

City Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sebastopol Fire Department Reorganization with Gold Ridge to Proceed

Formal protest period ends; reorganization to take effect by July 1.

SEBASTOPOL, Calif., May 9, 2025 --

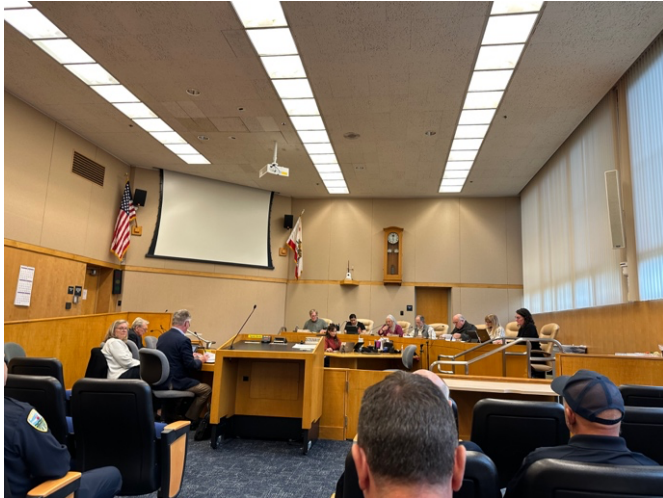
The Sonoma County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) conducted a public hearing Wednesday to receive any testimony from interested parties and to conclude the formal Protest Period for the proposed reorganization of Sebastopol's Fire Department with the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District. As fewer than 200 protests were received from City voters and/or property owners, Gold Ridge Fire Protection District Reorganization No.



Members of the merged Fire Departments and City of Sebastopol representatives.

2025-02 (City of Sebastopol) Involving Annexation of the Territory of the City of Sebastopol for the Provision of Fire and Emergency Services Only is approved. The reorganization will take effect no later than July 1, 2025.

"This reorganization will provide a higher level of service to the community, and I look forward to the hard work of merging our organizations and better serving the people of Sebastopol," said Gold Ridge Fire Chief Shepley Schroth-Cary. "We firmly believe our two agencies combined will create a stronger and safer community."



LAFCO Hearing - May 7, 2025

Sebastopol has pursued a reorganization with Gold Ridge to provide better fire protection and emergency response while managing costs. Rising calls for emergency services – up 16% since 2019 – have stretched the Sebastopol department's volunteer model. The reorganization is designed to deliver substantially improved services.

The reorganization will also allow for additional resources to anticipate needs in the city, and plan for threats such as wildfires and other natural disasters. It will

require extending Gold Ridge's existing parcel taxes to properties in Sebastopol. These taxes will total approximately \$265 per year for a typical single-family home and could vary based on the number of structures on the property.

"This reorganization is the product of many years of discussion and careful analysis," said Vice Mayor Jill McLewis and a member of the City's Fire Ad Hoc Committee. "The time it takes for firefighters to respond to emergencies is crucial, and this merger leverages Gold Ridge's larger scale to provide better coverage, faster response times, and more backup crews when needed. We'll have a safer community as a result."

"I have been personally involved in the research and deliberations on the fire issue for nearly as long as I have been on the Council," said Neysa Hinton, Councilmember and member of the City's Fire Ad Hoc Committee. "I am confident that we as a community have reached the right decision. The reorganization is a responsible and sustainable path to a safer City, and I am grateful to Gold Ridge for their dedication to this process and for the services they will be providing in the years to come."

The Protest Period at LAFCO, which opened after it approved the merger on March 5, gave residents and property owners a chance to weigh in on the process. The City of Sebastopol and Gold Ridge conducted Town Hall meetings in person and online to educate the community on the background and process that led to the reorganization. LAFCO reported receiving fewer than 200 total protests to the proposal, well short of the 25% threshold of registered voters or landowners to trigger an election on the proposal.

More information about the merger is available on the City's website at www.cityofsebastopol.gov/SebFireReorg

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