

Gold Ridge Fire Protection District

Proposal for Consolidation

With Sebastopol Fire Department



Shepley Schroth-Cary
2-18-2022

Introduction

The Gold Ridge Fire Protection District was formed in 1993 when the Hessel and Twin Hills fire departments merged. Gold Ridge is comprised of three fire stations located in the communities of Hessel, Twin Hills, and Freestone. The district offers all-risk fire protection and emergency medical response spanning 75 square miles of rural Sebastopol, serving a population of roughly 20,000 residents, as well as providing mutual aid to all surrounding fire districts.

Gold Ridge is a combination Fire District consisting of 12 full-time firefighters, 3 battalion chiefs, a fire chief, 3 administrators and approximately 50 volunteers. The full-time fire suppression staff at Gold Ridge works a 48 hour on-duty, 96 hour off-duty schedule covering three rotating shifts. Gold Ridge volunteers contribute to the organization in several important ways. They are available for response whenever needed, they fill stipend daytime and sleeper shifts, they staff engine companies during large wildland fire response, and provide station coverage. Our volunteers are comprised of district residents and out of district members. We recruit interns from the Junior College who make a year-long commitment to the organization. After their year-long internship, they have the option to become volunteers. Additionally, we have an Explorer Post which continues to groom new volunteers.

Operations

The Fire Chief, or his designee, will provide leadership in the areas of emergency management, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Under the authority of the Fire Chief, the Battalion Chief is responsible for planning and directing the regular daily operation of the assigned shift using discretion and independent judgment. Duties include supervising equipment operation, fire suppression, fire prevention, equipment maintenance, facilities maintenance, training, incident command, public education, daily activities, and personnel management, which includes assigning work schedules for paid and volunteer staff. The Battalion Chief will handle community concerns and staff discipline for events occurring during their assigned shift. There will be a Captain, an Engineer and a Volunteer Firefighter assigned to each shift. Captains are responsible for completing projects assigned by the shift Battalion Chief, ensuring equipment readiness, managing emergency response, and coordinating daily training of paid staff and weekly training of volunteer staff.

Administration

The Gold Ridge Fire Protection District has three administrative employees who serve as support staff for the Fire Chief and management staff, as well as provide assistance to the public when they call or visit the station. Administrative staff is also responsible for the following tasks: payroll, human resources (health insurance, PERS retirement and worker's compensation), accounts payable, accounts receivable, contracts, budgeting, banking, finance, grant writing assistance, volunteer onboarding and scheduling, and serves as clerk of the board.

Fire Prevention

The 40-hour Prevention Captain will be supervised by the B shift Battalion Chief. Plan Check for new construction and tenant improvements would be conducted by an independent contractor with those costs passed along to the applicant. The contractor (H & S Associates) is the current contractor that the City of Sebastopol uses for plan review. The Prevention Captain will conduct the new construction and tenant improvement inspections. The Prevention Captain will also have a suppression background and will be able to augment the response to greater alarm calls for service. Many of the current annual fire prevention inspections and pre-fire plan inspections would be handled by the engine company. Managing the annual inspections would be coordinated by the Prevention Captain. The Fire Prevention Captain would handle community outreach programs as well as act as the department Public Information Officer (PIO). 24/7 Fire Investigation would be coordinated by the B-Shift Battalion Chief. There are currently 2 available investigators with an additional investigator in trainee status. While large scale fires may incorporate the Sonoma County Fire Investigation Task Force, the majority of the incidents can be investigated internally by department personnel.

Revenue

The Gold Ridge special taxes would generate approximately \$1.1 million in new revenue if applied to Sebastopol boundary parcels. The summary of our taxes are as follows: The 1997 tax is a unit of risk assessment at \$5.00 per unit of risk. A typical residential home is 4 units of risk equaling a total charge of \$20.00. This tax passed with 84% percent support. Measure O was passed in 2008 with 76% support. Measure O is a very simple tax and is only applied to improved parcels at the rate of \$45.00/parcel. Our most recent tax Measure E was passed in 2019 with 70% support. The three taxes combined when applied to a typical single-family home comes to a total of \$265.00 annually. Attached are the individual ordinances for each tax.

Estimated Revenue Using Gold Ridge Special Tax applied to Sebastopol City Parcels

Use Code Type	Use Code count	Base Rate	Building Primary Size	.14 per sq ft	Building Secondary Size	.14 per sq ft
Agricultural Total	2.00	\$ 200.00	-	\$ -	-	\$ -
Commercial Total	329.00	\$ 98,700.00	1,749,064.00	\$ 244,868.96	194,921.00	\$ 27,288.94
MultiFamily Total	114.00	\$ 99,345.00		\$ -		\$ -
Residential Total	2,350.00	\$ 640,655.00		\$ -		\$ -
Total	2,795.00	\$ 838,900.00	1,749,064.00	\$ 244,868.96	194,921.00	\$ 27,288.94

Revenue Total	1,111,057.90
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Gold Ridge Tax

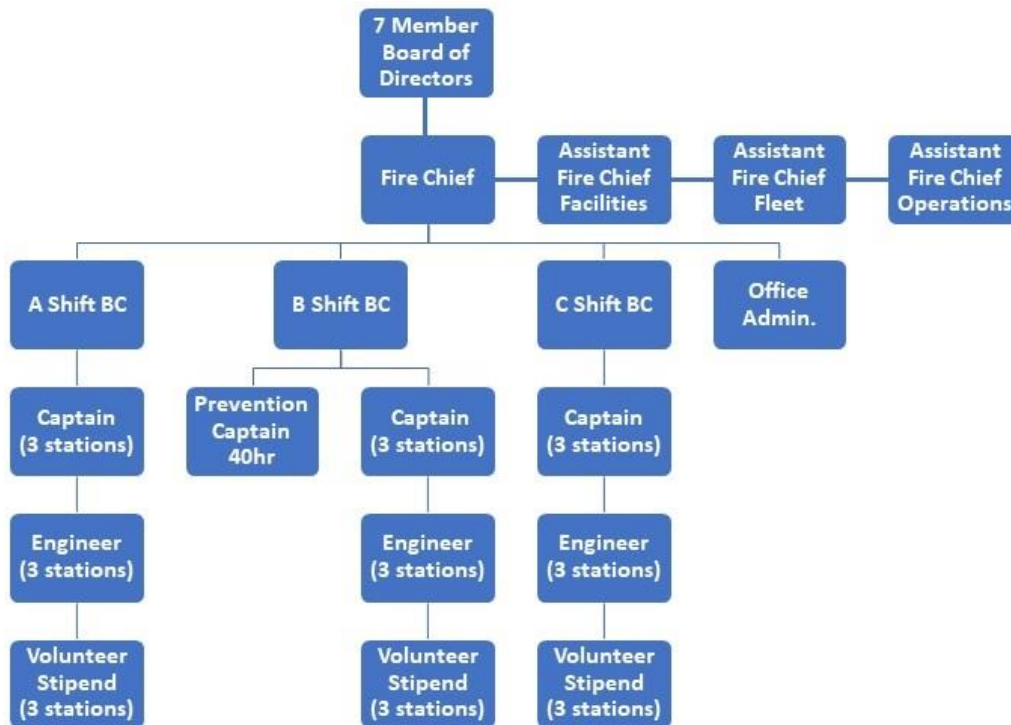
USE CODE SUMMARY GROUP	RATE PER APN	RATE PER ADDITIONAL UNIT	CHARGE BASE
Residential	\$200.00	\$100.00	Residence
Commercial	\$300.00	\$0.14	Sq Ft
Other Parcels	\$100.00	N/A	Parcel

The City of Sebastopol should continue to contribute to the cost of providing fire protection in the City. The City’s funding contribution should be expressed as a fixed percentage of the City’s annual revenue; therefore, it would fluctuate with the economic ups and downs. The initial amount would be negotiated and dictated by immediate and projected needs. The goal of the funding agreement would be to provide consistency to the City budget process, while also meeting infrastructure, apparatus, and operational needs for adequate fire response.

Added Service Level

An increased service level will be achieved in several ways. The new revenue from the tax overlay will provide staffing at the Sebastopol Station. The addition of staffing will be the most significant enhancement to public safety. The proposed staffing model will include participation from volunteers. The inclusion of volunteers is important to ensure appropriate response depth when multiple resources are required i.e.: fires, traffic accidents, storm flood events, and multiple calls within the response area. A larger volunteer and paid labor force will enhance the ability to cover responses and station coverage. The combining of the two agencies will act as a recruitment and retention tool providing more choices and opportunity for participation. A combined work force will strengthen specialized programs like water rescue, large animal rescue, and technical rescue. As one agency, immediate efficiencies will be achieved on a day-to-day operational level. This includes 24-hour Battalion Chief coverage. The staffing, along with the efficiencies from consolidation will ensure that we are able to meet the needs of our community and visitors.

Proposed Organizational Chart



Proposed Staffing Model

The proposed staffing model at the Sebastopol Station would include daily staffing of one full-time Captain, one full-time Engineer, and one Volunteer Firefighter Stipend. The primary work location for the 40-hour Prevention Captain would be the Sebastopol station. Daily operations would be overseen by the on-duty Battalion Chief. The below chart represents the cost to achieve the desired staffing model.

POSITION	Annual Salary	5923 PERS/SS	5924 MEDIC	5930 HEALTH	5940 W COMP	Total Comp/EE	# EE	Total Comp All EE's
Captains	101,340	26,470	1,469	23,277	9,131	161,688	4	\$ 646,751
Engineers	79,390	10,916	1,151	23,277	7,153	121,887	3	\$ 365,662
Volunteer FF Stipend	73,000	4,526	1,059	0	6,577	85,162	1	\$ 85,162
							8	\$ 1,097,574

EE's calculated at top step. Captains calculated as Classic members, Engineers as PEPRA. All calculated at Family cap health rate.

PERS District Rates 2021-22

Classic member 26.120%
PEPRA member 13.750%

FICA 6.200%

Medicare 1.450%

Annual Health Costs	Medical	Dental/		Total
		Vision		
BS Health Family	\$ 29,544	\$ 1,965		31,509
Family cap	\$ 21,312	\$ 1,965		23,277
Plus 1 cap	\$ 16,392	\$ 1,965		18,357
Single cap	\$ 9,268	\$ 1,965		11,233
Dental Vis only	\$ 1,965	\$ 1,965		3,930

W Comp Safety 9.01%

Gold Ridge Fire Salary Schedule as of 05/19/21

Captain											
STEP	With FLSA	FLSA	Annual BASE	HOURLY	OT	Per Shift	Bi-weekly Regular	Bi-weekly FLSA	Bi-weekly TOTAL	Bi-weekly Classic PERS	Bi-weekly PEPRA PERS
1	\$ 91,918.68	\$ 2,391.48	\$ 89,527.20	\$ 30.66	45.99	\$754.98	\$3,443.35	91.98	\$3,535.33	318.18	486.11
2	\$ 96,514.61	\$ 2,511.05	\$ 94,003.56	\$ 32.19	48.29	\$792.73	\$3,615.52	96.58	\$3,712.10	334.09	510.41
3	\$ 101,340.34	\$ 2,636.60	\$ 98,703.74	\$ 33.80	50.70	\$832.36	\$3,796.30	101.41	\$3,897.71	350.79	535.93

Engineer											
STEP	With FLSA	FLSA	Annual BASE	HOURLY	OT	Per Shift	Bi-weekly Regular	Bi-weekly FLSA	Bi-weekly TOTAL	Bi-weekly Classic PERS	Bi-weekly PEPRA PERS
1	\$ 75,609.56	\$ 1,967.16	\$ 73,642.40	\$ 25.22	37.83	\$621.02	\$2,832.40	75.66	\$2,908.06	261.73	399.86
2	\$ 79,390.04	\$ 2,065.52	\$ 77,324.52	\$ 26.48	39.72	\$652.07	\$2,974.02	79.44	\$3,053.46	274.81	419.85

Gold Ridge is committed to making the transition process as smooth as possible. All volunteers would transfer to the District holding their current rank. In the case of the full-time Fire Engineer, he would be promoted to the proposed 40-hour Prevention Captain's position. The current Fire Chief has indicated that he will be retiring, he would be offered an opportunity to assist during the transition period. The integration of the current Senior Administrative Assistant position will need to be evaluated.

Fleet Management

Gold Ridge will provide a comprehensive preventive maintenance (PM) program consisting of semi-annual service and safety inspections by equipment/safety specialists and a certified fire mechanic, brake and lamp inspections, and Basic Inspection of Terminal, if applicable. Repairs will be completed in-house, within our capability, and by outside vendors such as Twin Oaks Garage, Burton's Fire Apparatus in Modesto, Pete's Automotive in Sebastopol, as well as others, depending on the nature of repair. Reserve apparatus may also be available when equipment is out of service for an extended time period. Gold Ridge Fire District has a comprehensive Fleet Replacement plan:

- Command Vehicles: 10 years. Battalion Chief's unit runs 3-4 years front-line, then is moved into utility use for the balance.
- Type 1 Engine: 20 years. No reserves.
- Type 3 Engine: 20 years. One reserve, so most reliable unit retired from front-line is moved into reserve capacity.
- Water Tender: 25 years. No reserves.
- Ladder Truck: 25 years.
- Rescue: 25 years.

While there are several apparatus approaching or beyond the replacement schedule, we believe we can manage the replacement of apparatus by utilizing a lease purchase plan. It is estimated that there is around \$3 million worth of expenditure to replace the aging fleet and meet the District Fleet Replacement schedule. A recent financing quote provided to the District quoted a %3.25 interest rate for a \$3 million loan with an annual payment of \$486,066.11 over seven years. Current rates are high and are expected to increase. The replacement of the fleet requires immediate action, but it can be prioritized and spread across the next 5 years.

Facilities

The station requires upgrades to the bathrooms and the addition of a sleeping quarter. The cost and timing of these improvements is challenging. It may be necessary to house staff in a temporary building while station improvements are completed. Further analysis is required to provide an associated cost with the needed improvements. There are several ways to approach the ownership of the building and future improvements. One example would be:

The City of Sebastopol will lease the Fire Station to the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District for the nominal fee of \$1.00 per year. Gold Ridge will use the premises for public safety purposes. The City shall be responsible for insurance protection of improvements against fire and other risks. Gold Ridge will provide normal, daily operations, and maintenance for the leased facility consistent with established district standards. Gold District will be responsible for all utilities, including gas, electricity, water, and trash removal.

Normal daily operations and maintenance services include janitorial supplies, cleaning, maintenance of interior and exterior surfaces; service and repair of plumbing and electrical

systems; trash pickup; and other minor repairs. Repairs of major items—such as air conditioning, apparatus doors, heating systems, and exterior coverings—are covered by participation in the station maintenance plan. Alterations and improvements in excess of \$15,000 will be the responsibility of the City of Sebastopol, and would be submitted to the City by the Chief for consideration. It is assumed that the station will be in operational order at time of transition and that the identified repairs at the station will be complete or a plan to correct any issues will be agreed upon.

The City shall be responsible for all maintenance, repair, and alterations considered a capital improvement (Capital improvements are any single project that exceeds a cost of \$15,000.). Capital projects may include seismic repair, major remodel, renovation/relocation of stations and new fire station construction including structural upgrade required by law.

The above proposed handling of the facilities does not resolve the challenge of funding the needed improvements to the fire station, but there are other options to explore. We are not the first two agencies to be challenged with this possible scenario. The subject needs to be discussed in greater detail.

Governance

The Gold Ridge Fire Protection District Board of Directors is comprised of seven Directors elected to four-year terms of office. The formation of the Board of Directors is pursuant to the provision of the California Health and Safety Code section 13842 and Government Code section 56886(n). The terms of four Directors expire in December of 2022, and three expire in 2023.

Our Board believes in transparency and community representation, based on this belief there will be an opportunity to integrate residents from the city limits to serve on the Board as seats become available. During preliminary discussions regarding consolidation, the Gold Ridge Board Chair has expressed the desire for inclusion of representation from city residents on the Board. Initially, an oversight committee consisting of representatives from the City, Sebastopol Fire and Gold Ridge may be the best way to ensure collaboration. During the transition period the oversight committee would have a standing report on the Gold Ridge Board Agenda.

Summary

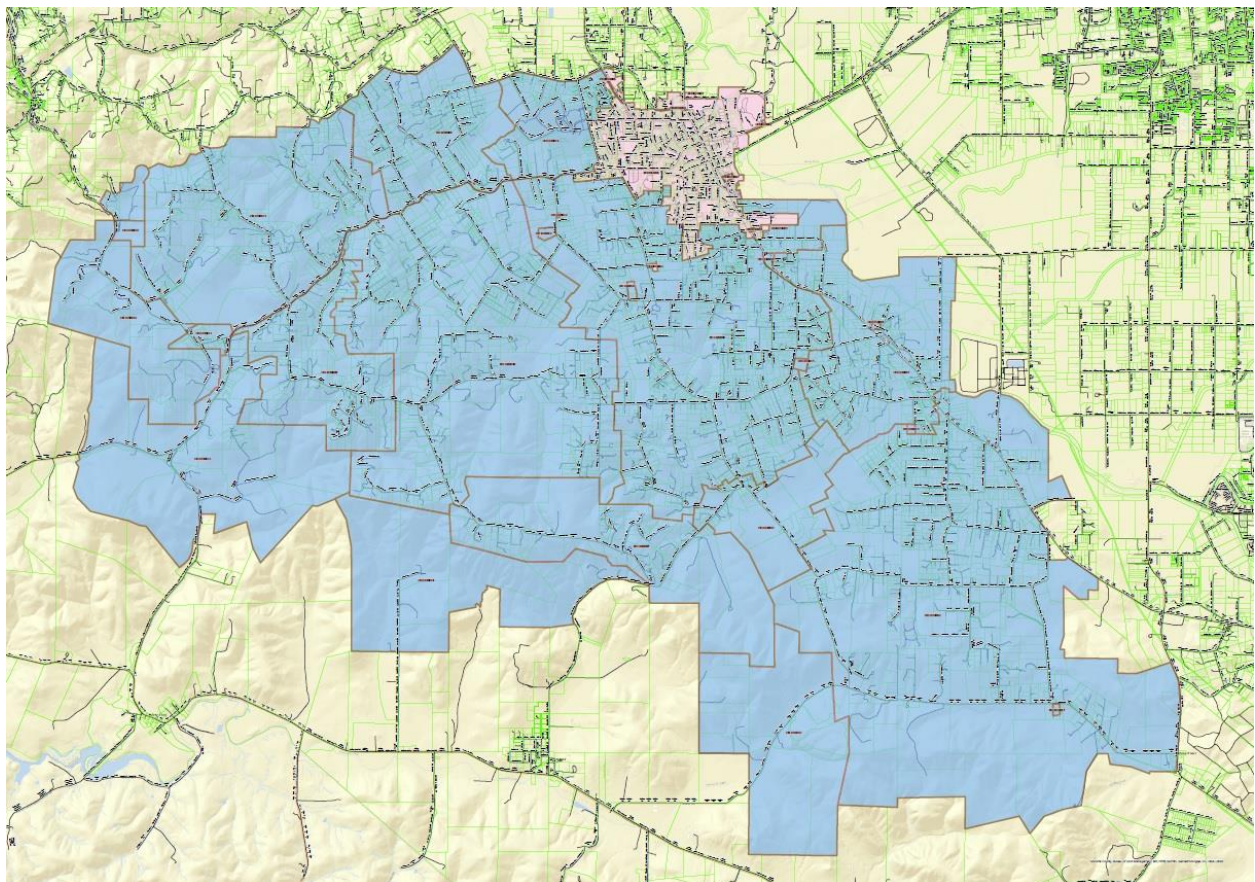
The benefit of consolidating our two agencies is shared. Operational and managerial efficiencies would be achieved. New opportunities to our volunteer and paid staff will be provided. A consolidated training program will ensure that responders are effective and efficient. The addition of a staffed engine company will enhance the safety of the region. We will be prepared for the challenges of the future.

The path to consolidating our two agencies will be hard. There will be a strong emotional response to the idea alone. Integrating two agencies that have a tremendous amount of pride and history will be challenging. The approach must be inclusive, allowing input from all

stakeholders. A collaborative management style will be necessary. The leadership and culture of the Gold Ridge Fire District is prepared and capable of bringing our two departments together. It will be important that City leadership and Sebastopol Fire Department leadership are also up to the challenge and committed to the end goal.

Ultimately the most important outcome of consolidating our two agencies is that our community will receive the benefit of a sustainable, community minded, dedicated, and professional emergency response. While we look forward to next steps, we should always ask the question, does this make sense and how will it serve the public?

Gold Ridge District Boundary/Sebastopol Boundary



Index of Attachments

- Gold Ridge Special Tax Information
 - 1997 Tax Ordinance
 - Units of Risk Use Codes
 - Measure O
 - Measure E

- Gold Ridge Fire Protection District Budgets (3 fiscal years)
 - Final Budget FY 2019-2020
 - Final Budget FY 2020-2021
 - Final Budget FY 2021-2022

- Gold Ridge Fire Protection District Financial Audits (3 fiscal years)
 - Financial Audit FY 2018-2019
 - Financial Audit FY 2019-2020
 - Financial Audit FY 2020-2021