



Cathedral City

Legislation Text

File #: 2016-434, Version: 1

City Council

MEETING DATE: 10/26/2016

TITLE:
2016 Building and Fire Codes Adoption, Second Reading

FROM:
Paul Wilson, Fire Chief
Albert Jimenez, Building Official

RECOMMENDATION:
Staff recommends the City Council conduct a second reading, by Title only, of an Ordinance which proposes adoption of the 2016 editions of the California Building and Fire Codes with the requisite findings in support of local additions and amendments to the codes.

BACKGROUND:
In January, 2016 the State of California adopted a complete set of new building and fire codes based on the latest national and international model building and fire codes. These codes, known as the California Building Standards Code (BSC), have been adopted as Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, and were published in July, 2016. While many of the national model code standards have been incorporated into the BSC, it is the BSC that applies in all parts of California, not the model codes. The new codes are effective January 1, 2017 and are immediately applicable to all building permits submitted after that date, unless the City adopts amendments on or prior to that date.

The City is permitted to adopt local additions and amendments to Building Standards Code, provided the additions and amendments are based on findings that the additions and amendments are necessary due to local climatic, topographic or geological conditions.

Any additions and amendments adopted by the City are not effective until copies of both the express findings and the additions and amendments, with the additions and amendments expressly marked and identified as to the applicable findings, have been filed with the California Building Standards Commission.

On October 12, 2016, the Cathedral City City Council approved the ordinance as presented.

DISCUSSION:

The Codes:

The BSC is a compilation of three types of building standards from three different origins:

- Building standards that have been adopted by state agencies without change from building standards contained in national model codes.
- Building standards that have been adopted and adapted from the national model code standards to meet California conditions.
- Building standards, authorized by the California legislature, that constitute extensive additions not covered by the model codes that have been adopted to address particular California concerns.

PURPOSE OF THE ORDINANCE

The purpose of the proposed ordinance is to make the requisite findings regarding the local climatic, topographic or geological conditions that require the adoption of more restrictive standards than provided in the BSC and to adopt the amendments proposed by the City's Building Official and Fire Chief.

FINDINGS

In order to adopt the proposed additions and amendments that provide more stringent life safety and fire protection system requirements, the City Council must make findings supporting that the additions and amendments are necessary due to local climatic, topographic or geological conditions.

Following are the proposed findings:

1. The City of Cathedral City has an arid desert climate with annual rainfall of approximately 3 inches. Temperatures exceed 100°F on average for four months of the year, with daily highs near 110°F during July and August. Surface area temperatures exceeding 160°F degrees are common. Additionally, the area is subject to hot, dry winds during most months of the year. These hot, dry, windy climate conditions increase fire danger by drying and pre-heating combustible material and by fostering spontaneous combustion of flammable material. These conditions can hasten the spread and heighten the intensity of fires, thus creating a need for an increased level of fire protection. The fire dangers that result from these desert conditions can be mitigated by: (i) requiring the installation of the proposed on-site fire protection systems; (ii) mandating use of clay or concrete tiles as roofing material because clay and concrete is more fire-resistive than other roofing materials permitted under the BSC; and (iii) prohibiting use of aluminum and copper-coated aluminum wiring smaller than size 1.0 AWG (gauge) because the smaller gauge aluminum wiring is more likely to fail under the desert conditions and result in failure which can lead to fires, electrical shocks and other hazardous conditions.

2. Cathedral City is located on or near several significant sources that have the potential to cause moderate to large earthquakes: San Andreas Fault Zone, Garnet Hill Fault, San Jacinto Fault,

East Mojave Shear Zone and Pinto Mountain Fault. Severe seismic activity could disrupt communications, damage gas mains, cause extensive electrical hazards, and place extreme demands on the limited and widely dispersed resources of the City's Fire Department. Requiring the installation of on-site fire protection systems including automatic fire sprinkler systems and the other proposed fire protection measures described above can partially mitigate the demand for fire protection services following a severe seismic event, resulting in improved fire safety for building occupants and the community at-large.

3. Elevation within the City limits ranges from 270 feet in the eastern portions of the City adjacent to the Whitewater River to 1,360 feet in the mountains in the most Northern boundaries of the City. Topography extends from flat to 6% slope for habitable land. Traffic and circulation congestion to buildings located in the commercial areas of the City often slows fire department response time to emergencies. Requiring the installation of on-site fire protection systems and the other proposed fire protection measures will supplement normal fire department response in new developments and result in improved life safety and fire protection for building occupants and the community at large during fire occurrence.

4. Persistent drought conditions in the Colorado River Basin have resulted in water levels of Lake Mead and Lake Powell that are near-historic lows. On May 9, 2016, Governor Jerry Brown issued an Executive Order aimed at water conservation due to severe and continuing drought conditions throughout the State of California. As a result of this water emergency, the City must take extensive steps to reduce the consumption of water, including its dependency on large volumes of water for fire suppression. Requiring the installation of on-site fire protection systems and the other proposed life safety and fire protection measures will provide an increased level of community protection and reduce the City's dependency on large volumes of water for fire suppression.

5. The local climatic, geological and topographical conditions identified above create a heightened fire danger that requires the adoption of stringent fire protection measures. If not amended, the California Building and Fire Codes would permit the construction within the City of many new buildings and structures and the improvement of many existing buildings without on-site fire protection systems, with roofing materials other than clay or concrete tile, and with aluminum and copper-coated aluminum wiring smaller than size 10 gauge.

6. The City Council therefore finds that the additions and amendments to the 2016 California Building and Fire Codes set forth herein, in addition to those previously adopted (effective January 1, 2014) afford more stringent requirements for fire protection than required by the State and that such additions and amendments are necessary for the protection of the public's health, welfare and safety.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Adoption of this ordinance is not anticipated to have any significant fiscal impact on the City nor the development community within the City.

ATTACHMENTS:

Ordinance