urban interface constructions standards, and co-sponsor public forums to discuss relevant issues.

Pasadena will benefit from these efforts in several ways: increased public attention will likely lead to increased diligence in fire prevention efforts by homeowners within the wildland urban interface, limiting both the likelihood and severity of potential fires; streamlined and increasingly effective regulations within the wildland urban interface will likewise decrease both the probability and intensity of wild fires; and improved statewide standards will safeguard the Pasadena firefighters who respond to provide mutual aid to our neighboring communities.

The four key factors contributing to the wildland urban interface fire hazard are:

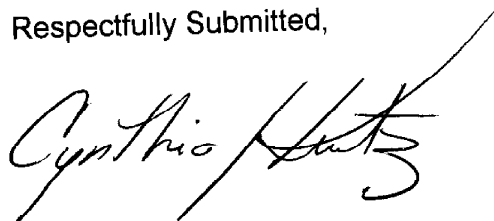
- A. Increasing populations within the flammable environment of the wildland urban interface;
- B. Increased fuel load within the wildland urban interface;
- C. Increased difficulty implementing vegetation management to decrease the flammability of the wildland interface; and,
- D. Increased costs associated with fire suppression in the wildland interface.

None of us need be reminded of the potential devastation of uncontrolled wildfires in the urban interface; nature provides annual reminders that usually strike far too close to home. As recently as April of 2004, Southern California suffered from another round of multiple wildfires. "The catastrophic fires that burned throughout Southern California in October and November 2003 provide a sobering look at the impacts fires have on public health and safety — jobs are lost, businesses and schools are impacted, infrastructure and environmental damages occur, and in the wildland intermix/interface (suburbs to the wildland) areas, lives, property and natural resources are threatened and often destroyed." [from the League/CSAC Joint Policy Statement, Supporting Documentation, Attachment A] Pasadena is not immune from these potential catastrophes; were it not for some favorable geography and weather, the "Altadena Fire Storm" could have just as easily been the "Pasadena Fire Storm." Almost annually, Pasadena is threatened by brush fires that threaten to erupt into conflagrations within the occupied wildland urban interface—the area in which the populated urban area intermingles with the fire hazards of the unmanaged wildlands.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

This action has no fiscal impact. This action requires no specific commitment of staff or resources. Its sole purpose is to establish the City Council's support for these efforts to improve the mitigation, prevention and response to wildland urban interface fires.


Respectfully Submitted,



Cynthia J. Kurtz  
City Manager

Prepared by:

Approved by:



James C. Weckerle  
Hazardous Materials Specialist



Dennis J. Downs  
Fire Chief

Attachment