



STAFF REPORT

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
MEETING DATE: MARCH 17, 2025
FROM: CITY MANAGER DUBOIS
SUBJECT: NUISANCE ABATEMENT ORDINANCE

RECOMMENDATION:

Review the proposed ordinance revisions to our existing weed and nuisance ordinance, to add enforcement language and process. If there are no changes or minor revisions, Council can make a motion to pass the first hearing tonight. If there are more significant changes, Council can make a motion capturing requested changes and have it brought back in a future meeting.

BACKGROUND:

As we experience more severe weather, the concern about extreme fire events increases. Winter storms knock down trees that can lay fallow on the ground for some time. Heat and drought in the summer create tinder box situations.

While the City currently has a nuisance and weed abatement ordinance on the books, the current ordinance lacks any enforcement mechanism. Every year, the Fire District inspected properties throughout town and cajoles people to reduce vegetation to improve fire safety. If people don't comply, the Fire District provides a list to the City, and the City police department reaches out to ask people to comply. Most residents do comply however, some ignore the warnings. Absentee property owners do not respond. And some owners that are residents also ignore the requests.

Without better cooperation, our efforts to reduce fire risk can only go so far.

In addition, we sometimes experience other types of nuisances – trash or other potentially unsafe health hazards on properties that should be removed. We can use our code enforcement process, but by clarifying clearer penalties for these types of nuisances, along with a process to add fines and clean up costs to the property tax lien, the City will have a much better enforcement tool.

DISCUSSION:

Staff feels that passage of enforcement provisions is a critical tool for the City to be able to improve fire safety as well as clean up other property that represents a threat to public health or is an extreme eyesore.

With passage of an improved ordinance, City staff will develop a communication plan, working in concert with the Fire District, to get out the word about the change. The intent is NOT to generate a lot of penalties and enforcement action but to continue to encourage people to do this work. We will work with the Fire District to help anyone that wants to remove weeds but may be unable to do so either because of

their physical ability or financial situation. For the worse offenders, those with dangerous properties who either do not respond OR refuse to comply, the City will move to enforcement. Staff will establish a budget for how much to spend on hiring crews to perform weed abatement each year. Projects will be prioritized - we will not be able to afford to enforce against everyone each year.

Jackson and Ione both enforce their vegetation management ordinances. Based on what they experienced, we can expect that once residents become aware that the City is serious and will follow through with enforcement, more and more people will voluntarily comply.

Staff are in the process of discussing with both the Police Department and the Fire District to work out operational details. The operational processes and communication plan are separate from getting the ordinance in place.

Staff recommends that Council pass the first hearing of the ordinance. It will return for a second reading in thirty days before coming into effect. The timeline is pretty tight to be prepared for this Spring and Summer season.

BUDGET IMPACT:

We anticipate budgeting around \$20,000 for enforcement in the first year. The City will recover these funds through property tax liens, but there will be a cash flow delay of up to 12 months.

ATTACHMENT:

Proposed Ordinance and Resolution.