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City Manager's Report
April 8, 2025, City Council Meeting
Prepared by: Cleve Morris, City Manager
Item #: 10.1

Subject: Consider an Ordinance approving the Fire Hazard Mitigation Zone Maps for the City of Placerville.

Recommendation: Waive the first reading and introduce and ordinance of the City of Placerville designating Fire Hazard Severity Zones as required by California Government Code Section 51178.

Purpose: To introduce and consider adoption of an ordinance designating the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection required Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) in the City of Placerville.

Strategic Plan Strategy: Health & Public Safety

1. Strategy – Wildfire Protection, Disaster Preparedness

Background: In 1992 California adopted Assembly Bill 337 which required CalFire to evaluate fire hazard severity in Local Responsibility Areas (LRA). LRA's are primarily incorporated cities and other urban regions where local government is responsible for maintenance. That bill only required analysis and designation of Very High Severity Zones. In 2021 Senate Bill 63 was adopted which added the requirement for Moderate and High Severity Zones in LRA's.

California Government Code Section 51179 requires the City to adopt the FHSZ map as prepared by CalFire. CGC 51179 states as follows:

51179 (a) A local agency shall designate, by ordinance, moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones in its jurisdiction within 120 days of receiving recommendations from the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 51178.

(b) (1) A local agency may, at its discretion, include areas within the jurisdiction of the local agency, not identified as very high fire hazard severity zones by the State Fire Marshal, as very high fire hazard severity zones following a finding supported by substantial evidence in the record that the requirements of Section 51182 are necessary for effective fire protection within the area.

(2) A local agency may, at its discretion, include areas within the jurisdiction of the local agency, not identified as moderate and high fire hazard severity zones by the State Fire Marshal, as moderate and high fire hazard severity zones, respectively.

(3) A local agency shall not decrease the level of fire hazard severity zone as identified by the State Fire Marshal for any area within the jurisdiction of the local agency, and, in exercising its discretion pursuant to paragraph (2), may only increase the level of fire hazard severity

zone as identified by the State Fire Marshal for any area within the jurisdiction of the local agency.

(c) The local agency shall transmit a copy of an ordinance adopted pursuant to subdivision (a) to the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection within 30 days of adoption.

(d) Changes made by a local agency to the recommendations made by the State Fire Marshal shall be final and shall not be rebuttable by the State Fire Marshal.

(e) The State Fire Marshal shall prepare and adopt a model ordinance that provides for the establishment of very high fire hazard severity zones.

(f) Any ordinance adopted by a local agency pursuant to this section that substantially conforms to the model ordinance of the State Fire Marshal shall be presumed to be in compliance with the requirements of this section.

(g) A local agency shall post a notice at the office of the county recorder, county assessor, and county planning agency identifying the location of the map provided by the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 51178. If the agency amends the map, pursuant to subdivision (b) or (c) of this section, the notice shall instead identify the location of the amended map.

(Amended by Stats. 2022, Ch. 574, Sec. 10. (AB 211) Effective September 27, 2022.)

The City has reviewed the maps with El Dorado County Fire Chief Cordero and with CalFire. CalFire was requested to attend this meeting but due to workload were unable to attend. In comparing the map with the previous map, many areas in the City are down zoned to a lower severity zone than previously designated. The previous map (slide 10) compares the two maps. As noted, the previous map designated the entire City as Very High Severity.

Discussion: As noted above, the City does not have a lot of options regarding the adoption of the maps. The City can designate areas to a higher severity zone than recommended by CalFire, but we cannot designate them to a lower severity zone. Staff noted one area that we felt may be considered and discussed this area with CalFire. This is the area known as Lumsden Ranch. Looking at the map, the Lumsden Ranch area is designated as Moderate, where the area around that is either High or Very High. In our review we feel that this is an area we may want to consider changing the designation to either High or Very High.

One of the main questions that arise is what the requirements are if these areas are designated High and Very High. Slides 8 and 9 in the attached presentation outline the requirements associated with each zone. Comparing the map however, with the previous map (slide 10), you will see that some of the designations are less restrictive than they were previously. The previous map designated the entire City as Very High Severity. The new map downgrades several of those areas. Since the previous map designated the entire City as Very High Severity, the requirements noted on slides 8 and 9 are already in place for the City.

The other question is what effect this has on an individual property owner. These questions are answered in the attached FAQ prepared for the map adoption.

Based on this information, staff recommend we proceed with the adoption of the maps as presented with the one exception to consider increasing the severity for the Lumsden Ranch area to High Severity or Very High Severity.

The following link provides additional information for the public to determine the effects of this action on their individual property.

[Find my Address](#)

Options:

1. Adopt the maps as recommended.
2. Adopt the maps as recommended with the exception of the Lumsden Ranch area up zoned to High Severity.
3. Adopt the maps as recommended with the exception of the Lumsden Ranch area up zoned to Very High Severity.
4. Do not adopt the maps at this time and request staff to research additional information.

Environmental:

Class 8 - Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment (Section 15308)

This exemption applies to "actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state law or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment."

The adoption of LRA Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps aligns with this exemption because it is a regulatory action mandated by state law (e.g., Government Code Section 51179 and Senate Bill 63) to identify and mitigate wildfire hazards, thereby protecting the environment and public safety. The maps themselves do not directly authorize physical development or construction but establish a framework for future wildfire safety measures, such as building codes or defensible space requirements.

Cost: NA

Budget Impact: NA



M. Cleve Morris, City Manager

Attachments:

- Att. A: Presentation
- Att. B: Map
- Att. C: Draft Ordinance
- Att. D: FAQ