

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: October 23, 2025

From: Community and Economic Development Department

Subject: Introduce an Ordinance Amending Chapter 15.04 of the Capitola Municipal Code Pertaining to Building and Fire Code

Recommended Action: Introduce for first reading, by title only, waiving further reading, an ordinance amending Chapter 15.04 and 15.18 of the Capitola Municipal Code pertaining to adoption of California Building Codes and the California Fire Code, 2005 Edition and portions of the 2024 International Fire Code, as amended by the Central Fire Protection District and ratified by the Capitola City Council.

Background: Every three years, the Building, Plumbing, Mechanical, Electrical, Energy, Green Building, Fire Code, and other building codes and standards are updated to include the most current construction and engineering principles and practices. Under the purview of the California Building Standards Commission, the newly revised California Building Standards Codes are published for required local adoption. This process ensures that the latest construction, engineering, and life safety techniques become standard practice throughout the State.

Under applicable provisions of the California Government Code and Health and Safety Codes, when a city is part of a fire protection district, the district adopts the local amendments to the Fire Code. Capitola is part of the Central Fire District (the "District"). The District has forwarded to the City a copy of the District's proposed ordinance adopting local amendments to the 2025 Fire Code, accompanied by findings supporting the amendments, for Council consideration.

The City last adopted updated versions of these codes in 2022. The mandatory effective date of the 2025 California Building Standards Code, including the Fire Code, is January 1, 2026.

Discussion: Staff recommends amending the City's building regulations, Title 15 of the Municipal Code, to recognize the adoption of the State Building Standards Codes. The City is permitted to adopt amendments to the State building standards.

The proposed ordinance is included as Attachment 2. Notable changes to the code are outlined below.

Part 2: California Building Code

- Amendments were made to the permit expiration provisions of the code.
- There were no significant updates to the California Historical Building Code. The State Historical Building Safety Board adopted the 2025 California Historical Building Code by carrying forward existing provisions from the 2022 edition without further amendment.

Part 2.5: California Residential Code

- Amendments were made to the permit expiration provisions of the code.
- Amendments include increased fire resistance between units in a duplex.

Part 4: California Mechanical Code

- Amendments were made to the permit expiration provisions of the code.

Part 5: California Plumbing Code

- Amendments were made to the permit expiration provisions of the code.
- Amendments include stricter flow requirements for showers, faucets, and toilets.
- Amendments include new greywater alternative water reuse systems.

- Amendments include higher efficiency water heaters.
- Amendments include ADU-specific requirements around plumbing fixture flow rates, hot water delivery times, and a separate shut-off for ADU water supply.

Part 6: California Energy Code

- Amendments include tighter requirements on the thermal envelope, requiring better insulation.
- Amendments include more stringent infiltration/envelope sealing requirements.
- Amendments include increased minimum efficiencies for heat pumps.
- Amendments include increased controls for lighting.
- Amendments include more requirements for PV systems.

Part 11: California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen)

- Amendments include expanded EV charging requirements for the installation of EV charging receptacles and EV chargers (EVSE).
- Amendments include a stronger emphasis on material reuse and water diversion.
- Amendments include enhanced site development vegetation, landscaping, and minimizing heat islands.

Fire Codes

Central Fire District amended the Fire Code by adding section 903.2.4 concerning fire sprinklers in new accessory dwelling units (ADUs). The State Fire Code does not require automatic sprinkler systems for ADUs that are detached from the primary residence and less than 1,200 square feet if the primary residence does not have sprinklers. (California Residential Code, Title 24, Part 2.5, Section R309.2 (2025).) The District has added Section 903.2.4, which sets the following fire protection standards for newly constructed ADUs:

1. All newly constructed ADUs must meet the standards for water supply for firefighting in Section 507.3 and fire department vehicle access in Section 503.1.1. If these cannot be met, the owner can install an automatic residential sprinkler system as an alternative.
2. If the primary residence has fire sprinklers, the ADU must also have fire sprinklers. If the primary residence does not have sprinklers, sprinklers are not required in the ADU if the ADU is attached to the primary residence and 50% or less of the square footage of the primary residence, or if the ADU is detached from the primary residence.

The District is required to provide a copy of its proposed ordinance and adopted findings to the city where the ordinance will apply at least 30 days before adopting the proposed ordinance. The District sent a copy of the proposed ordinance and adopted findings to the City following the District's Special Meeting on September 25, 2025. The City may provide written comments, which will become part of the District's public hearing record, before the District adopts the ordinance. The District is scheduled to consider adoption of the ordinance on November 13, 2025.

After the District adopts the ordinance, it will transmit the adopted ordinance to the City. The Council may then ratify, modify or deny the ordinance, and must transmit its determination back to the District within 15 days. The Fire Code amendments become effective in Capitola when ratified by the City Council.

Staff recommends Council adopt the State Codes as the governing Code for this cycle, as the City is obligated to apply State Building and Fire Codes, and because the State's standards are tailored to the geographic, climatic, and topographic conditions found in California.

Fiscal Impact: None.

Attachments:

1. Central Fire Letter to City Council
2. Draft Ordinance
3. Building Municipal Code
4. Fire Code
5. Central Fire Resolution Fire Code
6. Central Fire Resolution State Housing Law

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Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager