

Memorandum

DATE: April 28, 2015

TO: Finance Committee

FROM: Parks and Recreation Commission

REGARDING: Support for Funding to Implement the Foothills Fire Management Plan.

The Foothills Fire Management Plan was adopted by Council on May 18, 2009. The objectives of the plan are: life safety, structure and infrastructure protection, ignition prevention, fire containment, and natural resource protection and enhancement. The plan was developed with lesson learned from the Oakland Hills Fire and the associated loss of lives. Palo Alto's foothills have very similar conditions to the areas of the Oakland Hills, and the plan goals are designed to address and mitigate the impacts of fire hazards. The Plan identifies 51 areas (approximately 330 acres of City land) where treatments are to be conducted. These treatments are found within Foothills Park, Pearson-Arastradero Preserve, and 12 miles of City roadways. The highest priorities are the treatment of roadways which are evacuation routes and entrapment hazards (citizens to evacuate and allow emergency personnel and equipment to access safety). Roadside treatments also helps protect city infrastructure (water reservoirs, electric and gas lines) which would be severely impacted by a foothills fire. The Plan identifies a five year cycle of treatments.

The five-year costs to implement the first cycle of recommended projects were estimated to be approximately \$700,000 in 2009. In FY12, Council approved a new CIP (PO-12003) Foothills Wildland Fire Mitigation Program, which was funded for \$200,000 for FY12. The project requires significant staff management. Fire, Police, Public Works, Emergency Services, and Community Services Departments all lacked the available staff time to effectively manage the project. In FY 2013, the City formed a partnership with the Santa Clara County Fire Safe Council to secure their assistance in managing and implementing the project.

Since forming the partnership with the Fire Safe Council the following Plan treatments have been implemented:

1. Evacuation routes on:
 - a. Arastradero Road (30-ft on city owned land; 10-ft on private property)
 - b. Los Trancos Road (10-ft easement only)
 - c. Approximately 1-1/2 miles of Page Mill Road (north side only)
2. Vegetation clearing core sections of Foothills Park
 - a. Towle Camp (campground)
 - b. Wildhorse Valley road (evacuation route)
 - c. Oak Grove Picnic Area and restroom (100-ft defensible space)
 - d. Orchard Glen Picnic area and restroom
 - e. Foothills Park maintenance shop (100-ft defensible space)
 - f. Fire Station 8 (100-ft defensible space)
 - g. Corte Madera Water Tank (100-ft defensible space)
 - h. Corte Madera Pump Station (100-ft defensible space)

- i. Boronda Water Tank (100-ft defensible space)
- j. Boronda Pump Station (100-ft defensible space)
- k. Park Water Tank (100-ft defensible space)

The remaining balance of the CIP (PO-12003) Foothills Wildland Fire Mitigation Program is \$49,000. Staff anticipates the existing CIP funding will be exhausted by end of FY15.

The consultant who wrote the Foothills Fire Management Plan recently provided an updated estimate of the funding required to achieve the goals of the Fire Plan. The total FY16 funding needed for this project is \$181,500; however, since the Fire Department already has \$60,000 budgeted for this work, the total new annual funding requested for this project is \$121,500.

The partnership with the Fire Safe Council will allow staff to fully utilize this funding. The funds needed for subsequent years will vary. It is anticipated that FY17 will require less funding (CSD will require approximately \$48,000 in FY17), while some future years will cost more due to the cycles of vegetation treatment.

The costs for funding the Fire Plan are divided between Community Services, Public Works, and the Fire Departments.

Fire: \$60,000. (Fire already has \$60,000 in their on-going budget for this work, so there will be no additional funding requested by the Fire Department)

-Planned prescribed burns and/or risk assessment and training about wildland fire behavior \$56,000.

-1/3rd of project management consultant \$4,000.

Public Works: \$54,800

-Cost of treating roadsides totals \$40,800.

-Cost for road side survey work \$10,000

-1/3rd of project management consultant \$4,000.

Community Services: \$66,700

-Treatments inside City parklands are estimated to total \$52,700

-Cost for in-park survey work \$10,000

-1/3rd of project management consultant \$4,000.

The Parks and Recreation Commission strongly supports fully funding this critical fire protection program.

Date: May 26, 2015

To: Palo Alto City Council

From: PRC

Re: Memorandum to City Council recommending that funds for implementing the Foothills Fire Management Plan be incorporated and approved annually as part of the fiscal year operating budget.

Summary:

Public safety for Palo Alto residents and visitors in all of our parks and open space is the highest priority for PRC. The Foothills Fire Management Plan was adopted by Council on May 18, 2009. The objectives of the plan are: life safety, structure and infrastructure protection, ignition prevention, fire containment, and natural resource protection and enhancement. These treatments are found within Foothills Park, Pearson-Arastradero Preserve, and 12 miles of City roadways. The highest priorities are the treatment of roadways which are evacuation routes and entrapment hazards (for citizens to evacuate and to allow emergency personnel and equipment to access the areas).

In 2009 the five-year costs to implement the first cycle of recommended projects were estimated to be approximately \$700,000. In 2012 a \$200,000 CIP to implement the Fire Plan was approved. Staffing constraints precluded work until 2013 when interdepartmental arrangement among Community Services, Public Works and the Fire Department did substantial work and used \$151,000 of this CIP leaving only \$49,000, which will be spent by the end of this fiscal year and is actually insufficient for the planned work.

Tonight the PRC passed the following motion: **To insure that residents are protected from fire risks in Foothills Par and Arastradero Preserve, PRC recommends that council approve necessary maintenance for the Foothills Fire Management plan annually and routinely in the respective departmental budgets rather than have this work be subject to prioritization, and potential non-approval, of longer term CIP projects.**

The joint department implementation plan and projected budget from CSD staff is attached for your reference.