



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 01/21/2025

ITEM NO: 18

DATE: January 13, 2025
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Chris Constantin, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Discussion, Consideration, and Approval to Add a Full-Time Emergency Manager (Classification: Division Manager) Position to the FY 2024-25 Budget and Approve an Expenditure Budget Adjustment of \$1,000,000 for Emergency Management Efforts from the Available Special/Capital Projects Reserve

RECOMMENDATION:

Town staff recommend the Town Council:

- Add a full-time Emergency Manager (Classification: Division Manager) position to the FY 2024-25 Budget and approve an expenditure budget adjustment of \$1,000,000 for emergency management efforts from the available Special/Capital Projects Reserve.

BACKGROUND:

Over the years, the Town has dedicated time and resources to emergency preparedness, with an emphasis on wildfire preparedness. Of note, the following list outlines examples of progress made in recent years to bolster the Town's emergency preparedness:

- Policy and Plans
 - Development of the [2024 Community Wildfire Protection Plan \(CWPP\)](#), [2024 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Annex \(LHMP\)](#), [Vegetation Management Plan for Roads and Open Spaces](#) (2021), [Ad Hoc Wildfire Committee Report](#) (2020), and [Wildland Urban Interface \(WUI\) Evacuation Assessment Report](#) (2019).
 - Adoption of ordinances to expand weed abatement requirements (2019, 2020), require defensible space around new structures in the WUI and beyond property lines in certain circumstances (2020), and reduce certain requirements for tree removal and maintenance when related to furthering defensible space (2020).

PREPARED BY: Katy Nomura
Assistant Town Manager

Reviewed by: Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Finance Director

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- Vegetation Management for Wildfire Prevention
 - Multiple grant awards for vegetation management:
 - USDA grant for roadsides: \$750,000 awarded with a \$750,000 match requirement
 - FEMA grant for roadsides: \$1,467,388 awarded with a \$489,130 match requirement
 - FEMA grant for open space: \$1,502,121 awarded with a \$500,707 match requirement
 - Completion of vegetation management on approximately 11 miles of Priority 1 and Priority 2 roadways in the Vegetation Management Plan (2021, 2022).
 - Removal of 18 eucalyptus trees on Overlook Road, a Priority 3 roadway in the Vegetation Management Plan (2023).
 - Brush mitigation on the hillside behind the Library using a herd of goats, funded with \$15,000 in grant funding from the California State Library (2023).
- Training and Community Engagement
 - Ongoing staff EOC training for all Town employees, including over 100 employees trained as Disaster Service Workers (DSWs) in 2024.
 - Hillside evacuation drill involving AlertSCC and approximately 50 households (2021).
 - Monthly meetings with CERT leads as well as quarterly Meet and Greet workshops with all CERT members, volunteers, and interested community members.
 - Two additional Neighborhood Incident Command Posts (NICPs) were added in 2023 with two more underway.
 - In 2024, 22 additional CERT members and 16 volunteers were recruited.
 - In 2024, the CERT members held five emergency preparedness information meetings throughout various neighborhoods.
 - Increased Los Gatos AlertSCC subscriptions (6,942 in 2020 to 10,115 in 2025).
 - Continued wildfire preparedness messaging on social media platforms with the following post counts from October 2021 to January 2025:
 - Facebook = 31
 - Instagram = 27
 - X/Twitter = 17
 - LinkedIn = 23
 - Nextdoor = 30
- Partnerships
 - The Town of Los Gatos led an effort with other West Valley cities to secure \$7 million in State grant funding with the support of former Assemblymember Low as part of the 2020-2021 California Budget. Of that funding, \$2 million was dedicated to pilot a defensible space wildland fire mitigation program implemented and overseen by the Santa Clara County Fire District (County Fire).

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This included a new Vasona crew and has been made a permanent program in County Fire's budget.

- The Town sold property at Winchester and Lark to County Fire to set the stage for them to build a state-of-art fire station in Town (2019-2021).

In addition to preparedness efforts, the Town continues to provide appropriate emergency response for events such as COVID-19 and the 2023 storms.

DISCUSSION:

Emergency preparedness is an established, critical strategic priority for the Town of Los Gatos. Currently, the Town budgets 960 part-time, Emergency Services Coordinator hours to address emergency preparedness, planning, and training. To further these efforts; address implementation needs for various disaster mitigation efforts as outlined in the LHMP, CWPP, and Ad Hoc Wildfire Committee Report; pursue emergency preparedness grant funding; explore policy options for improving wildfire prevention; and conduct more robust community engagement, additional staffing resources are required.

To elevate the Town's emergency management, a management level position is necessary to ensure the necessary expertise and leadership to effectuate cross-departmental, Townwide preparedness initiatives. Given the broad scope and high workload of existing management staff in the Town Manager's Office, a new position dedicated to emergency management is required. For these reasons, staff recommends adding a full-time Emergency Manager position (Classification: Division Manager) as soon as possible. Originally, staff planned to make this recommendation during the upcoming budget cycle; however, given the extreme fires occurring in Southern California, it appeared prudent to expedite the request ahead of the upcoming fire season. This new position would cost approximately \$95,000 for the remainder of this fiscal year and \$308,000 annually.

In addition to the staffing resources required, an appropriation of \$1 million is recommended to cover the \$95,000 cost of the new position as well as provide funding to implement emergency and wildfire preparedness initiatives. If approved, the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager will work closely with the new Emergency Manager to evaluate and prioritize the most pressing needs first, while ensuring that appropriate Council oversight and approvals are obtained in accordance with the Town's purchasing policy. Should an emergency occur, this funding would be used to address any immediate response needs.

CONCLUSION:

In order to achieve superior levels of emergency preparedness in an expedited fashion, staff recommends adding a full-time Emergency Manager position and appropriating \$1 million for emergency preparedness and response.

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Adjustment of \$1,000,000

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FISCAL IMPACT:

The recommended expenditure budget adjustment of \$1 million would be funded from the available Special/Capital Projects Reserve. The recommended position would cost approximately \$95,000 for the remainder of the fiscal year and \$308,000 annually. The costs in the current fiscal year would be funded through the recommended \$1 million appropriation and the costs in future years would be included as part of the budget process.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.