

OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION NO. _____ C.M.S.

INTRODUCED BY COUNCILMEMBERS SHENG THAO AND DAN KALB

RESOLUTION DESIGNATING WILDFIRE PREVENTION A TOP PRIORITY FOR THE CITY OF OAKLAND AND REQUESTING THE CITY ADMINSITRATOR TO PRESENT A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE THAT ADDRESSES OAKLAND'S WILDFIRE PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND PLANNING FOR OAKLAND'S WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

WHEREAS, wildfires have grown larger and increased in intensity over the last several decades due to drought, climate change and increased development in the wildland/urban interface (WUI). Of the twenty most destructive California wildfires since 1932, when the state began keeping records, 9 have occurred in the past ten years—and four of those took place in just 2017 and 2018; and

WHEREAS, more than 2 million of California's households, or roughly 1 in 4 structures in California lie within the high or extreme risk fire zones in maps drawn by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. In Oakland, that equates to 26,000 homes or 21.5% of the geographic area of the City of Oakland. The City of Oakland is designated by California's Office of the State Fire Marshal as a Community at Risk of damage from wildfire; and

WHEREAS, since 1923, more than a dozen major wildfires have impacted the Oakland hills, resulting in extensive damage, economic harm and loss of life. The 1991 Oakland/Berkeley firestorm, considered the third most deadly fire in California, burned over 1,500 acres, caused the deaths of 25 people and injured over 150 people; and

WHEREAS, wildfires in this decade are larger, faster and more destructive in 1991, causing great risk to not only the Oakland Hills but to Oakland neighborhoods between the hills and the Bay, as evidenced by the destruction of Coffey Park in the 2017 Tubbs Fire; and

WHEREAS, Oakland is also at high risk for a devastating earthquake on the Hayward Fault, which cuts right through Oakland's high fire severity zone; where fire ensues, it will cause further destruction to life, property and the City's resiliency; and

WHEREAS, when a wildfire destroys a neighborhood, the short- and long-term economic impact multiplies geometrically. Oakland's own 1991 Firestorm resulted in estimated \$1.7 billion (1991 USD) in insured losses (\$2.7 billion in 2018 dollars) and created a recession in the City of Oakland that took at least five years to recover; and

WHEREAS, the more intense, extensive fires facing the Western United States, could increase the cost—and the availability—of homeowner’s insurance for more than 25% of the state’s homeowners who live in the areas with high exposure to wildfires; and

WHEREAS, major disasters such as the 2017 Tubbs Fire and the 2018 Camp Fire severely strain the limited housing stock in a community when survivors are forced to replace housing destroyed in the wildfire. Oakland already has an affordable housing crisis, and Oakland and nearby communities would be hard pressed to accommodate thousands of residents displaced by a wildfire or other major disaster; and

WHEREAS, as the Camp Fire in Paradise has shown, financially disadvantaged people, renters, and employees would be far more seriously injured by a wildfire on the scale of Paradise than residents who can afford adequate insurance. Should a major wildfire spread from the high-risk wildland interface to the more urban areas, economic havoc would result; and

WHEREAS, a wildfire in the Oakland hills impacts the entire City of Oakland, both in short-term air quality, loss of housing, injury and loss of life, and in long-term economic, housing and city resiliency; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That the City Council adopts this resolution designating wildfire prevention a top priority for the City of Oakland; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the City Council requests the City Administrator to present a report to the Public Safety Committee within 180 days that addresses: 1) how city departments will address wildfire prevention in their planning, programs and projects for Oakland’s Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), including the extent to which the strategies will involve multi-disciplinary and multi-agency teams in the development of pre-fire plans, 2) what wildfire prevention plans will include such as home hardening, evacuation and other wildfire prevention strategies for both private and public properties, and public communication strategies, before, during and after a wildfire event, and 3) the extent to which wildfire prevention will be addressed in the next updates to the City’s General Plan, Safety, Open Space, Hazard Mitigation Plans and other similar plans.

IN COUNCIL, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA,

PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES - FORTUNATO BAS, GALLO, GIBSON MCELHANEY, KALB, REID, TAYLOR, THAO AND PRESIDENT KAPLAN

NOES –

ABSENT –

ABSTENTION –

ATTEST: _____
LATONDA SIMMONS
City Clerk and Clerk of the Council of the
City of Oakland, California