

MOTION

During the past few years, certain regions of the State have been impacted by destructive wildfires. Wildfires in the City of Paradise, Sonoma County and Ventura County have caused significant loss of life and property damage. In the aftermath, these communities are starting to rebuild. It is believed that power lines and utility equipment in close proximity to overgrown trees and vegetation are the cause of these wildfires. Recent reports show that power infrastructure owned by State's three largest Investor-owned utilities (IOUs) ignited more than 2,000 wildfires during the last three and a half years.

The State is currently investigating these incidents including the IOU's brush clearance practices and standards and whether fines should be assessed. Due to mounting liability associated with the wildfires, PG&E has recently filed for bankruptcy protection. State Legislators are now raising questions about wildfire prevention, power line safety and oversight. There is a high likelihood that new legislation will be introduced that seeks to address this matter and mitigate future public safety concerns.

The City's Department of Water and Power (DWP) maintains power infrastructure in rural areas as well, including areas adjacent to the City. There is a potential that any new legislation or regulatory action may not only impact the DWP's operation, maintenance and public safety standards, but may have an effect on rates and costs as well. Inverse condemnation has been raised as a key factor in both private and public power utility provider's liability, and the topic may be attributing to the downgrading of credit ratings of some utilities.

Any potential impact on the DWP's operations should be carefully reviewed and assessed. In this manner, the interests of the City and the ratepayers may be ensured.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Department of Water and Power (DWP) be requested to report to the City Council in 30 days on the status of potential State legislation or regulatory action related to mitigating wildfires caused by Investor-owned Utility's power infrastructure.

I FURTHER MOVE that the DWP report on any potential effects of State legislation or regulatory action on the Department's operations (generation/transmission requirements), maintenance, safety standards including costs and rate impacts; and whether there is a need for the City to prepare a legislative position concerning these matters.

PRESENTED BY:


NURY MARTINEZ
Councilwoman, 6th District

SECONDED BY:



ORIGINAL



APR 12 2019