



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT



April 9, 2024

ITEM TITLE

Grant Award and Appropriations: Accept Grant Funds From the California Fire Foundation and the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation

Report Number: 24-0100

Location: No specific geographic location

Department: Fire

G.C. § 84308: No

Environmental Notice: The activity is not a “Project” as defined under Section 15378 of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines. Therefore, pursuant to State Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3) no environmental review is required.

Recommended Action

Adopt resolutions A) Accepting the California Fire Foundation grant of \$27,800 and appropriating funds for that purpose **(4/5 vote required)**, and B) Accepting the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation grant of \$293,000 and appropriating funds for that purpose **(4/5 vote required)**.

SUMMARY

The Fire Department applied for the California Fire Foundation Grant and San Diego Regional Fire Foundation Grant for assistance in purchasing equipment needs for the Fuels Crew for hazard brush mitigation around the City. The California Fire Foundation Grant awarded \$27,800 and the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation Grant awarded \$293,000.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Director of Development Services has reviewed the proposed activity for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the activity is not a “Project” as defined under Section 15378 of the State CEQA Guidelines because it will not result in a physical change in the environment. Therefore, pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Not Applicable.

DISCUSSION

The City of Chula Vista Hazard Mitigation Plan classifies wildfire as having highly significant threat to the city and its residents. Chula Vista has several residential communities and commercial structures built in and around many wildland and open space areas. A number of these structures were developed prior to the enactment of the City's Urban-Wildland interface Code in 2000. Additionally, Chula Vista abuts a rural mountainous region on the eastern boundary of the city that is rated as a very high fire hazard severity zone. Wildfire is rated as a "high" hazard within the City because of the amount of open space and canyon areas that are in the center city. These areas, if involved in a wildland fire, have the potential to affect much of the City's population.

In response to the ever-increasing threat of wildfire, the Fire Department established its first ever Fuels Crew. By industry standards, a fuels crew is a group of personnel that specializes in vegetation fuel management related to vegetation fire hazards and risks. The mission of Fuels Crew is to reduce the wildfire risk to the public through the Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program. This program is intended to address the City's potential for wildfire within the wildland-urban interface and reduce the risk to life and property while fostering healthy landscapes that are resilient to wildfire.

Specialized training and equipment are required to properly complete hazardous fuels reduction projects. Equipment includes, but is not limited to, skid steer loaders with attachments for grappling, grinding, and chipping, as well as power tools and hand tools to cut and remove brush, small trees and other hazardous vegetation.

By reducing wildfire risk, we create safer communities and safer places to recreate, while generating awareness for fire safety and preparedness. Additionally, by performing hazardous fuels reduction activities, aimed at keeping wildfires smaller and more manageable, we create a safer environment for our first responders to combat wildfires and reduce the risk of loss of life and property.

The California Fire Foundation

The California Fire Foundation, a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization, provides emotional and financial assistance to families of fallen firefighters, firefighters and the communities they protect. Formed in 1987 by California Professional Firefighters, the California Fire Foundation's mandate includes an array of survivor assistance projects and community initiatives.

The Chula Vista Fire Department applied for and received \$27,800 in grant funds which will be used to purchase equipment directly aligned with the mission of the Fuels Crew for hazard brush mitigation around the city. Equipment utilized by the Fuels Crew includes heavy equipment such as a wood-chipper. This equipment requires specialized training as well as accessories to correspond with the specific type of fuels that are being cleared. Everything from large tree trunks to light brush needs to be cut down to smaller size to be more manageable for Fuels Crew personnel.

The San Diego Regional Fire Foundation

The mission of the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation is to make San Diego the safest county in the nation from fire related incidents. To accomplish this mission, the foundation supports programs throughout San Diego County by working closely with fire departments and other partners to identify and raise funds for departmental needs and regional priorities to deliver top-notch medical and rescue services, as well as effective fire prevention and suppression services.

The Chula Vista Fire Department applied to the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation grant opportunity, seeking funding for Fuels Crew equipment needs similar to and supportive of the California Fire Foundation wood-chipper. In addition to the Fuels Crew equipment, is funding for a new Type 6 Engine to support the increasing volume of vegetation fires experienced on the westside of the City. The department's application was successful, and the foundation has agreed to provide \$293,000 toward the purchase of new equipment dedicated to hazardous fuels removal and extinguishing vegetation fires.

DECISION-MAKER CONFLICT

Staff has reviewed the decision contemplated by this action and has determined that it is not site-specific and consequently, the real property holdings of the City Council members do not create a disqualifying real property-related financial conflict of interest under the Political Reform Act (Cal. Gov't Code § 87100, et seq.).

Staff is not independently aware and has not been informed by any City Council member, of any other fact that may constitute a basis for a decision-maker conflict of interest in this matter.

CURRENT-YEAR FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of resolutions A and B will result in the acceptance of \$27,800 from the California Fire Foundation and \$293,000 from the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation and amend the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget by appropriating funds to the Fire Section of the Other Grants Fund and State Grants Fund.

ONGOING FISCAL IMPACT

Future maintenance costs will be included as part of the annual budget development process and funded by the Measure A Fund.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: San Diego Regional Fire Foundation Draft Memorandum of Understanding

Attachment 2: California Fire Foundation Grant Agreement

Staff Contact: Emily Folker, Principal Management Analyst; Harry Muns, Fire Chief; Marlon King, Emergency Services Manager