

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: September 3, 2024

=====

**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers  
**From:** Fire Ad Hoc Committee  
**Subject:** Mark Bramfitt, Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)  
 Presentation from Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) (Mark Bramfitt) on process and timelines for Fire Consolidation Process through LAFCO. The Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) was created by State law in 1963 to regulate the boundaries of cities and special districts and will provide a presentation on the City of Sebastopol Fire Consolidation Process (Gold Ridge Fire Protection District Annexation of Sebastopol fire and EMS Service)

=====

**RECOMMENDATION:** Receive presentation and orientation on LAFCO process and timeline for District annexation of City fire and EMS services effective July 1, 2025

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The City Council has approved proceeding toward the annexation of the City fire and EMS services by the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District (GRFPD).

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the Council with an orientation and overview of the process and timeline used by the Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to consider and approve the annexation of City fire and EMS services by GRFPD effective July 1, 2025.

**BACKGROUND:**

LAFCO was created by State law in 1963 to regulate the boundaries of cities and special districts. These commissions have both planning and regulatory powers. LAFCOs plan by adopting and revising “spheres of influence,” which are planning documents that show a city or special district’s future boundary and service areas. LAFCO is not a county agency, a city department, a city agency, or a special district.

There is a LAFCO in each of the 58 counties of California. The objectives of LAFCO are:

- To encourage the orderly formation of local government agencies and promote the efficient provision of public services, including municipal services such as fire and EMS services.
- To preserve agricultural land and open space resources.
- To promote orderly growth and discourage urban sprawl.

In April 2024, the City Council approved merging the municipal fire and EMS services provided by the Sebastopol Fire Department with GRFPD, using the annexation approval process through the Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).

On July 2, 2024, the City Fire Ad Hoc Committee, together with the City Manager and Assistant City Manager, met with GRFPD Chiefs, staff and counsel to review the LAFCO process and timeline for this annexation of City fire and EMS services by GRFPD effective July 1, 2025.

On July 18, 2024, as agreed by the parties at the July 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, GRFPD staff met with the LAFCO Executive Officer and staff to review and update the attached LAFCO process and timeline. LAFCO staff confirmed the timeline was

feasible for GRFPD to submit its application to LAFCO in early December 2024 and the annexation of City fire and EMS services by GRFPD to be effective on July 1, 2025.

The Fire Ad Hoc Committee also met with Mark Bramfitt, Executive Officer, LAFCO, on August 21, 2024 and can provide their comments at the September 3, 2024 City Council Meeting.

**ANALYSIS:**

The example LAFCO process and timeline information are provided for discussion and orientation of the Council on the steps necessary for GRFPD to annex the City's fire and EMS services by July 1, 2025. Although he has already reviewed, discussed, and approved the feasibility of the timeline, the LAFCO Executive Officer has been invited to attend this Council meeting to assist and answer Council questions.

To meet LAFCO timelines, the Council needs to approve two documents for inclusion in the LAFCO application that will be submitted by GRFPD in early December. The first is a Resolution indicating support for the reorganization and the second is a Revenue Sharing Agreement that will address additional funding of the plan for services GRFPD will provide the City.

The Resolution will address required elements for an annexation of City fire services by Gold Ridge and will be reviewed with Council at an upcoming meeting.

The revenue sharing agreement involves discussions between the City and GRFPD on the plan for service and accompanying funding. This document will come back to Council, likely in October.

In addition, LAFCO is preparing a Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Study for the Gold Ridge and Monte Rio Fire Protection Districts and the City of Sebastopol Fire Department. The report evaluates the agencies across an array of criteria, and will recommend that the sphere of influence of the Gold Ridge FPD be expanded to cover the Monte Rio and Sebastopol areas. If approved by the commission, Gold Ridge would then become eligible to seek to expand their territory.

Any reorganization proposal is subject to a public hearing and protest proceeding, allowing registered voters and landowners an opportunity to register opposition to the proposal.

**PROPOSED SCHEDULE:**

Anticipated Upcoming Schedule regarding Council actions for LAFCO annexation process (Subject to Change):

September 3 Council Meeting

- Briefing on the LAFCO process and the anticipated timeline;

Date TBD:

- Council will consider approval of Resolution of support for reorganization addressing the LAFCO requirements setting minimum time/duration for the merger years (Code 56855). (The GRFPD Board will consider approval of this Resolution of support for reorganization at its meeting on September 11) It is anticipated that this Resolution will be on the September 17, 2024 City Council Meeting.

October 1 Council Meeting

- Consideration of approval revenue sharing agreement to fund plan for service

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH:**

This item has been noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting date. The City has also uses social media to promote and advertise the City Council Meeting Agenda Items.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact with receipt of the presentation. However, the FY 24-25 budget has dedicated funds for the LAFCO process.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Example LAFCO timeline for GRFPD annexation of Sebastopol Fire

# City of Sebastopol/Gold Ridge Fire and LAFCO

Presented to City Council

Tuesday September 3, 2024

Mark Bramfitt, Executive Officer

Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission

# “What is LAFCO” in Two Minutes or Less

- Enabled under state legislation; doesn't answer to State (or County)
- Seven members
- We draw the boundaries of Cities and Special Districts
- Some “grand jury”-like authority
- We also have authority over reorganizations
- You may know us from fire district consolidations, the Roseland community annexation, or the dissolution of the Palm Drive Healthcare District

# Proposed Reorg of Fire and EMS

- This is a reorganization, not a consolidation.
- Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence amendment paves the way.
- Gold Ridge “drives” the process by filing the proposal.
- City has key interests as well as participates in preparing the proposal.
- Citizens of Sebastopol have opportunity to participate in a “referendum”.
- Yes, the reorganization can be “undone” in the future by following the same process.

# The Proposal Package

- Deposit against actual incurred expenses by LAFCO.
- Fee waiver request (if desired).
- Application form.
- Lists of registered voters and landowners within territory.
- **Plan for service**
  - Staffing
  - Five-year projected budget of costs and revenues
  - Transfers of assets and liabilities

# Key City Involvement

- Resolution indicating support.
- Review of the Plan for Service document.
- Negotiation and agreement of a financial exchange contract
  - What revenues will go from City to District?
  - Includes language regarding transfers of assets and liabilities, including station, vehicles, equipment, employees (if any), pension/health liabilities (if any)
- Community outreach activities (beyond mandated ones) of your choosing.

# Other Options

- Contract for service
- If you do not continue down the path of reorganization, but continue to contract for services from Gold Ridge FPD, that contract is subject to LAFCO review and approval.

# Questions?

- You can reach me at [Mark.Bramfitt@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Mark.Bramfitt@sonoma-county.org) or 707-565-3765