

Public Safety Commission, Item 5: WUI Code

June 3, 2019

Attendees: Chief Joel Baker, Chief Vocke, Chief Limon, Mark Baker

Public: WUI Code is a critical item to prevent fire disaster in Austin. This Code is coming to council for Budget soon.

Staff: AFD supports the WUI code. It is important that Austin be prepared.

Staff: We would like an endorsement of the draft we have prepared; that you have in front of you. The technical board that we need to appear before is the fire code board of appeals.

Mark Baker gives Presentation.

Public: This is only about new construction?

Staff: Yes, the WUI code is not retroactive. Vegetation management will be required for all remodels and new construction.

Public: Will some of the educational funds be used for public education about defensible space?

Staff: Some education is happening now. We thank you for your time and support. We have worked through issues and you are an important stake holder for support to city council. There are costs involved. We do not have staff do to reviews and inspections. The fees will help offset the increased cost of housing.

Public: I will move that we endorse this WUI Code. 64% of Austin is at risk; 1/3 of that is preserve land. How will the preserves be involved?

Staff: No. only new developments and remodels are involved.

Public: What will be done about the preserves?

Staff: We will make a team effort.

Public: Why is it not included in the WUI Code?

Staff: We can talk about it.

Public: We have lots of development that backs up to greenbelts, who will be responsible for making public land safe? What about defensible space?

Staff: The WUI code is for new builds. We need to look at the best course of action for the Wildland interface.

Public: How closely do you feel that this code mirrors California's code?

Staff: It is similar. Wildfire is everyone's fight. It will be something we need to have conversations about with our network of partners.

Public: We need to harden existing structure and new development. We need to move in the right direction. The idea of losing ½ of our structures in the WUI areas is upsetting. All new builds are in

danger. We need to have safety in league with equity concerns. We need to adopt this code and continue working toward more fire safety.

Staff: We have a different setting here in Austin with the WUI. We are identified as WUI interface and our homes are vulnerable. We are looking to make Austin safer in the WUI and in the interior of the city. It is important to develop relationships with our partners about the preserves and to comply with all of existing rules for endangered species. We have installed miles of shaded fuel breaks in Austin, and will encourage private land owners to create more shaded fuel breaks.

Public: How do you estimate the fees?

Staff: \$400 for an average review and inspection.

Public: what is the estimated cost of setting this up?

Staff: \$1.5 million dollars. The fees will help pay for this.

Public: You need to learn from EMS. They are very good at recouping costs.

Public: The WUI Code effects every district. Some whole districts are in the WUI. Thank you for your work.

Public: Improve to endorse the adoption of the WUI code based on the model code. I move that council give AFD the cost in the budget to AFD.