



COUNTY OF NEVADA COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: November 5, 2019
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: County Executive Office
SUBJECT: Request for Approval Letter of Concern on Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) Impacts

RECOMMENDATION: Approve and authorize the Chair of the Board to sign the attached Letter of Concern on Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) Impacts.

FUNDING: N/A

BACKGROUND: The attached Letter of Concern is a collaborative document drafted jointly by the City of Grass Valley, City of Nevada City, and the County of Nevada and is intended to be distributed to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). This Letter of Concern lists the impacts of the recent October PSPS Events, which elicited a proposed Emergency Declaration by the County of Nevada on November 5, 2019.

Though we jointly recognize that PSPS events are intended to help prevent catastrophic loss of life and property from the effects of hazardous wildfires; it is imperative that these efforts are carefully balanced with the negative impacts on local communities—especially those businesses, residents and public institutions that they serve.

The recent PSPS events affected over 43,000 PG&E customers within the confines of Western Nevada County. During the recent PSPS events, vulnerable populations also referred to as Access and Functional Needs (AFN) populations were placed in jeopardy through the loss of medication, adequate transportation to access charging stations for life-sustaining devices, and life-threatening impacts to local healthcare and dialysis clinics.

Other public safety risks identified by the County of Nevada Emergency Operations Center included the loss of cellular and broadband VoIP phones for hundreds of households resulting in the inability to call 911 or receive timely event updates. Admittedly, this also provided difficulty messaging evacuation orders with vital communication infrastructure down. Though there is a lower available coverage area for communication, the PSPS event has resulted in a substantial increase of calls for service through the Nevada County Dispatch Center and 211

Moreover, it should be noted that though PSPS events are initiated to prevent catastrophic loss of life and property from the effects of hazardous wildfire; there are also unintended secondary fire dangers in regards to home generators exceeding their limitations.

Other partner agencies, such as the Sierra Memorial Hospital and members of the Nevada County School Districts have listed a number of concerning issues that include a greater impact in customer base due to clinic closures within the area and successional school closures causing a variety of community based issues, respectively.

Outside of public safety concerns, PSPS events have many direct and indirect financial impacts to the local economy and respective businesses throughout the area. Staff reached out to various community groups and associations within our community who reported a variety of impacts regarding loss of business due to their inability to operate. Additionally, the PSPS events threatened the viability and sustainability for local area retailers, food service providers and other businesses due to the loss of product and revenue.

Therefore, the City of Grass Valley, Nevada City, and the County of Nevada jointly call upon the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for increased regulatory action for PSPS Protocols that mitigate the direct and indirect public safety and economic impacts. Regulatory actions need to include specific requirements for Investor Owned Utilities (IOUs) to: 1) Ensure cellular and landline communication services are maintained throughout every PSPS event to mitigate impacts on public safety; 2) Provide amenities and better coordinate special need provisions to vulnerable populations and healthcare service providers for each PSPS event, 3) Ensure timely and adequate notices are provided to community stakeholders to mitigate undue financial hardship to the local economy, and 4) Ensure regulatory guidance that promotes targeted localized PSPS events that prevent unnecessary wide ranging impacts. We strongly urge the CPUC to work with City and County partners to develop PSPS protocols that balance the need wildfire precautionary efforts with the public safety and economic impacts.

Item Initiated and Approved by: Alison Lehman, County Executive Officer