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I attended the Study Session on the Wildlife Mitigation Ordinance last night and there were several things that concern me. It was said that the provisions could be either voluntary or mandatory – but I think there could be a compromise. It could be voluntary for a period of time – something like 3 to 5 years – giving people the opportunity to decide the timing of their compliance efforts. This period should coincide with the availability of financial assistance through the FEMA Grant to help pay for the work. At the end of voluntary period, the Ordinance should become mandatory. I assume that regulations will define terms for enforcement – e.g. no grace period, no monetary help, time-certain requirements and fines for non-compliance.

You'd offer a strong incentive to do it soon, while money is available to defray the cost. Since the aim of all this is to get Ashland ready for the increasing danger of wildfire destroying our property and taking lives, the more quickly we do the necessary mitigation city-wide, the safer we will be.

I also think it essential that the existing highly flammable vegetation should be removed and replaced (if desired). The HOA in my complex has been diligent in removing and replacing vegetation, but we are surrounded by big stands of Leyland Cypress and other very large and highly flammable trees. Education and outreach are not having any effect; in fact, new cypress trees are being planted close to existing homes in spite of the danger. It is well and good to think that everyone will act responsibly if given the chance, but even in Ashland -- it doesn't happen.

There are many benefits to passing a mandatory ordinance besides making the city safer. 1) - It will bring direct awareness of the problem – many are not paying attention to the increasing risk of wildfire here. 2) - By encouraging the work to be done soon, it will provide jobs to local contractors and keep the money circulating in the community. 3) - It will pull the us all together in the joint effort to protect the whole city. Also, with the increase of fire along the west coast, it won't be long before insurance companies raise rates or even refuse to cover fire damage. This has happened in areas where there were yearly floods or frequent seismic shocks. Suddenly, homeowners found that certain coverage disappeared from their policies and they were forced to take out separate and very expensive coverage for possible natural disasters.

Thank you very much for all your excellent work. I appreciate the immense effort that went into and giving the community the opportunity to have input over many years, and crafting this inclusive ordinance. Now is the time to put it into effect and see some results.

Sincerely,
Helen Burd