

## Wildfire Mitigation Ordinance - Intro Draft July 17, 2018

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of the WMO I want to provide some of the background and context out of which this ordinance has emerged...

For the last ten years and more the City and its AFR partners have been working to make our forests, including the Watershed, more resistant to wildfires, by removing excess 'fuel' that could carry an intense wildfire . We now have largely completed the first thinning phase thereby creating what I call a "wildfire safety reduced fuels zone" that is actually part of the City's infrastructure.

This zone has to be scrupulously maintained on a regular cycle, which we do by controlled burning to remove new 'fuel' that is continually growing up. This process may sometimes produce smoke in the city, about which I will say more later...

We have also instituted a voluntary Firewise program since 2010 for neighborhoods across the City, that has been enthusiastically embraced by the community. Firewise focuses on reducing the vulnerability of the participating neighborhoods to wildfire, essentially by managing what might be called 'urban fuel', i.e. pruning trees and shrubs, removing combustible debris from around structures, etc. Yet, this program still covers less than 10% of Ashland's land base and up to 20% of homes covered by Firewise areas don't even participate in the program.

But now it's time to take a much more comprehensive approach to protect the entire city itself - whose vulnerability to events such as last year's Santa Rosa fire had been vividly illustrated. (Although we had a miniature preview seven years ago with our own Oak Knoll fire.) Clearly there are times when conditions (temperature, humidity and wind) are such that fires, once started, are very difficult to stop, whether they are in the forest or not. While we can't make ourselves completely safe from wildfires of every kind, we can reduce opportunities for ignition and generally do a better job of protecting ourselves from a variety of lesser types of fires, which constitute the overwhelming

majority of conditions and actual fires.

Our effort to take this step in preparation, in awareness and in acceptance of the reality of our situation started with a revamp of our existing WMO 4 years ago but the Planning Commission soon wisely recognized that it had important limitations for our community. I convened a workgroup, including key staff, to follow up on the PC and ultimately we decided on the strategy that is debuting before you tonight.

An important component of this strategy is to deal with new construction separately from the existing 'built environment'. We believe the Land Use Ordinance and Building Code are appropriate for the former but that a voluntary, educational approach better suits the built environment, i.e the structures and foliage of the city as it exists today. (This is similar but more ambitious than the approach we have used successfully for water conservation.)

Tonight's group of regulations is just the first step of the overall program of wildfire mitigation that will be rolling out in the coming months. And, as Brandon will explain, it only applies to new construction and is the first component of regulation that we will bring to you. We will turn our/your attention to the rest of the city later this year.

Before I hand over the talking stick to Brandon, Chris, Stephen Gagne and Roger Pearce, a word about smoke... Over these ten years that I mentioned, it has become apparent that we have a separate but related vulnerability to smoke - in two ways: 1) We can be the recipients of large amounts of smoke from remote wildfires that don't directly threaten our town and 2) maintaining our wildfire safety zone can occasionally bring much lighter amounts of smoke, of shorter duration, into our airshed.

For those of you who follow civic events, our Smokewise Program, a joint project of the Chamber of Commerce and the City, was introduced recently and is accessible on both the Chamber and City websites.

One last point: all our various efforts regarding wildfire and smoke are really

about community resiliency, which means facing up to our vulnerability and taking practical steps to reduce our risk even while recognizing we can't totally eliminate it. Needless to say, this is a complex community process but I have confidence, based on shared experiences of Ashland, that we can do it.