



STAFF REPORT

AGENDA NO: 9k

MEETING DATE: March 16, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council

Date: March 16, 2026

From: Lisa K. Goldman, City Manager – (650) 558-7243

Subject: Adoption of a Resolution Authorizing the Mayor to Send a Letter of Support Regarding AB 2517, Fire Hazard Severity Zones

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council authorize the Mayor to send the attached letter to Assemblymember Lisa Calderon in support of AB 2517, a Cal Cities-sponsored bill that would improve the Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) designation process conducted by the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

BACKGROUND

California Public Resource Code section 4202 requires the State Fire Marshal to classify lands within state responsibility areas into Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ). Each zone shall embrace relatively homogeneous lands and shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors present, including areas where winds have been identified by the department as a major cause of wildfire spread.

Under Government Code section 51178, the State Fire Marshal is required to identify areas in the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones based on consistent statewide criteria and based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas. Moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors including areas where winds have been identified by the State Fire Marshal as a major cause of wildfire spread.

DISCUSSION

Under current law, the FHSZ designations in local responsibility areas are required to be “periodically” reviewed. Prior to last year, the FHSZ maps were last updated in the 2007 to 2009 timeframe. With the most recent map release occurring in 2025, local agencies have expressed concerns that they did not have the ability to provide updated land use information prior to the maps being released by the state. In the most recent maps, for example, parcels were split in half with two different zones, and parking lots and other bodies of water were designated as being in very high fire severity zones. (This was not the case in Burlingame.)

According to Cal Cities, the vague timeline associated with the release of updated maps often leaves local governments without the scientific data they need to fully understand which areas are at greatest risk for fires. These designations correlate with defensible space and home hardening requirements and are critical for ensuring communities can mitigate wildfires.

AB 2517 would clarify that this process happens every five years and would require the State Fire Marshal to provide a preliminary release of the maps with a public comment period and regional workshops. This improved process would allow local governments and the public the opportunity to better understand the designations. Additionally, the bill would require the state to make the data and methodology for the fire hazard model publicly available, which increases transparency and understanding of the environmental conditions that may cause hazard.

AB 2517 is awaiting a committee assignment and will be heard this spring.

FISCAL IMPACT

There are no fiscal impacts associated with supporting this legislation.

Exhibits:

- Resolution
- Draft letter