



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, February 24, 2026
TO: CITY COUNCIL
WRITTEN BY: Principal Engineer Lizarraga
RECOMMENDED BY: PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES DIRECTOR LINDBERG
APPROVED BY: TAMARA VIDES, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE 7, CHAPTER 1 OF THE WATSONVILLE MUNICIPAL CODE - STREET EXCAVATIONS

RECOMMENDATION:

Introduce for first reading only, waiving full reading of the text, an Ordinance amending Chapter 1 (Street Excavations) of Title 7 (Public Works), of the Watsonville Municipal Code related to street excavations to modernize permit requirements, strengthen pavement protection standards, establish clearer moratorium provisions for newly improved streets, and improve coordination with public and private utility providers.

BACKGROUND:

Street excavations within the public right-of-way are necessary for utility installation, maintenance, and repair; however, improperly coordinated or inadequately restored excavations can significantly reduce pavement life and increase long-term maintenance costs to the City. Existing Municipal Code provisions require clarification and enhancement to address modern construction practices, traffic control requirements, and pavement preservation strategies.

Title 7, Chapter 1 of the Municipal Code governs excavation activities within City streets, sidewalks, alleys, and other public rights-of-way. The proposed ordinance consolidates and clarifies existing provisions while adding new requirements related to moratoriums on newly improved streets, inspection authority, bonding, and coordination with utility providers.

DISCUSSION:

Street excavations are necessary to accommodate utility installation, maintenance, and repair; however, repeated or poorly restored excavations significantly reduce pavement life and increase long-term maintenance costs. The recommended ordinance updates Title 7, Chapter 1, to better protect the City's investment in street infrastructure and ensure consistent excavation and restoration practices.

Key components of the amendments include:

- **Permit Requirements:** All street excavations require a permit issued by the Director of Public Works, except in emergencies. Permits establish completion timelines, inspection requirements, and applicable construction standards.
- **Inspections and Restoration Standards:** All work must comply with the City's adopted Public Improvement Standards and Standard Details. Each phase of construction is subject to inspection and approval. Permittees remain responsible for settlement or surface failures for one year following final resurfacing.
- **Bonding, Insurance, and Liability:** The amendments clarify bonding and insurance requirements to ensure completion of work and protection of City infrastructure. Permittees are fully responsible for damage arising from excavation activities.
- **Moratorium on Newly Improved Streets:** The amendments establish excavation moratorium periods of three years for streets receiving surface treatments of one inch or less, and five years for newly constructed or reconstructed streets exceeding one inch in depth. Limited exemptions may be granted by the Director of Public Works.
- **Enhanced Restoration During Moratoriums:** When excavation is approved within a moratorium period, additional backfill, resurfacing, grinding, or full-width restoration may be required to return the street to a condition as close as practicable to pre-excavation.
- **Utility Coordination:** Public and private utility providers are required to coordinate planned work with the Public Works Department and submit annual two-year work plans to reduce repeated trenching and impacts to newly improved streets.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) DETERMINATION:

The recommended ordinance is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), as it involves regulatory updates related to maintenance and minor alterations of existing public infrastructure with no expansion of use.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Efficient and Well-Performing Government

The proposed amendments modernize the City's street excavation regulations by clarifying permit requirements, inspection authority, bonding, and enforcement mechanisms. These updates improve operational efficiency, provide clear expectations for permittees, and strengthen the City's ability to protect public assets while ensuring consistent and predictable project delivery.

Infrastructure & Environment

The ordinance directly supports the preservation and longevity of City streets and public rights-of-way by establishing excavation moratoriums on newly improved streets, strengthening restoration standards, and requiring enhanced pavement repairs when moratorium exceptions are granted. Improved coordination with public and private utilities further reduces repeated street cuts, minimizes environmental impacts, and protects recent infrastructure investments.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The ordinance is not expected to have a direct fiscal impact on the General Fund. Enhanced bonding, inspection, and restoration requirements are intended to reduce long-term pavement maintenance costs and protect City infrastructure investments. Permit fees and inspection costs will continue to be recovered through Council-adopted fee schedules.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION:

The City Council may decline to adopt the ordinance or direct staff to return with revisions; however, neither option is recommended as they would retain outdated street excavation standards or delay implementation of updated requirements intended to protect City street infrastructure. No reasonable alternatives are known at this time that would achieve the objectives of the proposed ordinance.

ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (IF ANY):

None.