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THE CITY OF HALF MOON BAY CALIFORNIA

Exhibit A

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO:
Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

FROM:
City of Half Moon Bay
501 Main Street
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

SAN MATEO COUNTY CLERK:
Mark Church, County Clerk
555 County Center, 1st Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063

Project Title
City of Half Moon Bay Safety Element Update

Project Applicant
City of Half Moon Bay

Project Location
Citywide

Project Description
The City of Half Moon Bay is updating the Safety Element of the City's General Plan pursuant to the requirements of California Government Code Section 65302(g) and other applicable provisions of State law. The Safety Element Update consists of amendments to the City's General Plan policies and supporting text addressing public health and safety hazards, including, as applicable, wildfire, evacuation, flooding, geologic and seismic hazards, climate-related hazards, emergency preparedness, and other safety-related issues. The Safety Element Update is a policy and planning document. It does not approve or authorize any specific development project, construction activity, infrastructure improvement, land use entitlement, grading, vegetation removal, or other physical alteration of the environment. Implementation of individual policies or recommendations that may result in future physical changes to the environment will be subject to applicable

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project-specific review, including CEQA review, at the time such activities are proposed and sufficiently defined.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project
City of Half Moon Bay

Exempt Status
☐ Ministerial (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(1); CEQA Guidelines § 15268)
☐ Declared Emergency (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(3); CEQA Guidelines § 15269(a))
☐ Emergency Project (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(4); CEQA Guidelines § 15269(b) or (c))
☐ Categorical Exemption
☐ Statutory Exemption
☒ **Common Sense Exemption — CEQA Guidelines § 15061(b)(3)**

Reasons Why Project is Exempt
The Safety Element update qualifies for a CEQA exemption under the common-sense exemption set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3). This exemption applies where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility the activity may have a significant effect on the environment. The CEQA Exemption Memorandum and Notice of Exemption form are attached as Exhibit A and B to the Resolution, which is included as Attachment 1 to this staff report. Key findings include:

- The Safety Element update is a program-level policy document establishing a framework for addressing hazards and does not commit the jurisdiction to any specific development action.
- The update does not include land use or zoning changes, does not increase development potential, and does not grant entitlements for development projects.
- No provisions of the update would result in direct or indirect population growth or place additional demands on natural resources, public services, or infrastructure.
- Future implementation actions that could affect the environment, such as code amendments, capital projects, or other physical improvements, would be subject to separate CEQA review at the time they are prepared, as applicable.

The policies contained in the Safety Element Update are intended to improve public safety, reduce exposure to natural and human-caused hazards, improve emergency preparedness and evacuation planning, and promote protection of life and property. Adoption of the Update will not directly result in construction, grading, vegetation removal, alteration of waterways, development of new structures, or expansion of existing uses.

To the extent that implementation of individual Safety Element policies may involve future physical improvements or other activities that could potentially affect the environment, those activities will require separate approval and will be subject to environmental review under CEQA, as applicable, when sufficiently defined and proposed for implementation. Adoption of the Safety Element Update does not commit the City to undertaking any such future physical activity.

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Accordingly, based on the nature and scope of the proposed General Plan amendment, it can be seen with certainty that adoption of the Safety Element Update has no possibility of causing a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, the project is not subject to CEQA pursuant to the common sense exemption in CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).

Lead Agency Contact Person

Leslie Lacko
Community Development Director
City of Half Moon Bay
650-825-4933
llacko@halfmoonbay.gov

Signature



11/18/2026

Debbie Ruddock
Mayor
City of Half Moon Bay

Date

☒ Signed by Lead Agency
☐ Signed by Applicant

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Exhibit B

PLACEWORKS

MEMORANDUM

DATE	February 17, 2026
TO	Leslie Lack, Community Development Director City of Half Moon Bay
ADDRESS	501 Main Street City of Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
FROM	Liza Debies, Associate Principal Amber Sharpe, Senior Associate II PlaceWorks
SUBJECT	**Safety Element Update California Environmental Quality Act Exemption Memorandum**

Introduction

PURPOSE

This Exemption Memorandum shall serve as an evaluation of the City of Half Moon Bay (City) General Plan Safety Element update (referred to as Safety Element update or proposed project) California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance. This Exemption Memorandum was prepared to present the findings resulting from the CEQA compliance review.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY AND REQUIREMENTS

Once a lead agency determines that an activity is a project subject to CEQA, the lead agency then determines whether the project is exempt from CEQA. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)[1] outlines the ways in which a project may be exempt. A project is exempt from CEQA if at least one of five criteria are met:

1) The project is exempt by statute (see, e.g., Article 18, commencing with Section 15260).
2) The project is exempt pursuant to a categorical exemption (see Article 19, commencing with Section 15300) and the application of that categorical exemption is not barred by one of the exceptions set forth in Section 15300.2.
3) The activity is covered by the common-sense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.
4) The project will be rejected or disapproved by a public agency (see Section 15270(b)).
5) The project is exempt pursuant to the provisions of Article 12.5 of Chapter 3.

[1] California Association of Environmental Professionals. 2025. 2025 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Statute and Guidelines. https://www.califaep.org/docs/CEQA_Handbook_2025combined.pdf.

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The proposed project would be exempt as a common-sense exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because implementation of the proposed project would not have the potential to cause a significant effect on the environment, as further discussed in Section 3, *Findings Concerning CEQA Exemption*.

Project Description

REGIONAL LOCATION

The City of Half Moon Bay and its sphere of influence is in San Mateo County in the San Francisco Bay Area. The city is bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west, and unincorporated areas of San Mateo County to the north, east, and south. The city is located on the San Francisco Peninsula, along the coast, approximately 23 miles south of San Francisco. Half Moon Bay connects to areas north of San Francisco (i.e., the North Bay), San Francisco, the northern Peninsula, and unincorporated areas of the southern Peninsula via State Route 1 (SR-1). SR-92 connects the city to the Peninsula Bayside and East Bay communities.

PROPOSED PROJECT

Project Background

The Safety Element is a State-mandated policy document that is a component of the General Plan. The Safey Element must identify potential natural and human-caused hazards that could affect the residents, businesses, and services in the city. The purpose of the Safety Element is to establish a framework to anticipate hazards and increase the community's resilience to these risks. The existing Safety Element was adopted in October 1991 and amended on May 6, 2025. However, the regulatory framework for safety elements has changed since the adoption and amendments and the existing Safety Element does not reflect these changes. Therefore, pursuant to State law, the proposed project is necessary to bring the Safety Element up to date to address the requirements of California Government Code Sections 65302(g) and 65302.15.[2]

Safety Element Update (Proposed Project)

The proposed project provides a policy framework for addressing emergency preparedness and evacuation, geologic and seismic hazards, flooding, severe weather and drought, extreme heat, shoreline hazards such as sea level rise and emergent groundwater, fire, and human-caused hazards such as hazardous materials and airport safety. This framework includes strategies to minimize physical harm to the people, buildings, and infrastructure in the city and to reduce damage to local economic systems and community services. The proposed project complies with the requirements of California Government Code Section 65302(g), Section 65302.15, and the California Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation General Plan Guidelines.

Findings Concerning CEQA Exemption

SECTION 15061(B)(3): COMMON-SENSE EXEMPTION

The proposed project is exempt as a common-sense exemption under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3). This exemption applies because the proposed project does not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.

[2] California Government Code Sections 65302(g) and 65302.15 mandate that a Safety Element contain background information and policies to address multiple natural hazards, a climate change vulnerability assessment, policies and implementation actions to address climate change adaptation and resilience, and an assessment of residential areas with evacuation constraints.

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ANALYSIS IN SUPPORT OF FINDINGS

The proposed project is a program-level policy document that includes goals, policies, and programs intended to guide decisions regarding land use, emergency operations and evacuation planning, and climate change adaptation, to ensure that communities are prepared for potential threats and can respond effectively when hazardous events occur. As described in the *Safety Element Update (Proposed Project)* discussion of this Memorandum, the proposed project establishes a framework for how to achieve its goals through policies and actions to improve public health and safety by complying with new State laws, incorporating policies from other local and regional plans, and responding to community goals and priorities. The proposed project does not include land use or zoning changes that would result in direct or indirect growth or changes in building density and intensity. No provisions implemented under the proposed project would result in direct or indirect population growth and thus would not place additional demands on natural resources, public services, or infrastructure. In addition, the proposed project does not include any site-specific designs or proposals to develop specific projects, nor does it grant any entitlements for development projects.

Future implementation actions could include amendments to the Half Moon Bay Municipal Code and other City regulations and plans to facilitate improved preparation, response, and recovery from disasters. Although the proposed project contains policies that direct the City to explore amending land use or zoning regulations that would improve public safety and community resilience, the proposed project itself does not include these amendments. Until the details and scope of any such amendments are known, it is too speculative and premature to evaluate environmental impacts. Subsequent amendments to the City's land use or zoning regulations would be subject to a separate CEQA review at the time the amendments are prepared, if required. Therefore, the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment and is exempt from CEQA review.