

Item 4.I : Ratification of Regional Fires Emergency Proclamation (Manor Implications)

“Item 4.I matters because renewing the fire emergency also renews the City Manager’s authority over facilities like the Manor, allowing continued or expanded uses without a separate public vote.”

Sponsors / Requesting Councilmembers:

City Manager / Director of Emergency Services

Relevant Past Council Actions: Initial emergency proclamations adopted and extended 2023–2025

What the agenda item does:

Ratifies continued emergency powers related to regional fires, enabling expedited procurement and property decisions.

Potential impacts: Normalizes long-term governance under emergency authority.

Arguments in favor: Supporters argue emergencies require speed and flexibility.

Arguments against / concerns: Critics argue prolonged emergencies bypass democratic oversight.

Questions Council should answer before voting:

- What specific powers remain necessary at this stage?
- What decisions have been made under emergency authority?
- When does emergency governance end?

Why Item 4.I Has “Manor Implications

Item 4.I – Ratification of Regional Fires Emergency Proclamation renews the City’s local emergency declaration related to regional fires.

Ratifying the emergency does three important things:

1. Extends expanded authority to the City Manager
2. Allows deviations from normal procurement, contracting, and land-use processes
3. Preserves discretion over facilities used for emergency response, temporary housing, or relocation

That’s where the Manor comes in.

How Emergency Powers Connect to the Manor

The **Manor** has been used (and discussed) in recent years as:

- A temporary facility tied to emergency response
- A site for relocation, sheltering, or service provision
- A property whose use has shifted *under emergency authority*, not normal zoning or planning review

When Council **renews the emergency proclamation**, it is not just responding to fires — it is **continuing the legal framework that allows the City Manager to:**

- Change how facilities like the Manor are used
- Extend or modify those uses without a new public vote
- Avoid standard public processes by citing emergency necessity

While the Manor may not be named in Item 4.I, **the authority governing its use lives inside this emergency declaration.**

Why Residents Are Right to Be Concerned

1. “Temporary” emergency uses can become semi-permanent

Emergency proclamations are supposed to be short-term.

In practice, they often get **rolled forward repeatedly**, allowing long-term outcomes without full Council debate.

2. Oversight is reduced

Decisions made under emergency authority:

- Do not always return to Council in detail
- Are harder for residents to track
- Are justified retroactively (“we had to act quickly”)

3. It blurs lines between fire response and other policy goals

A fire emergency declaration can be used to justify:

- Facility repurposing
 - Service expansion
 - Contracting
 - Relocation decisions
- ...even when the connection to active fire response is indirect.

The Core Issue

“This emergency vote keeps alive the legal authority that governs what happens at the Manor — without a separate, transparent discussion.” That’s a **governance concern**, not speculation.

Why This Fits the Broader Pattern We’ve Been Tracking

Item 4.I fits the same pattern as:

- Item 5.K (closed-session land disposition)
- Repeated “emergency” contract extensions
- Policy shifts framed as temporary or technical

Different items, same structure:

big decisions → emergency or closed framework → limited public process.