

CITY OF PASADENA
City Council Minutes
January 15, 2025 – 1:00 P.M.
City Hall Council Chamber

EMERGENCY SPECIAL MEETING

Pursuant to the Declaration of Local Emergency – Windstorms and Fires issued on January 8, 2025 the meeting was convened and held virtually by videoconference/teleconference.

OPENING: Mayor Gordo called the emergency special meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. (Absent: Councilmember Jones)

ROLL CALL:
Councilmembers: Mayor Victor M. Gordo
Councilmember Rick Cole
Councilmember Tyron Hampton
Councilmember Justin Jones (joined via teleconference at 1:07 p.m.)
Councilmember Jason Lyon
Councilmember Steve Madison
Councilmember Gene Masuda
Vice Mayor Jessica Rivas

Staff: City Manager Miguel Márquez
City Attorney/City Prosecutor Michele Beal Bagneris
City Clerk Mark Jomsky

CONSIDERATION OF WHETHER THE CITY OF PASADENA JOINS THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES TO OPT-IN TO THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) DISASTER MITIGATION PROGRAM RELATED TO THE FIRE-DEBRIS REMOVAL AND MITIGATION

City Manager Márquez provided introductory remarks on the item. Jennifer Paige, Planning Director, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) disaster mitigation program in response to the Eaton fire. She outlined the two phases of the debris removal and mitigation process, noting that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), and the County of Los Angeles will be part of a unified command responsible for Phase 1 (Household Hazardous Waste Removal), and that Phase 2 (Private Property Debris Removal) will be managed either by a state or federal level agency. Director Paige stated that if the City participates in the program, it provides impacted property owners with the option to participate in these clean-up efforts, including structural, ash, and debris removal and soil testing. She noted that property owners would have 180 days to opt-in to the program for the cost to be covered 100% by FEMA.

In response to Councilmember Jones' inquiry regarding residents who choose not to opt-in to the program, Director Paige reported that residents can hire their own contractors to remove debris on their private property, and would be subject to the proper permitting and safety compliance to be administered by the City.

Kevin McGowan, Director of LA County Office of Emergency Management, reported that the 180-day timeframe began when the disaster declaration was authorized. He reported on the two phases of the emergency response and clean up, cost bearings, the federal reassessment of reimbursement caps after the initial 180 days, and responded to questions.

Discussion ensued regarding possible scenarios if the City opts out of Phase 2 of the debris removal and mitigation process. Director McGowan reported that the City could organize their own clean-up program, but would be subject to FEMA guidelines and would need to comply with all requirements in order to receive federal reimbursement. Additionally, private property owners could be responsible for their own clean-up efforts.

In response to Councilmember Hampton's inquiry regarding the designated routes for debris removal, Director McGowan reported that the City will have input on the routes, as recovery efforts will be driven by local governments.

In response to Mayor Gordo's inquiry regarding preparations for rain and preventing the spread of toxins, Director McGowan reported that the LA County Department of Public Works – Flood Control District will be working with cities and stakeholders to establish watershed assessments and develop mitigation strategies.

Yadi, Pasadena resident, inquired about statistics on other disaster relief, expressed concerns regarding delayed FEMA reimbursements and the impacts of waiving CEQA, and advocated for disaster recovery and emergency response to be a task force or ad hoc committee project.

MOTION:

Following discussion, it was moved by Councilmember Hampton, seconded by Councilmember Masuda, to direct staff to join the FEMA Opt-In Disaster Mitigation Program for fire debris removal and mitigation.

AYES: Councilmembers Cole, Hampton, Jones, Lyon, Madison, Masuda, Vice Mayor Rivas, Mayor Gordo
NOES: None
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None

UPDATE – CITY RESPONSE TO WINDSTORMS AND FIRES – CITY MANAGER AND EMERGENCY OPERATIONS STAFF

Recommendation: It is recommended that the City Council:

- (1) Consider updates from City staff and provide direction if desired by the City Council;
- (2) Find that, if direction is given to staff, it would not be a “project” subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21065 and within the meaning of CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b).

Chad Augustin, Fire Chief, provided an oral update on red flag conditions, the progressing containment of the Eaton Fire, and the lifting of all evacuation orders in Pasadena. He also reported that the incident command team is working with LA County Public Works on the planning for rainstorms and future mud and debris flow.

Following brief discussion, on the order of the Mayor, and consensus of the City Council, the information was received and filed.

ADJOURNMENT

On order of the Mayor, the emergency meeting of the City Council adjourned at 2:27 p.m.

Victor M. Gordo, Mayor
City of Pasadena

ATTEST:

City Clerk