



STAFF REPORT
10/14/2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Kendra Reif, Community Development Director

PREPARED BY: Kendra Reif, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Urgency Ordinance No. 1239 Establishing Expedited Permitting Procedures for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt Urgency Ordinance No. 1239, adding Chapter 17.120, Electric Vehicle Charging Station Permitting, to Title 17 of the Coachella Municipal Code, and make the environmental determination set forth in Section 4 of the ordinance. Adoption as an urgency ordinance requires a four-fifths vote of the City Council and is intended to take effect immediately pursuant to Government Code Section 36937(b).

FISCAL IMPACT:

The ordinance does not appropriate funds or approve City construction of charging infrastructure. Implementation would require staff time to maintain the permitting checklist, update application materials and the City website, coordinate departmental reviews, and administer statutory processing timelines. Permit fees would be charged pursuant to the applicable City fee schedule and would be limited to the City's estimated reasonable cost of providing the service. The amount of any additional administrative cost or permit revenue has not been quantified for this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Urgency Ordinance No. 1239 would add Chapter 17.120 to the Coachella Municipal Code to establish expedited permitting procedures for electric vehicle charging stations consistent with California Government Code Sections 65850.7 and 65850.71. The ordinance provides for administrative review, electronic applications and signatures, a publicly available permitting checklist, and specified processing deadlines while maintaining applicable building, electrical, fire, accessibility, and public health and safety requirements.

Urgency adoption is proposed to address uncertainty affecting current and future permit applications and pending litigation alleging noncompliance with State permitting requirements, without admitting any allegation or liability. The ordinance supports the General Plan's

greenhouse gas reduction policies and includes a determination that adoption is not subject to CEQA or, alternatively, is exempt under the common-sense exemption.

Staff recommends adoption by a four-fifths vote of the City Council, with immediate effectiveness. Implementation would require administrative staff time but would not authorize a capital expenditure or appropriate additional funding.

BACKGROUND:

Assembly Bill 1236 and Assembly Bill 970, codified in Government Code Sections 65850.7 and 65850.71, establish requirements for expedited review of electric vehicle charging station permit applications. These requirements include administrative permitting, a publicly available application checklist, electronic submittals, and specified processing timelines. Review of charging equipment is limited to applicable public health and safety requirements, except where additional review is expressly authorized by State law.

The proposed ordinance establishes a dedicated chapter of the Municipal Code to provide a clear permitting framework for applicants and City staff. It applies to both charging stations serving an existing primary use and facilities where vehicle charging is the primary use of the site.

DISCUSSION:

Chapter 17.120 would establish the following permitting procedures and requirements.

Administrative review and application checklist. The Building Official would administer the expedited process and maintain a checklist of required application information. The checklist, forms, submittal requirements, and applicable fees would be published on the City website. Applications and supporting documents could be submitted electronically, and electronic signatures would be accepted as required by State law.

Processing deadlines. For applications proposing 1 to 25 charging stations at a single site, the ordinance specifies five business days to issue an incompleteness notice and 20 business days after an application is deemed complete for the specified adverse action. For applications proposing more than 25 charging stations, those periods are 10 and 40 business days, respectively. Applications may be deemed complete or approved when the City does not act within the applicable periods, subject to the conditions established by State law.

Health and safety review and appeals. Charging stations would remain subject to applicable building, electrical, accessibility, fire, structural, and utility safety requirements. A conditional use permit may be required only upon the findings authorized by State law concerning a specific adverse public health or safety impact. Denial requires substantial evidence that the impact cannot be satisfactorily mitigated or avoided. The ordinance establishes appeals to the Planning Commission and, for a denied conditional use permit, to the City Council.

Small and large charging stations. The ordinance distinguishes charging stations ancillary to another use from facilities where charging is the primary use. Small stations would not undergo

discretionary architectural or aesthetic review solely because charging equipment is proposed. For large stations, the draft includes a three-acre minimum lot size, 200-foot minimum street frontage, underlying-zone setbacks and height limits, security plans, and circulation requirements. Noncharging amenities, such as commercial kiosks, restrooms, and resting facilities, would undergo administrative architectural and site plan review as described in the ordinance.

Parking and private association approvals. Required parking for an existing use would be reduced as necessary to accommodate charging equipment, consistent with State law. Applicable accessibility requirements would continue to apply. City permit approval would not be conditioned on approval by a homeowners' or property owners' association.

Implementation and State law. The ordinance addresses right-of-way installations, concurrent departmental review, inspections, and fees limited to reasonable service costs. It authorizes the Building Official to update administrative procedures and expressly provides that mandatory State law controls in the event of a conflict. All siting, utility, and development requirements must be implemented within those State-law limits.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Consistent with Section 4 of the proposed ordinance, adoption is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3), because the ordinance establishes administrative permitting procedures and will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. In the alternative, adoption is exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), because it can be seen with certainty that the ordinance itself will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Individual installations processed through a building permit or similar nondiscretionary approval are ministerial and are not subject to CEQA. Any discretionary use permit required pursuant to Government Code Section 65850.7 remains subject to CEQA to the extent required by law. Adoption of the ordinance does not approve a specific charging facility or construction project.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council may adopt the urgency ordinance; direct revisions and adopt an amended urgency ordinance following City Attorney review; or continue the item and provide direction to staff. Continuing the item would delay establishment of the Municipal Code procedures and would not suspend the City's obligations under State law.

RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE(S):

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt Urgency Ordinance No. 1239, adding Chapter 17.120, Electric Vehicle Charging Station Permitting, to Title 17 of the Coachella Municipal Code, and make the environmental determination set forth in Section 4 of the ordinance. Adoption as an urgency ordinance requires a four-fifths vote of the City Council and is intended to take effect immediately pursuant to Government Code Section 36937(b).

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Urgency Ordinance No. 1239 adding Chapter 17.120 to the Coachella Municipal Code.