



Board Report

File #: 18-723, Version: 1

- a. Receive a report on costs and description of duties for Fire Fuel Mitigation duties in response to wildfire concerns;
- b. Provide direction for the County Resource Management Agency to negotiate and draft a contract with the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County for Board consideration to provide personnel services to address a wide range of fire fuel mitigation issues and objectives; and
- c. Consider financing options for allocating up to \$150,000 to fund costs for Fire Mitigation in FY 2018-2019

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Receive a report on costs and description of duties for Fire Fuel Mitigation duties in response to wildfire concerns;
- b. Provide direction for RMA to negotiate and draft a contract with the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County for Board approval to provide personnel services to address a wide range of fire fuel mitigation issues and objectives; and
- a. Consider financing options for allocating up to \$150,000 to fund costs for Fire Mitigation in FY 2018-2019

SUMMARY:

On June 26, 2018, the Board of Supervisors held hearings to adopt the annual budget for FY 2018-19. Supervisors Adams inquired about an augmentation submitted by RMA for \$150,000 to fund a Fire Fuel Mitigation Officer. This augmentation was not included in the adopted Budget due to funding constraints. The Board directed staff to return to the Board with a report providing additional information regarding the costs and a more detailed description of the services to be provided.

Over the past few years, RMA has tried to work with the Fire agencies to establish an agreed approach to fire mitigation. The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCD) has expressed interest in contracting with the County for the provision of fire fuel mitigation services. Staff initiated conversations to draft an agreement modeled after a contract between RCD and the Agricultural Commissioner's Office for technical assistance, weed management, and other services. When RMA returns to the Board with a contract for consideration, RMA would seek \$150,000 intended to serve as seed money to establish these services through RCD. It is envisioned that the services include identifying grants and other funding mechanisms to ultimately pay for continued services, as well as, fire prevention/protection project implementation.

DISCUSSION:

On November 8, 2011, the Board of Supervisors adopted an ordinance adding Chapter 2.33 to the Monterey County Code to establish the position of County Fire Warden as well as adopted Resolution No. 11-361 that further created a Fuel Mitigation Officer. Collectively the Fire Warden and Fuel Mitigation Officer positions were established to serve at the direction of the RMA to aid in enforcing all laws and ordinances and any rules or regulations adopted by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and the State Fire Marshal related to fire prevention and protection within the unincorporated territory that is not within a local fire district jurisdictional area. The Fuel Mitigation Officer position is to be funded by outside funding sources, such as state and federal grants, to act as a technical adviser to the County Board of Supervisors and the County staff

regarding wildfire-related matters.

At the same time, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU, **Attachment A**) was negotiated to set forth the intention of the County of Monterey, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire), Monterey Fire Safe Council, and fire protection districts, departments and brigades located within the unincorporated areas of Monterey County to work together to support the Fire Warden Office. At that time there was general support to appoint the CalFire Chief for San Benito-Monterey area, Rick Hutchinson, as the County Fire Warden and Fuel Mitigation Officer. Chief Hutchinson retired shortly thereafter, and the County has not been successful in filling these positions.

For various reasons, the Fire Warden and Fuel Mitigation positions have not been staffed and the community and MOU collaborators are interested in moving forward with filling a Fuel Mitigation Officer position under contract to the RMA. Funding (\$300,000) was approved by the Board in FY15 to establish both positions, however, disagreement among the various interested parties and fire districts resulted in the positions remaining unfilled. In FY16, the Board reduced funding by one-half to allow for one position. RMA sent out a letter to inquire if anyone, or any firm, was interested. There was no response.

Members of the Fire Safe Council, a non-profit corporation committed to protecting and educating the public on wildfire dangers, have recently discussed responsibilities of the Fire Fuel Mitigation position, and suggested contracting the position through a third party, non-governmental agency, such as the Resource Conservation District (RCD). It is envisioned that the Fuel Mitigation Officer could develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs), write grants and identify funding to sustain staffing and fire prevention efforts, and assist to proactively address fire dangers countywide. Instead of a single person or “officer” it was discussed that the personnel requirements of the position might require more than one individual’s expertise to address all the responsibilities envisioned in the attached scope of services (**Attachment B**). If funding is authorized, RMA will work with MOU signatories and other partners to finalize the draft scope of responsibilities of the Fuel Mitigation Officer and negotiate a contract with the Resource Conservation District. Staff would return to the Board for consideration of any contract/agreement and allocation of funds.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The following agencies have participated in this matter:

RMA-Planning

RMA-Administration

Additionally, the Fire Safe Council of Monterey County has provided input.

FINANCING:

The FY 2018-19 Budget does not include funding for the position. Staff is recommending an allocation of up to \$150,000 in support of the position. where the financing source would be General Fund Contingencies, which would leave a contingencies balance for FY 2018-19 of \$4,500,681. If the Board wishes to consider this recommendation, staff will return to the Board with a request to increase appropriations and request to transfer funds.

Another option for financing is cannabis revenue. The adopted budget included \$2.7 million in cannabis revenues to support cannabis program implementation; however, estimated revenues presented to the Board at the June 26, 2018 budget hearings estimated revenue from cultivation at \$4.3 million for FY 2018-19. If the Board wishes to consider this option, staff would return to the Board for a request to increase revenues and appropriations.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Monterey County is prone to significant wildland fires that come with significant costs. Fire prevention can help reduce impacts to the environment and save lives and property. Major fires also impact the economy since they often occur during the height of the tourist season, and comes with great costs to protect/repair public infrastructure.

X_Economic Development
X_Administration
X_Health & Human Services
X_Infrastructure
X_Public Safety

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Approved by: Carl P. Holm, AICP, RMA Director

The following attachment are on file with the Clerk of the Board:

Attachment A - 2011 MOU

Attachment B - Draft Scope of Services

cc: Fire Safe Council, Monterey County
RCD