

Council Business Meeting

November 20, 2018

Agenda Item	2018 Fire Adapted Ashland FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Submission	
From	Chris Chambers Alison Lerch	Forest Division Chief Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator Ashland Fire & Rescue
Contact	Chris.Chambers@ashland.or.us alison.lerch@ashland.or.us	541-552-2066 541-552-2231

SUMMARY

Ashland Fire & Rescue’s Forestry Division is seeking approval from City Council to submit the 2018 Fire Adapted Ashland FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant for \$3 million spread over three years. This grant is part of the Fire Adapted Ashland program, which includes a suite of wildfire safety programs, including: the recently passed Wildfire Lands Ordinance, Ashland Forest Resiliency Project, City/Parks forestlands management, wildfire evacuation plans, and Firewise USA communities.

Ashland Fire & Rescue will ask for \$3,000,000 with a \$750,000 matching requirement that will be met by a combination of existing, budgeted staff time and required landowner contribution. No new City funds are being requested as a condition of the grant. The grant will be on a reimbursement basis for creating fire safe landscaping and home hardening projects using the guidance in the newly adopted Wildfire Lands Ordinance, National Fire Protective Association, and International Code Council.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

The 2015-2017 City Council Goals and Objectives: *“Maintain current Firewise communities and implement the Fire Adapted Communities model (8.3).”*

The Ashland Comprehensive Plan includes a goal to *“Protect life, property and environmental resources in Ashland’s suburban/wildland interface area from the devastating effects of wildfire. Lessen the possibility of wildfire spreading to the Ashland watershed from the urban/wildland interface area”* (4.25 Wildfire Hazards).

The 2018 Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (Ashland Addendum): *“Reduce the threat of loss of life and property from natural hazards by incorporating information on known hazards and providing incentives to make hazard mitigation planning a priority in land use policies and decisions, including plan implementation”*

The City of Ashland’s 2017 Climate Energy Action Plan: *“Prepare the city’s communities, systems, and resources to be more resilient to climate change impacts”* and includes the specific strategy to *“Support more climate-ready development and land use. Regulate new development in the Wildfire Lands Overlay part of the urban growth boundary (Strategy ULT-4).”*

The City of Ashland’s 2014 Wildfire Hazard Zone Evaluation demonstrated that the Wildfire Lands overlay boundary established in 1997 does not incorporate all areas within the City that meet the criteria to be considered a

Wildfire Hazard Zone as set forth by OAR Chapter 629, Division 044, and found that expansion of the Wildfire Lands boundary to include all properties in the City was warranted.

The 2004 Ashland Community Wildfire Protection Plan includes a goal to “Write and adopt a fire safe landscaping ordinance to regulate plantings around new structures.”

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION

Council passed expansion of the Wildfire Lands Overlay and update of the Development Standards for Wildfire Lands on September 18, 2018. This grant application was mentioned as part of staff’s presentation and served to address concerns that the City address flammability of existing buildings. Approval to apply for this grant follows on our commitment to address this concern.

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During the process of updating and expanding the Wildfire Lands Overlay and updated Land Use Code, Ashland Fire & Rescue emphasized that education-based approaches to wildfire risk reduction are the most effective approach in the city of Ashland. Since there are on average only 50 new buildings and 200 additions in a given year that would be subject to the new Wildfire Lands Ordinance, it is necessary to acquire grant funds to move the rest of the existing built environment toward the same code standards we’re now requiring of new construction. The FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant is the only grant source of significant scale to make a marked improvement in Ashland’s overall wildfire hazard. Residents who enroll in the FEMA grant will be subject to creating a fire safe landscape using the General Fuel Modification Area requirements already adopted in Ashland’s Land Use Code.

FISCAL IMPACTS

There will be no additional City funds requested for this grant as a condition of the match requirement.

Fiscal impacts to the City include existing staff time to prepare and help administer the grant over a three-year period. The grant will pay for a new full-time equivalent for the term of the grant. In addition, there will be more reimbursements than normal from the Forestry Division, which will have an impact on the City’s Finance Division.

Over time, we anticipate that the reduction of fire danger will have a fiscal benefit to city government and citizens through reduced impacts to critical infrastructure, fire responses, and loss of life and personal property.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of Ashland Fire & Rescue’s request to submit a 2018 application for the FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant.

ACTIONS, OPTIONS & POTENTIAL MOTIONS

I move to approve authority for the City to submit a 2018 FEMA Pre Disaster Mitigation grant proposal in the amount of \$3 million with matching funds to come from existing staff salaries and participating private landowners.

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

None