



Agenda Item No. \_\_\_\_\_

File Code No.

# CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

## COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**ITEM 7**

**AGENDA DATE:** May 5, 2015

**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers

**FROM:** Water Resources Division, Public Works Department

**SUBJECT:** Declaration Of Stage Three Drought Emergency And Adoption Of Stage Three Water Use Regulations And Development Restrictions

### RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt, by reading of title only, A Resolution of the Council of the City of Santa Barbara Declaring a Stage Three Drought Emergency and Establishing Water Use Regulations and Development Restrictions to Be Effective During a Stage Three Drought Emergency.

### DISCUSSION:

For over a year, the City has been taking successive steps in response to what has turned out to be the worst dry period on record in Santa Barbara, with 2015 being the end of the driest four years on record. These steps have been in line with the City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan and the 2011 Long Term Water Supply Plan, which are based on the following principles:

- Most of the City's water supplies depend on rainfall to fill reservoirs;
- Severe drought is an expected part of water supply planning and develops over a number of years, as our primary water supplies diminish;
- A drought might end in a relatively short time, but the lead time needed to ensure an adequate supply of water requires an assumption of continuing drought; and
- Management of customer demand is a critical part of water supply management, including ongoing efficiency improvements during normal times and extraordinary additional cutbacks during extended dry periods.

On February 11, 2014, Council declared a Stage One Drought Condition at the midpoint of a possible third consecutive dry year. On May 20, 2014, with no improvement in water supply during the last half of the rainy season, Council adopted a Stage Two Drought Condition, triggering the following actions:

- Expanded public information efforts to publicize the drought status and the need for extraordinary conservation efforts;
- Established a 20 percent water conservation target for City customers, based on statewide drought conditions and record low rainfall;
- Enacted Stage Two water use regulations;
- Adopted drought water rates, based on the added costs of water supplies and necessary water use reductions;
- Purchased supplemental water to offset depleted surface water supplies; and
- Initiated preliminary design and solicitation of Design/Build/Operate proposals for the reactivation of the City's Charles Meyer Desalination Facility (Desalination Facility).

The above actions were in response to a third dry year. The rainy season of the fourth year has again provided less than half of average rainfall. Gibraltar Reservoir is essentially empty, the 2016 State Water Project allocation is expected to be no more than 20 percent, and, for the first time in history, no water entitlements from Lake Cachuma are anticipated for 2016. Accordingly, staff recommends adoption of a Stage Three Drought Emergency, to be implemented in a phased approach, as discussed below. New actions would be related to the community water conservation target, water use regulations, and development restrictions. The recommended actions reflect preliminary Council review and input on April 14, 2015, and ongoing discussions with the City's Board of Water Commissioners. The actions are part of the City's overall drought response that also includes an upcoming staff recommendation to award a contract for the reactivation and operation of the Desalination Facility and implementation of Fiscal Year 2016 Drought Water Rates.

### **Water Conservation Target**

Since the declaration of a Stage One Drought Condition, the City has asked the community for a 20 percent reduction in water usage to help stretch available supplies. As in past droughts, the community has responded by meeting the goal, with cumulative water reductions in excess of 20 percent, since the Stage Two Drought rates took effect in July 2014. At this time, a water conservation target of 25 percent is recommended to further stretch remaining supplies while minimizing impacts to the local economy and damage to valuable community landscape resources. While the analysis of rates adopted by Council on April 7, 2015 does not include a change to a 25 percent reduction, the rates do reflect the cost of reactivating the Desalination Facility and will contribute to meeting the target, in conjunction with new water use regulations, development restrictions, and the City's public information campaign. The 25 percent target matches the mandatory statewide target, established in an April 1, 2015 Executive Order by Governor Brown, though City staff developed this recommendation prior to the Governor's Executive Order.

At the time this report was prepared, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) had issued draft regulations to implement the Governor's mandatory reductions. Consistent with the Governor's Executive Order, the reduction targets vary from 8 to 36

percent, depending on each urban water supplier's residential per capita daily usage during July through September of 2014. If adopted by the State Board, this approach would set a 16 percent mandatory reduction for the City of Santa Barbara. However, staff still recommends a 25 percent water conservation target based on the City's particular circumstances.

## **Water Use Regulations**

In July 2014, the State Board adopted statewide water use regulations that were generally consistent with the Stage Two regulations adopted by the City in May 2014. On April 19, 2015, the State Board published updated draft regulations to implement rules that were called for in the Governor's Executive Order. These updated regulations were also consistent with the City's current and planned regulations, with minor exceptions. The State's updated regulations are scheduled to be adopted by the State Board on or about May 5, 2015.

Given the success of the community in meeting the water conservation target to date, staff is recommending limited additional regulations at this time, mostly for clarification of current Stage Two regulations, and changes as needed to comply with State mandates. The attached "Summary of Recommended Stage Three Drought Water Use Regulations" presents the recommended regulations grouped as new, modified, and existing. As discussed with Council on April 14, 2015, staff has identified additional regulations that can be enacted, if the conservation target is not met. These regulations would be related to mandating the use of high-efficiency irrigation systems and limiting or prohibiting irrigation of turf.

## **Development Restrictions**

Potential development restrictions were discussed with Council in October and December 2014, and in detail on April 14, 2015. Staff consulted with the Planning Commission on February 12, 2015 regarding appropriate development restrictions that would accompany a Stage Three Drought Emergency declaration, and has evaluated the relative costs of administering various restrictions along with the associated water savings benefits. Based on that evaluation and Council input, staff is recommending the following initial development restrictions during Stage Three:

- Voluntary landscape deferral;
- Mandatory deferral of the installation of non-water wise plants, including turf;
- Suspension on the issuance of building permits for new swimming pools;
- Suspension on the issuance of permits for new and replacement wells; and
- Enforcement of the Governor's Executive Order restricting irrigation for new buildings

As with water use regulations, additional potential development restrictions have been identified for future implementation, if needed, including a mandatory landscaping

deferral, suspension of permits for projects with net new water use, and suspension of new water meter installations.

### **Conclusion**

Staff believes the recommended measures are appropriate, given the community's success in meeting the established water conservation targets. Staff plans to monitor the cumulative water savings from June through September 2015, as a basis for determining whether to recommend additional measures for Council consideration in October 2015. These may include additional water use regulations and/or development restrictions.

**ATTACHMENT:** Summary of Recommended Stage Three Drought Response Measures

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**SUBMITTED BY:** Rebecca J. Bjork, Public Works Director

**APPROVED BY:** City Administrator's Office