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AGENDA

REGULAR MEETING OF THE Community Safety Committee

July 6th, 2026 at 6:00 PM

City Hall Council Chambers
10890 San Pablo Avenue
El Cerrito, Ca 94530

This Meeting Place is Wheelchair Accessible

6:00 PM CONVENE REGULAR MEETING

1. **ROLL CALL** – Chair James Dolgonas, Vice-Chair Cedrick Cobb, Members; George Gager, Rosa Esquivel, and Howard Hickman
2. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**
Remarks are typically limited to three minutes per person.
3. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**
CSC members will have a vote to approve the meeting minutes from the June meeting.
4. **COUNCIL AND STAFF LIASION REPORTS**
5. **CRIME BLOTTER**
Member Rosa Esquivel will give a presentation on her work on the ad-hoc committee studying the El Cerrito Police Department's crime blotter.
6. **CITY OF EL CERRITO JULY FOURTH CELEBRATION**
CSC members will debrief the July Fourth event to see if they should change anything about their participation in the coming July Fourth events.
7. **DRAFT VEGETATION MANAGEMENT STANDARDS FOR THE VERY HIGH FIRE SEVERITY ZONES**
Chair Jim Dolgonas will lead a discussion about fire severity zones in El Cerrito and speak about regulations Cal Fire is likely to adopt.
8. **UPDATE FROM AD HOC COMMITTEES**
Members of the Ad Hoc committees will update their progress on their projects.
These may include;

Cobb and Dolgonas – Vegetation Management
Cobb and Dolgonas – Red Flag Day parking program
Esquivel – Crime Blotter
9. **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE**
Please limit comments to three minutes.

10. ADJOURNMENT

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Staff Liaison, (510) 215-4418. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title I).

Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the members regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at El Cerrito Police Department – 10900 San Pablo Avenue El Cerrito, Ca 94530 during normal business hours.



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DRAFT MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE Community Safety Committee

Monday, June 1st, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

El Cerrito City Hall Council Chambers
10890 San Pablo Avenue
El Cerrito, Ca 94530

CONVENE REGULAR MEETING Chair Dolgonas called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. **ROLL CALL** – Present: Chair Dolgonas, Vice Chair Cobb; Members Rosa Esquivel, Howard Hickman. George Gager (absent-unexcused).

2. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**
There were no public comments on items not appearing on the agenda.

3. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**
Chair Dolgonas wanted the addition of information regarding materials being collected for the July Fourth community outreach event, including mosquito district educational materials added to the minutes.

Moved/Seconded: Member Esquivel/Dolgonas **Action:** Passed a motion to approve the minutes from the May 4th meeting. **Ayes:** Members; Dolgonas, Cobb, Esquivel, and Hickman **Noes:** None

4. **COUNCIL AND STAFF LIASION REPORTS**
Council Member Ktsanes provided an update. Here is a summary;

The City Council was preparing to review the proposed two-year City budget. Council members had received approximately 300 pages of budget materials and continued reviewing the proposal. Preliminary discussions indicated the proposed budget would utilize reserve funds to address an estimated operating deficit.

Council requested additional traditional financial reporting to assist with future budget review and analysis.
Budget adoption was anticipated following additional Council review and public discussion.

Sergeant Leone provided an update. Here is a summary;

- ☐ Officers investigated a violent assault and robbery involving a 59-year-old woman who was attacked while walking along the Ohlone Greenway.
- ☐ The suspect was quickly located and arrested following coordinated efforts with neighboring law enforcement agencies.
- ☐ The Contra Costa County District Attorney filed charges including:
 - Attempted Murder
 - Mayhem
 - Torture
 - Robbery
- ☐ Sergeant Leone noted that the victim was expected to recover despite sustaining significant injuries.
- ☐ During the same 24-hour period, officers also:
 - Arrested a rape suspect.
 - Arrested a suspect who attempted to strike a police sergeant with a vehicle while fleeing officers.
- ☐ The committee discussed violent crime trends and noted that El Cerrito continues to experience one of the higher violent crime rates in Contra Costa County relative to its population.
- ☐ Committee members were reminded to RSVP for the upcoming City Boards and Commissions Recognition Dinner.

5. PEREGRINE TECHNOLOGIES

Police Chief Paul Keith came to the meeting to speak about the police department's use of new technology. The following is a summary;

The presentation included an overview of the software's capabilities, including:

- Integration of multiple existing law enforcement databases into a single search interface.
- Improved investigative efficiency by connecting records management, dispatch records, body-worn camera evidence, digital evidence, and other existing databases.
- Enhanced crime analysis tools for investigators, patrol officers, and command staff.
- Paperless case preparation and electronic submission of criminal cases to the District Attorney's Office.
- Geographic crime mapping and crime trend analysis.

- Analytical tools to assist with complex investigations involving multiple suspects, vehicles, and digital evidence.

Chief Keith advised that:

- The software does **not** replace the City's existing databases but provides a secure interface to search existing departmental data.
- The proposed agreement would be a one-year pilot program funded through existing grant funding designated for law enforcement technology.
- The proposed cost would be approximately \$45,000, including implementation and staff training.
- Numerous law enforcement agencies throughout Contra Costa and Alameda Counties currently utilize the software.

Committee members discussed several aspects of the proposal, including:

- Potential improvements in investigative efficiency.
- Data ownership and ensuring City ownership of all records.
- Long-term contract considerations.
- Cost savings associated with reduced paper filing and staff time.
- Mapping capabilities for crime trend analysis.
- Cybersecurity protections and CJIS compliance requirements.

Members of the public also commented on the proposal.

Public comments included discussion regarding:

- Data privacy and civil liberties.
- Potential future data sharing between agencies.
- Transparency regarding implementation.
- Whether the proposal should receive additional public review before implementation.
- Concerns regarding artificial intelligence, predictive policing, and vendor use of law enforcement data.

Chief Keith responded that:

- The initial implementation would utilize only El Cerrito Police Department data.
- Any future information sharing would require separate consideration.
- User activity within the system is fully audited and permission-based.
- The system complies with applicable state and federal criminal justice security requirements.

Following discussion, committee member Esquivel made a motion supporting the Police Department's use of the software.

Moved/Seconded: Esquivel/Dolgonas

Action: Passed a motion recommending the Police Department proceed with the proposed one-year Peregrine Technologies pilot program.

Ayes: Dolgonas, Esquivel, and Hickman

Noes: None

Abstentions: Cobb

During discussion, several committee members also expressed support for providing additional public information regarding the technology if it is implemented.

6. CITY OF EL CERRITO JULY FOURTH CELEBRATION

The committee continued planning for its participation in the City's Fourth of July Celebration.

Discussion included:

- Confirmation that the Community Safety Committee will host an informational booth during the event.
- Volunteer scheduling to provide booth coverage throughout the event, beginning at approximately 10:30 a.m. and continuing through the afternoon.
- Division of morning and afternoon volunteer shifts among committee members.
- Coordination of committee members responsible for staffing the booth.
- Reminder to follow up with committee members regarding outreach materials they had agreed to provide.

The committee discussed materials that will be available for the public, including:

- Fire safety information.
- Identity theft prevention resources.
- Fraud and scam prevention materials.
- Dating scam awareness information.
- Contra Costa Mosquito & Vector Control educational materials.
- IRS identity theft prevention publications.

Members also discussed preparing a brief informational handout describing the purpose and responsibilities of the Community Safety Committee to encourage community participation and recruit future committee members.

Additional discussion included:

- Displaying educational materials in digital and printed formats.
- Providing giveaway items if available.
- Coordinating outreach materials with the Fire Department to minimize duplication.

- Obtaining a larger table to accommodate the expanded display of public information.

Committee members also discussed future educational opportunities focusing on:

- Personal privacy.
- Mobile phone security.
- Location tracking awareness.
- Technology safety and best practices for protecting personal information.

7. FIRE SEVERITY ZONES

Chair Dolgonas presented an overview of California's Fire Hazard Severity Zone program and recent state efforts to strengthen wildfire mitigation requirements.

Discussion included:

- The three Fire Hazard Severity Zone classifications:
 - Moderate
 - High
 - Very High
- Existing Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps affecting portions of El Cerrito.
- Proposed State regulations requiring additional vegetation management around homes located within Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.
- Current State efforts to finalize defensible space standards, including vegetation management within five feet of structures.
- Examples of similar regulations previously adopted by neighboring jurisdictions.

Committee members reviewed maps identifying Fire Hazard Severity Zones throughout the City and discussed neighborhoods that may be affected by future State regulations.

Discussion emphasized:

- Anticipated future City ordinances implementing State wildfire requirements.
- Potential impacts on homeowners.
- The importance of public education before implementation of new vegetation management requirements.

Committee members discussed the importance of increasing Fire Department participation in Community Safety Committee meetings following the expansion of the committee's responsibilities to include wildfire preparedness.

Topics discussed included:

- The committee's desire for regular Fire Department representation at future meetings.
- Upcoming Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) activities and training opportunities.
- Coordination between the Fire Department, CERT, and the Community Safety Committee.
- The Chair's intent to continue discussions with City staff and the City Council regarding regular Fire Department participation.

Staff advised that a Fire Department presentation has been scheduled for an upcoming committee meeting.

8. FISCAL YEAR 2025–2026 ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORT

The committee reviewed revisions to its Fiscal Year 2025–2026 Accomplishments Report.

Discussion included:

- Incorporating edits from the previous meeting.
- Removing duplicate accomplishments.
- Updating the status of completed and ongoing projects.
- Clarifying committee recommendations related to vegetation management and wildfire preparedness.

The committee agreed to make several minor revisions before submitting the final report to the City Clerk.

Moved/Seconded: Esquivel/Cobb

Action: Approved the revised Accomplishments Report, subject to the discussed edits prior to submission.

Ayes: Cobb, Dolgonas, Esquivel, and Hickman

Noes: None

9. UPDATE FROM THE AD-HOC COMMITTEE'S

The Chair provided an update regarding the City's Red Flag Day Parking Pilot Program.

Discussion included:

- The City will continue the pilot program for another year rather than making it permanent.
- Existing temporary signage will continue to be used on designated streets during Red Flag Days.

- No additional streets are being added to the pilot during the current fire season.
- Budget considerations and the need for additional public outreach contributed to continuing the pilot rather than adopting permanent regulations.

Committee members discussed:

- Future evaluation of the pilot program.
- Opportunities for additional public engagement before permanent implementation.
- Sharing updated mapping information with committee members for future review.

Member Esquivel reviewed ongoing work to improve the presentation of crime statistics and crime mapping for committee meetings.

Discussion included:

- Continued development of community-friendly crime maps.
- Sharing updated mapping information with committee members.
- Future presentations highlighting crime trends and geographic patterns.
- Appreciation for the work completed on improving the committee's crime reporting materials.

The committee agreed that additional mapping examples would be presented at a future meeting.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE

Chair Dolgonas provided an update regarding the committee's previous recommendation to extend the vegetation abatement compliance period from **30 days to 45 days**.

Discussion included:

- The recommendation was previously referred to City staff for review.
- The Chair contacted the City Clerk to request a status update.
- Staff indicated the matter is expected to be discussed during a future City Council meeting addressing fire hazard abatement.
- Committee members expressed interest in monitoring the City's consideration of the recommendation and participating in future public discussion if appropriate.

Committee members discussed several topics for future agendas and community outreach efforts.

Topics included:

- Developing a community workshop focused on digital privacy and personal cybersecurity.
- Educating residents on protecting personal information from tracking and identity theft.
- Providing practical guidance regarding:
 - Mobile phone privacy settings.
 - Location services.
 - Online safety.
 - Emerging technology awareness.
- Expanding outreach to seniors regarding fraud prevention and identity theft.
- Holding additional community information sessions similar to previous public meetings conducted by the Police Department.

Members also discussed encouraging greater public participation when new public safety technologies are introduced so residents have opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback.

The committee noted that while it serves in an advisory capacity to the City Council, it supports continued transparency and public engagement whenever practical.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Chair:

This is to certify the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the regular meeting on June 1, 2026, as approved by the Community Safety Committee

Staff liaison:

SUMMARY OF DRAFT ZONE 0 REGULATION LANGUAGE

April 2026

To watch more on what's included in this rule plead, [click here for a short video](#).

California is experiencing a wildfire crisis and its leaders, legislators, and the Governor have responded accordingly to protect homes, lives, and communities. In recent years, state leaders have launched a series of actions and investments to confront this reality head-on. Through emergency action to fast-track nearly 400 wildfire resilience projects, billions in investments for wildfire prevention and protection, and giving communities the tools to be ready for when the next catastrophic wildfire starts, California is taking action to protect communities, keep wildfires from growing larger and more destructive, and supporting our firefighters and first responders.

Now, one more critical tool is being added to this list of wildfire defense. Following the devastating Los Angeles fires in January 2025, state leadership tasked the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection with strengthening defensible space standards by focusing on a new area, called Zone 0, that includes the first five feet around homes and structures. Research, fire science, and experience shows that this is the most critical area for protecting your home, your neighbors' homes, and the community around you. It's where wind-blown embers are most likely to land, and where homes are most vulnerable to ignition.

More specifically, Assembly Bill 3074 (2020), Senate Bill 504 (2024), Assembly Bill 1455 (2025), and Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-18-25 directed the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to develop new defensible space regulations for Zone 0 in certain fire-prone areas of the state.

Over the past year, the Board has conducted extensive outreach, including nearly a dozen public workshops, numerous site visits and walking tours, research and academic reviews, and on-the-ground engagement with homeowners, fire professionals, environmental groups, and local governments in their neighborhoods.

The process has surfaced multiple perspectives from different regions on how to address flammable materials located in Zone 0—with particular attention to trees and other living vegetation commonly occupying this area, and flexibility for local communities. To facilitate this discussion, **the subcommittee gathered input and considered multiple approaches, with the goal of developing a regulation that meets complex statutory requirements while addressing implementation considerations such as affordability, enforcement, and local flexibility.**

WHAT THE ZONE ZERO REGULATION DOES

One key goal of the Zone 0 rulemaking process is to give California homeowners time, resources, and guidance to make changes effectively and affordably while improving fire safety for neighborhoods and communities. This happens through a phased-in timeline for different activities in different zones within Zone 0.

More specifically, the rule will require all property owners in State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) to reduce combustible materials within the first 5 feet of homes and other structures. This draft seeks to balance fire mitigation with other property considerations, while allowing plants and trees in parts of Zone 0.

Implementation is also designed to take place in two phases, with education, outreach,

and progress towards compliance serving as the longer-term goal. The focus of inspections will be on helping homeowners identify issues at their homes, develop strategies over time, and prioritize actions for fire protection and mitigation. For homeowners, the goal is to begin making measurable progress and demonstrate effort over a five-year period.



The images above show Zone 0 compliant homes using the current draft recommendation.

TIMING AND IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

The current *draft* rule language for the Zone Zero Regulations Subcommittee's consideration recommends an implementation approach that prioritizes education and outreach. While Zone 0 requirements will apply to new construction upon adoption of the regulation, existing homes and structures can implement actions in phases over time within different areas of Zone 0:

- **PHASE 1 (Implemented within the first 3 years):** Includes removing combustible items such as firewood, dead leaves and branches, mulch, and wood chips within 5 feet of the structure. Cleaning gutters, removing dead and dying plants, trimming trees according to regulations, and implementing or adjusting for allowable vegetation during this time period.
- **PHASE 2 (Implemented within 5 years, with the exact timeline to be decided by the local jurisdiction):** Local jurisdictions will assign a timeline, within 5 years of the effective date of the regulations, for the creation of an under-eave safety zone, replacing combustible gates, and making any necessary adjustments to sheds and fencing.

Local fire agencies may authorize alternative practices based on local variations such as geography/topography, fire risk, lot size, response resources, or compliance with California Wildland Urban Interface Code building standards. These practices must provide substantially similar practical effects to the regulations. For example, some community-specific local flexibility options might include an inspector considering the existence of numerous evacuation routes, the use of fire-safe construction or building materials, an allowance of various vegetation types based on region, or applying logical discretion for unique architecture or design.

Phase 2 focuses on the area closest to the building, referred to as a non-combustible "safety zone." This phase is designed to protect the most vulnerable parts of a

structure—such as the base of the wall, windows, decks, and eaves—while still allowing for some flexibility based on the attributes of the home or structure. The separation of fuels from these vulnerable elements is reflected in this new draft.

The two areas—both the area closest to the structure under eaves, and the area comprising the remainder of Zone 0—are assigned based on the following (see also Figure 1 and accompanying images):

-A low-combustibility zone extending out from the safety zone, or the edge of an eave drip line, to the remaining portion of the five feet of Zone 0 (completed during Phase 1).

-A non-combustible immediate "safety zone" located directly next to the home and under eaves. This zone width flexes with the width of the eave. If the structure has 12-inch eaves, the safety zone is 12 inches in width. If the structure has 36-inch eaves, the safety zone is 36 inches in width (completed during Phase 2).

This proposed approach also accounts for variation in building design and aims to achieve fire safety while providing flexibility that is easy to interpret. At the end of this document are diagrams and visualizations to aid interpretation.

- The regulation applies to **new construction** immediately once adopted, and then to **existing homes** over a phased-in period from the effective date of the regulations.
- The following *draft* Zone 0 regulations would apply to both the Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs, per Gov. Code 51182) and State Responsibility Areas (SRAs, per PRC 4291):

TREES

Trees are permitted in Zone 0, but subject to the following maintenance (within 3 years of adoption of regulations):

- Branches should be ten feet from chimneys per existing statute. Branches should also be trimmed five feet above roofs and kept clear of eaves.
- Dead wood and lower branches or "ladder fuels" that could carry fire upward should be removed. Limbs should be removed from the bottom six feet for large trees, or from the lower third of the tree for smaller trees (whichever is less).
- The risk of transmission for each tree would be determined by the local defensible space inspector.

PLANTS/LANDSCAPING

- **No combustible materials shall be in Zone 0** (combustible mulches, fallen leaves and needles, woodchips, firewood, stored wood, etc.), on roofs, or in gutters (within 3 years of adoption of regulations).

- For the “safety zone,” to be established in Phase 2 (within 5 years), a vegetation-free buffer is required:
 - Within one foot of structures or out to the edge of the eave (or “drip line”)
 - Where the eaves are shallow, and the safety zone may not apply:
 - Safety zone still must be a minimum of one foot
 - Within two feet of windows, doors, and vents
 - Within five feet of attached decks and similar features
- **Well-maintained herbaceous plants and flowers are allowed outside these buffers** within Zone 0, with the following conditions (to be completed within Phase 1):
 - Non-woody smaller plants, such as bulbs, impatiens, begonias, petunias, poppies, yarrow and non-thatching succulents are allowed in spaced groupings
 - Low ground covers. Examples include blue-star creeper, beach strawberry, creeping thyme, and mosses.
 - Grass or lawn is allowed but must be maintained and mowed per requirements.
 - Potted plants in non-combustible pots that are easily moveable, no taller than 1.5 feet, and meet spacing requirements.

FENCES, GATES, AND SHEDS

- A five-foot non-combustible section is required where fences attach to a home, to be completed in Phase 2. Examples could include replacing a wooden gate with a non-combustible metal gate.
- No new combustible fences or gates are permitted within Zone 0. Repairs to existing fences permitted.
- Sheds and outbuildings within Zone 0 must have non-combustible exterior roofs and walls.

LOCAL ZONE 0 VARIATIONS PERMITTED IN LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY AREAS

- **Local fire agencies may authorize alternative practices based on local variations** such as geography/topography, fire risk, lot size, response resources, or compliance with California Wildland Urban Interface Code building standards. These practices must provide substantially similar practical effects to the regulations. For example, some community-specific local flexibility options might include an inspector considering the existence of numerous evacuation routes, the use of fire-safe construction or building materials, an allowance of various vegetation types based on region, or applying logical discretion for unique architecture or design.
- Local fire agencies must support with a finding that variations are equally effective as regulations. Defensible space standards for Zone 1 (5 to 30 feet from a home) and Zone 2 (30 to 100 feet from a home) are set by the local fire agency in compliance with statute.

TIMING DETAILS

The Board has emphasized that implementation will prioritize education and outreach. For new
Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Draft Zone 0 Regulations / April 2026

construction, compliance with this regulation would be required upon adoption. Existing homes will then be phased in during two phases, with early adoption being recommended and support for a range of approaches based on community priorities and needs. These phases include:

- **PHASE 1 (Within 3 years):** Within three years following adoption, homeowners will remove combustible items like firewood, mulch, and wood chips near the structure. They will clean gutters, remove dead and dying plants, trim trees according to the regulation, and implement or adjust for allowable vegetation.
- **PHASE 2 (Maximum of two additional years, decided by local jurisdiction):** Local jurisdictions may assign a timeline of up to 5 years (from the effective date) for completing the remainder of Zone 0 regulations. This will include completing the under-eave safety zone, replacing combustible gates, and making any necessary adjustments to sheds and fencing.

The goal is to give homeowners time, resources, and guidance to make changes effectively and affordably. CAL FIRE inspectors will prioritize helping homeowners identify issues at their homes, develop strategies, and set in motion actions for fire protection and mitigation. For homeowners, the overall goal is to make measurable progress and demonstrate effort over time.

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE AND RESOURCES

Legislative leaders, state and local government officials, local and state nonprofit organizations, fire departments, community service groups and many others are launching a series of resources, events, information, and funding to help support the implementation of Zone 0. This includes dedicated funding from the California Climate Bond, millions in grants from CAL FIRE and other state entities, support from local governments and fire organizations, organized community events providing Zone 0 assistance and yardwork, and committed service organizations and departments like the California Conservation Corps providing labor and support to help both underserved communities and those requiring hands-on assistance.

These are just a few of the community assistance efforts currently underway. The phase-in approach to these regulations provides more time and capacity to build this comprehensive list over time.