Adoption of 2022 California Building and Fire Codes

Every three years, the State of California amends and adopts updates to the International Construction Codes. The City in turn adopts the State's updates and any local amendments by ordinance. These then become the governing construction codes for Santa Barbara.

The City must at a minimum adopt the provisions of the State Construction Codes however, that does not limit the authority of a local municipality to establish more restrictive and reasonably necessary differences to the State Construction Code. Local municipalities must file findings for any amendment, addition, or deletion and those must be based on local climatic, topographical, or geological conditions.

On November 15, 2022 Council adopted four new amendments to the City's Building Code. These code amendments will take effect on January 1, 2023. As in the past, local amendments to the code are kept to a minimum and are designed to address situations based on specific local conditions and needs. Staff proposed four amendments the following updates.

1. Changing the requirement for a permit for draining at walls that are exempt from a permit.
2. Changing permit exemptions for residential retaining walls to include non-retaining walls including masonry and concrete free-standing walls.
3. Changing the number of required Board of Appeals members to have a Quorum from 5 to 4.
4. Add provision to facilitate alternate restroom designs-Single User Restroom Facilities.

In addition, Council in their meeting directed staff to evaluate a future potential code amendment to require an exterior window in a sleeping room for residential developments and identify the impact of the proposed code requirement on new development versus adaptive reuse.