

CITY OF PASADENA
City Council Minutes
January 17, 2025 – 2:20 P.M.
City Hall Council Chamber

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 special meeting to order at 2:23 p.m. The pledge of allegiance was led by Councilmember Cole. (Absent: None)

ROLL CALL:
Councilmembers: Mayor Victor M. Gordo
Councilmember Rick Cole
Councilmember Tyron Hampton
Councilmember Justin Jones
Councilmember Jason Lyon
Councilmember Steve Madison
Councilmember Gene Masuda
Vice Mayor Jessica Rivas

Staff: City Manager Miguel Márquez
Chief Assistant City Attorney Arnold Lee
City Clerk Mark Jomsky

Opening the meeting, Mayor Gordo reaffirmed the City's support for Altadena neighbors, and expressed his desire to uplift all impacted residents in Pasadena and Altadena as both communities navigate through this difficult time.

ADOPT A RESOLUTION TO ALLOW THE CITY COUNCIL, ALL OF ITS OPERATING COMPANY BOARDS, AND THE PASADENA RENTAL HOUSING BOARD, TO MEET REMOTELY PURSUANT TO THE BROWN ACT (Office of the City Attorney)

Recommendation: It is recommended that the City Council:
(1) Find that the action proposed in the agenda report is not 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); and
(2) Adopt a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Pasadena authorizing Remote Teleconference Meetings of the City Council, all City operating company boards, and the Pasadena Rental Housing Board, for the period January 17, 2025 through February 12, 2025. (Resolution No. 10110)

Chief Assistant City Attorney Lee introduced the item and reported that the proposed resolution would facilitate continuance of City business through remote meetings in a safe manner for all attendees of City Council, Operating Company boards, and the Pasadena

Rental Housing Board meetings, in compliance with Brown Act, under the local state of emergency.

In response to Councilmember Jones' inquiry regarding if City Committees and Commissions, and specifically City Council Committees, are included in the proposed resolution to meet remotely, City Manager Márquez reported that just the listed legislative bodies above are included in staff's recommendation due to the large number of advisory bodies that exist in the City, and the technological logistics of hosting and setting up virtual meetings. Philip Leclair, Chief Information Officer, reported that creating a virtual environment to host all committee and commission meetings could take a few weeks to set up.

MOTION:

Following brief discussion, it was moved by Councilmember Hampton, seconded by Councilmember Jones, to approve the staff recommendation, amended to include City Council committees, and with direction to City staff to return with an analysis on including City Commissions at a later date.

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

ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION RATIFYING THE HEALTH OFFICER'S DECLARATION OF LOCAL HEALTH EMERGENCY DUE TO IMPACTS OF CRITICAL FIRE EVENTS AND WINDSTORM CONDITIONS IN THE CITY OF PASADENA

Recommendation: It is recommended that the City Council:
(1) Find that the action proposed in the agenda report is not a "project" subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21065 and within the meaning of Section 15378(b); and
(2) In accordance with Health and Safety Code section 101080, adopt a resolution ratifying the January 15, 2025, Health Officer Declaration of a Local Health Emergency due to impacts of critical fire events and windstorm conditions in the City of Pasadena. (Resolution No. 10111)

ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL RATIFYING THE CITY MANAGER'S POWER AIR BLOWER REGULATION (Office of the City Manager)

Recommendation: It is recommended that the City Council:
(1) Find that the action proposed in the agenda report is not a "project" subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21065 and within the meaning of Section 15378 (b); and

(2) Adopt a Resolution ratifying the January 14, 2025 City Manager Power Air Blower Regulation. (Resolution No. 10112)

Yadi, Pasadena resident, advocated for vulnerable community members working in post disaster recovery clean-up areas have access to personal protective equipment (PPE).

APPROVE THE UPDATED WATER LEAK ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO PROVIDE AID TO CUSTOMERS IMPACTED BY THE EATON FIRE AND AUTHORIZE THE GENERAL MANAGER OF THE WATER AND POWER DEPARTMENT TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO WATER UTILITY BILLS FOR HIGH USAGE (Water & Power Dept.)

Recommendation: It is recommended that the City Council:

- (1) Find that this action proposed in the agenda report is not a “project” subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21065 and within the meaning of Section 15378(b);
- (2) Approve the updated Water Leak Assistance Program to provide aid to customers impacted by the Eaton Fire; and
- (3) Authorize the General Manager (or designee) of the Water and Power Department to adjust water utility bills for high usage due to the impacts of the Eaton Fire.

AUTHORIZE THE GENERAL MANAGER OF THE WATER AND POWER DEPARTMENT TO PAUSE OR SUSPEND THE UTILITY BILLING PROCESS AS A RESPONSE TO THE 2025 EATON WILDFIRE DISASTER

Recommendation: It is recommended that the City Council:

- (1) Find that the action proposed in the agenda report is not a “project” subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21065 and within the meaning of Section 15378(b); and
- (2) Authorize the General Manager (or designee) of the Water and Power Department to temporarily:
 - a. Pause the billing process for water and electric services for customers whose account was closed due to the loss of their home or business in the 2025 Eaton Wildfire Disaster;
 - b. Suspend collection of late fees for up to 60 days for customers who were displaced during a mandatory evacuation caused by the 2025 Eaton Wildfire Disaster; and
 - c. Suspend service interruptions due to non-payment for up to 60 days for customers who were displaced during a mandatory evacuation caused by the 2025 Eaton Wildfire Disaster.

City Clerk Jomsky reported that two letters related to Item 4, expressing concerns related to local air quality during the disaster recovery and advocating for the implementation of safety measures, was received by the City Clerk’s Office, distributed to the City

Council, posted online, and made part of the public record for the item.

MOTION:

It was moved by Councilmember Cole, seconded by Councilmember Hampton, to approve the staff recommendations for Items 4-7.

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; and
(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 a status update on the Eaton Fire. He stated that over 8,500 structures have been searched, all Pasadena residents have been accounted for, and no Pasadena residents have suffered a fatality as a result of the wildfire. He also noted that the City is working with Cal Fire to prepare for future mud and debris flow should a rainstorm occur.

Mayor Gordo reported that he met with mayors of various cities in the San Gabriel Valley and noted their offers of assistance to the City, and that some have already provided resources and other assistance.

In response to Mayor Gordo’s inquiry regarding the two major power transmission lines serving the City, David Reyes, Acting General Manager of Water and Power, reported that the Gould Line was affected by the Eaton Fire (temporarily non-operational), while the Mesa Line is still operating, and also noted that the Glenarm power plant is operating as a back-up energy source to the Mesa Line.

In response to Councilmember Hampton’s inquiry regarding the longest power outage, Acting General Manager Reyes noted that the longest outage was approximately 5 days and was located in a mandatory evacuation zone. Councilmember Hampton thanked City crews for restoring service in a quick and safe manner, despite not being able to perform work in mandatory evacuation zones.

Councilmember Jones suggested the City staff assess damaged water infrastructure in Altadena and have the City partner with public utilities in the fire zone to help the neighboring area restore water service in the near future, repair and preserve important infrastructure and resources, and protect fire victims from having to sell their properties to large developers due to a lack of water resources/infrastructure.

Councilmember Cole advocated for the City Council to consider ways to assist Altadena businesses, including helping those that may want to temporarily relocate to Pasadena in vacant spaces.

Mayor Gordo suggested moving up the date for the joint meeting with LA County Supervisor Kathryn Barger and extending invitations to the Altadena Town Council to discuss recovery efforts.

Councilmember Masuda left the meeting at 3:50 p.m. due to technological difficulties.

Manuel Carmona, Acting Director of Pasadena Public Health Department, provided a status update on the norovirus outbreak at the evacuation shelter at Pasadena Convention Center. He further reported that the City's Health Department is working with the American Red Cross, Kaiser Permanente, and AltaMed to deploy prevention and control measures at the shelter including the development of isolation halls and increased sanitation efforts for shelter residents.

In response to Councilmember Cole's inquiry regarding the status of air quality, Dr. Parveen Kaur, Acting Health Officer, stated that air quality testing and status may take time to accurately measure, and advised the public to wear personal protective equipment such as N95 masks to guard against pollutants. Acting Director of Public Health Carmona also clarified that the City has not issued a mask mandate, but is only suggesting that the public wear masks due to air quality affected by fire and smoke.

Discussion ensued regarding recommendations for masking, safe air quality, and potential risks for youth to be outside.

Councilmember Hampton advocated for the City to conduct air quality testing, and Councilmember Cole requested that staff agendaize air quality testing for further discussion to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the matter.

In response to Councilmember Jones' inquiry regarding green waste pickup and the impacts on street parking, Public Works Director Greg de Vinck reported that City crews have been consistently working on clearing tree and brush debris, and that contracts were recently issued to bring in additional trucks and larger equipment to collect larger pieces of debris. He added that the City will be contracting with local labor for debris cleanup work.

Councilmember Masuda returned to the meeting at 4:11 p.m.

Acting Public Health Director Carmona reported that the Public Health building at 1845 N Fair Oaks Ave will reopen for individuals impacted by the Eaton Fire to assist them obtaining vital records.

Joaquin Siques, Director of Transportation, briefly reported on upcoming resumption of parking enforcement for street parking and City-owned lots to promote turnover for businesses. He also noted that City staff will be returning to the City Council with a report regarding overnight parking and fees for those impacted by the Eaton Fire.

Discussion ensued regarding pre-approved building plans for ADUs and single-family residences, maximizing opportunities for impacted residents to rebuild, and the need to expedite the plan check and permit approval process for homes with customizations as well.

Councilmember Masuda requested City staff to release an updated map regarding the water quality in Upper Hastings Ranch.

City Clerk Jomsky reported that the one letter advocating for a rent freeze and/or eviction moratorium as a result of the impacts of the Eaton Fire, and two letters requesting the City waive Measure H City Charter provisions and other related comments, were received by the City Clerk's office, distributed to the City Council, posted online, and made part of the public record for this item.

Yadi, Pasadena resident, advocated for the Legislative Policy Committee to review and discuss State disaster relief bills related to the LA fires and implementing an ad hoc task force as part of AB239.

Brook Perez, residence not stated, commended the City for the handling of the Eaton fire and the quick actions to establish of the evacuation center at the Pasadena Convention Center.

Ash Riveire, Pasadena resident, expressed concerns regarding the displacement of tenants and advocated for an eviction moratorium and rent freezes to prevent price gouging.

Following discussion, the City Council provided the following direction to City staff: 1) explore the possibility of moving up the joint meeting with LA County Supervisor Kathryn Barger and invite the Altadena Town Council, 2) have Pasadena Water and Power check on water infrastructure in Altadena, 3) explore air testing around burn sites and check in with AQMD, 4) continue emphasis on debris removal efforts and explore local support from non-profits and other local entities, 5) start work on expedited home and ADU construction, including streamlined permitting and plan check processes to help facilitate rebuilding, and 6) provided an updated map depicting water quality in Upper Hastings Ranch.

ADJOURNMENT

On order of the Mayor, the special meeting of the City Council adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Victor M. Gordo, Mayor
City of Pasadena

ATTEST:

City Clerk