

Agenda Report

April 13, 2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Legislative Policy Committee (April 7, 2026)
FROM: Fire Department
SUBJECT: **AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR TO SEND A LETTER TO THE STATE BOARD OF FORESTRY COMMENTING ON ZONE ZERO**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the action proposed herein is covered by the common sense exemption set forth in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) as CEQA only applies to projects that may have a significant effect on the environment; and
2. Authorize the Mayor to send a letter to the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection stating Pasadena's position on Zone Zero that include Option 4 for vegetation management and Option 2 for tree management.

BACKGROUND:

At the Legislative Policy Committee meeting on April 7, 2026, Pasadena Fire Department provided an update on Zone Zero.

As background in 2020, California enacted Assembly Bill 3074 mandating the creation of an "ember-resistant zone" within five feet of structures in designated high fire hazard areas. This zone is referred to as Zone Zero. Originally set to take place in 2023, the regulations were not finalized. In February 2025, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-18-25 directing the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to expedite the adoption of Zone Zero with a goal to have these in place by the end of 2025. As of April 8, 2026, the Board has not finalized the adoption. Once Zone Zero is adopted, new properties will need to comply immediately, and existing properties may need to be compliant 3 years from adoption.

Over the last 6 years, there have been numerous stakeholder meetings with experts debating the science and the benefit of the “ember-resistant zone” created by Zone Zero. The current draft regulation presented October 23, 2025, proposes several new defensible space requirements for Zone Zero with key provisions including removing debris and combustible materials, non-combustible fences and gates, accessory structures built of non-combustible materials, vegetation management, and tree management.

Four primary vegetation management options are under review by the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection:

- Option 1: Potted plants under 18" tall allowed; no combustible vegetation or mulches.
- Option 2: Same as Option 1, with limited maintained vegetation under 4" tall (e.g., moss or low ground cover).
- Option 3: Plants up to 18" tall are allowed if well-spaced and kept clear of walls, vents, and windows.
- Option 4: Allows plants in pots and low vegetation provided they are well maintained and free of dead materials or combustible mulch.

Two primary tree management options are under review by the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection:

- Option 1: Branches must be at least 5 feet away from walls and above roofs and 10 feet from chimneys. Includes exceptions for trees protected by local ordinance.
- Option 2: Nearly identical but does not reference local tree ordinances and only stipulates that branches must be ten feet away from chimneys.

Through multiple meetings with local agencies and organizations, Pasadena leadership believes that a one-size-fits-all is not beneficial and that local control needs to be maintained to provide regulations that work for Pasadena. Staff recommends that City Council approve the Mayor to send a letter to the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and any other applicable agency indicating that, should the Zone Zero regulations be adopted statewide, they include Option 4 for vegetation management and Option 2 for tree management.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The proposed action has been determined to be exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines section 15061 (b)(3), the Common Sense Exemption that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

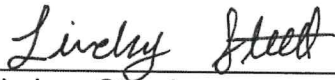
There is no fiscal impact.

Respectfully submitted:



CHAD AUGUSTIN
Fire Chief

Prepared by:



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Approved by:



MIGUEL MARQUEZ
City Manager