

Dear Council Members,

I urge you to support the merger recommendation detailed in Agenda Item 5 and “move forward with the merger of the Sebastopol Volunteer Fire Department with the Gold Ridge Fire Department.”

As has been detailed for over 18 months, the Sebastopol Volunteer Fire Service has done a tremendous job and has been a stellar part of our community for over 100 years. Volunteers have stepped up and valiantly performed a crucial public service at risk to themselves and at sacrifice to their families.

Due to chronic underfunding over the last 15 years, the fire department is no longer viable as a standalone unit. The need to merge comes from the fact that previous Council did not invest enough into the fire department for it to remain viable.

There has been an uptick in calls and changing social and environmental conditions which place even more demands on the Sebastopol Fire Department. These social and environmental changes and chronic lack of funding make merging with Gold Ridge the most viable option currently available to maintain high quality fire service in both the short and long term.

As a citizen and taxpayer, I have tremendous gratitude all the volunteer fire fighters. I thank them for their public service and for all the money they have saved the City of Sebastopol for the last 100 years.

Firefighters, thank you!

Best,

Kate Haug