



**Special City Council/
Town Hall Meeting
September 26, 2023
6:00pm**

**FUTURE OF THE SEBASTOPOL
FIRE SERVICE**

Sebastopol Fire Dept. Volunteer Firefighters

Welcome - Introductions



- ▶ Neysa Hinton, Mayor
- ▶ Jill McLewis, Councilmember
- ▶ Jack Piccinini, Interim Fire Chief
- ▶ Larry McLaughlin, City Manager/City Attorney
- ▶ Mary Gourley, Assistant City Manager/City Clerk

PURPOSE - WHY ARE WE HERE TONIGHT?



TO BE TRANSPARENT



TO HEAR FROM OUR
COMMUNITY



TO PRESENT
INFORMATION AND
ANSWER QUESTIONS



NEXT STEPS FROM
CITY COUNCIL

GROUND RULES

- ▶ Be respectful
- ▶ Make your comments brief and on point to the agenda
- ▶ Manage emotion
 - ▶ No argumentative discussions amongst attendees
- ▶ Stay on the subject
- ▶ Do not interrupt other speakers

Why Do Governmental Agencies Explore Alternative Delivery Options



- ▶ **Opportunity**
- ▶ **Greater Efficiencies**
- ▶ **Greater Economy of Scale**
- ▶ **Capacity**

The Why- Sebastopol Fire Dept.

- ▶ **Why have we been discussing our Sebastopol Fire Department for the last 5+ years!**
- For the last several years, fire services has been of concern for the City of Sebastopol and we have been keenly aware of the struggles currently facing the fire department.
- With the many changes facing today's fire department, such as retirement of Fire Chief Braga, staffing/loss of volunteers and volunteer recruitment, funding, vehicles, equipment, infrastructure; trend of increased response times, trouble getting the truck out the door or recruitment of volunteers to name a few, it is critical that a comprehensive long-range vision toward the future of fire services is established whether it is status quo or other potential actions.
 - To turn around the trend and come up with solutions to reduce call times which were increasing
 - Expand paid staffing coverage (weekday volunteer shifts becoming more difficult and going unfilled due to trend of locals working out of town). Longer response to calls relying more heavily on neighboring fire departments.
 - Increase volunteer pool. Community volunteers trending down (Est at -27%) and of the volunteers 2/3rd join as volunteer to get experience in fire industry, moving to applying to other Dept's within 2-3 years. Current core volunteers are aging.
 - Small Sebastopol City budget has under funded the fire department which lacks large revenue sources to support Fire Dept and the level needed for community.
 - Aging equipment and Fire vehicles.
 - Trend in Sonoma County to consolidation for fire departments and agencies. Over 20 so far



FIRE DEPARTMENT BACKGROUND

- ▶ Volunteer Fire Department Since 1902
- ▶ Career Fire Chief, 2 Fire Engineers and a .5 FTE Senior Administrative Assistant
- ▶ 30+/- Volunteers
- ▶ Full-Service FD responding to over 1325 call for service per year
- ▶ SFD is 14% of current budget. Standard expenditure is 20%.
- ▶ Highly Trained and well equipped.

What Services the Sebastopol Fire Department Provides

- ▶ Fire calls, accidents, medical calls through 911, outside agency fires, etc
- ▶ Manage the EOC
- ▶ Provides mutual aid to neighboring fire districts.
- ▶ Water rescue - serving Sebastopol and mutual aid
- ▶ Regional resource for large animal rescue - specialized training.
- ▶ Regional resource for confined space and building collapses rescue operations
- ▶ Support statewide response to wildfires

FIRE DEPARTMENT CHALLENGES

- ▶ Station upgrades
- ▶ Staffing model is strained
- ▶ Apparatus replacement plan
- ▶ Meeting training demands
- ▶ Equipment replacement and upgrades
- ▶ Plan for long-term funding



Current Status

- ▶ 1 authorized Fire Chief
- ▶ 2 authorized Fire Engineer positions
- ▶ .5 FTE Senior Administrative Assistant
- ▶ 1 Type-3 fire truck on order to be delivered within next 12 months.
- ▶ 1 Type-1 fire truck budgeted to be delivered within next 24 months.
- ▶ From 18 volunteers in 2022 to approximately 30 total volunteers as of today.
- ▶ County sales tax measure on March 2024 ballot.

Firehouse Costs

- ▶ Architecture Design Phase ~\$100k
- ▶ Construction \$2-5 Million
- ▶ Modular Building \$150,000

Countywide Fire Prevention & Response Tax Measure

March 5th 2024

www.sonomachiefs.org

A pivotal measure that would infuse annual money into the city for fire services.

1.8% of annual tax revenue + \$100K annually to offset current expenses related to dispatch and various operational costs.

Maintenance of effort requirement- Maintain baseline operating budget for 2021/2022.

Total tax expected \$60 Million annually resulting in \$1 Million for City of Sebastopol.

Timeframe to receive funds January 2025.

For 24/7 staffing & capital improvements an additional tax mechanism could be needed.

Reorganization with neighboring fire district. Process explained...

- ▶ Apply for Municipal Services Review (MSR) with neighboring fire district.
 - Potential cost of \$10k.
 - Timeframe fluctuates depending on backlog of requests.
- ▶ Identified district & City of Sebastopol agree upon a re-organization.
 - Financial & capacity review required
 - LAFCO oversees negotiations.
- ▶ *Total timeframe. Estimated to be approximately: 24-28 months.*
- ▶ Sebastopol property owners would then have the same parcel tax as the district it decides to reorganize with.

- ❑ Reorganization needs to be mutually beneficial for both departments. Both need to be financially sound with staffing and resources and equitable.
- ❑ Governance will be overseen by the combined district board which consists of members of the full district.
- ❑ Reorganization subject to a protest period.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

- ▶ Remain a City Governed Fire Department.
- ▶ Reorganize with a neighboring Fire District.
- ▶ Enter into a Joint Powers Authority- 2 agencies agree to provide services & enter into an agreement.
- ▶ Enter into limited contract for shared services.
 - ▶ Shared volunteers, administrative functions, Battalion Chief coverage.
- ▶ Administrative oversight agreement.
- ▶ Enter into a contract with another agency for full delivery of Fire Emergency Response Services estimated at \$2.5 mil.

All Options are good and exist in Sonoma County and throughout the state

The best option is based on the interest of the policy makers in determining what is right for the community

Continue to Explore

- ▶ Staffing model: 24/7 or 16 hour shifts.
- ▶ Fire station upgrades to accommodate 24/7.
- ▶ Funding for equipment and necessary apparatus upgrades to meet current safety standards.
- ▶ How to improve response times.
- ▶ Fire service long-term sustainability in a condition of increased climate uncertainty.

Process

- ▶ Questions from Council
- ▶ Answers for questions received in advance
- ▶ Public comment/questions- 2 minutes
- ▶ Response to public comment/questions
- ▶ Council Discussion

