



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: CEO
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of: 4/7/2009
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Tme:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Michael F. Brown, County Executive Officer
Director(s)
Contact Info: John McInnes, Assistant CEO
805-568-3552

SUBJECT: Status of County Tea Fire Recovery Efforts

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

a) Receive and file a report on the status of the County of Santa Barbara's Tea Fire recovery efforts.

Summary Text:

To assist residents affected by the Tea Fire, the County Executive Officer formed the Tea Fire Recovery Team (Recovery Team), which provided a forum for departments to work collaboratively, thereby delivering relevant, coordinated and timely services to the community. Examples of these services included extensive interaction and communication with community organizations and interests, coordination with federal, state and local support agencies, facilitation of safe and effective debris removal and processing/disposal, assistance with temporary housing for displaced residents, increased policing of the burn area to ensure public safety, waiver of the County's processing fee for replacement of U.S. passports and free processing of replacement copies for vital and official records.

Many of these initial recovery services are now complete and the County has focused its efforts on the rebuilding process. As an example, demolition permits were issued to 79 of the 81 parcels affected by the fire and 64 of the parcels are now clean and ready for rebuilding. Further, 4 building permits have been issued and another 7 land use and building permit applications have been received and are being processed. Accordingly, the Planning and Development department will now serve as the community's main point of contact and will continue to provide county residents with assistance and pertinent information related to the rebuilding process.

Background:

The "Tea" fire broke out at approximately 5:50 p.m. on November 13, 2008, burned for 3 days, destroyed 1,940 acres and directly affected 81 parcels in the unincorporated area. On November 17, 2008, the County formed the Recovery Team, which included Public Works, Planning and Development, Sheriff, District Attorney, County Counsel, Office of Emergency Services, Fire, Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office, Clerk-Recorder-Assessor's Office, General Services, Public Health, Mental Health, Agricultural Commissioner's Office, Information Technology and the County Executive Office. By collaborating through the Recovery Team, the departments provided relevant, coordinated and timely assistance to county residents including:

- Establishment of a Joint Recovery Center with other federal, state and local agencies;
- Participation in numerous community meetings to share information and provide guidance as appropriate;
- Appointment an Ombudsman to assist in timely resolution of issues raised by affected property owners and the public;
- Assignment of Project Case Managers to all 81 parcels under County jurisdiction to provide property owners with a single and direct point of contact at the County (extensive outreach efforts were conducted to ensure property owners were aware of, and had relevant contact information for the Case Managers);
- Issuance of 137 demolition and debris removal permits on 79 distinct parcels and deferral of all associated fees;
- Dissemination of important health information and safety guidelines for clean-up efforts;
- Receipt and processing over 6,500 tons of fire debris (including appropriate recycling and processing at the local County landfill);
- Coordination with the California Department of Toxic Substance Control to provide free household hazardous waste clean-up assistance for fire victims;
- Issuance of 29 permits for temporary trailer homes to be placed on affected parcels;
- Deployment of extra Sheriff's deputies to patrol the burn area to help ensure protection of vacated properties;
- Processing of more than 100 requests for deferral of property taxes and more than 100 requests for re-assessment of property values (for properties in both County and City areas);
- Expedited the free processing of replacement copies for vital and official records, such as certificates of birth, death, fetal death, or marriage, and property records or deeds that are required to obtain assistance from federal, state and local government agencies;
- Waiver of the County's processing fee for replacement of U.S. passports; and
- Establishment of a temporary satellite office at the Cold Springs School to a) facilitate certain day-to-day Tea Fire recovery operations, and b) provide a convenient community service desk and meeting location for the volunteers coordinating the needs of Tea fire survivors, their homeowners' groups and local relief and recovery volunteers.

In addition to the recovery services provided directly to residents, the County's Public Works Department completed several important projects to help prevent soil erosion and reduce the possibility of flooding or debris flows in the burn area, including:

- Cleared four miles of Sycamore Creek in cooperation with the City of Santa Barbara;

- Reconstructed a debris basin in Parma Park that was originally built after the 1977 Sycamore Canyon Fire;
- Cleared out several other existing debris basins and culverts in the Sycamore Canyon Watershed area and built numerous debris racks;
- Installed a new stream monitor gauge on Sycamore Creek near the Five Points intersection;
- Replaced a damaged rain gauge in the Mount Calvary burn area;
- Maintained four sand bag stations in cooperation with the cities of Santa Barbara and Goleta and the Montecito Fire Protection District;
- Monitored and cleared County roadways in the burn area on an as needed basis due to falling rock and other debris; and
- Re-surveyed all County roads in the burn area to facilitate the re-building process.

Having completed the above services and projects, the County is now focused on helping county residents re-build their homes. Accordingly, the Planning and Development department will now serve as the community's main point of contact and will continue to provide county residents with assistance and pertinent information related to the rebuilding process. Specifically, the department's assigned case managers will continue to assist affected property owners through the rebuilding process and conduct weekly meetings with staff from Environmental Health Services, the Montecito Fire Protection District, and the Montecito Water District to ensure coordination and expeditious permit processing. Dianne Black, Director of Development Services, will answer questions that were previously directed to the County's Ombudsman, Tony Nisich and will work directly with the case managers to ensure that all issues are resolved quickly in order to expedite the associated development review process. Finally, information regarding the rebuilding process that was previously on the County's main website page has been shifted to and updated on the Planning and Development Department's website.

Fiscal Impacts:

There is no fiscal impact associated with receiving and filing this report.

Attachments:

None.

Authored by:

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