



# FIRE SERVICE SALES TAX MEASURE

October 2, 2023

City of Petaluma

\*For informational/educational purposes only\*



# FIRE SERVICE SALES TAX MEASURE

## Title:

- "Improved and Enhanced Local Fire Protection, Paramedic Services and Disaster Response Initiative"

## Program Categories:

- Wildfire prevention, preparedness, emergency response and vegetation management
- Recruitment and retention of local firefighters
- Updates to essential equipment and facilities



# BACKGROUND

- Measure G - March 2020 ballot
  - Was placed on the ballot by Sonoma County
  - It had limited community outreach or education
  - The measure failed passing the 66.67% threshold by 1.83%
- Fire Service Working Group (FSWG)
  - For Measure G, operated as technical specialist under the BOS Fire Ad-Hoc
  - Now redesigned and operates as a subsection of the Sonoma County Fire Chiefs Association to fund the goal of improved and enhanced local fire protection, paramedic services and disaster response



# NEW PROPOSED MEASURE

- FSWG started from square one on a new tax measure
  - New strategy, new ordinance language
  - New governance and allocation plan
- Half-Cent General Sales Tax – March 2024
  - Countywide benefit, filling service gaps
  - Estimated to generate \$60M-\$65M annually directly to the fire service
  - Focuses on adding personnel and new facilities or facility upgrades based on deployment analyses

## COUNTYWIDE FIRE PREVENTION & RESPONSE PROPOSED MEASURE, MARCH 2024



"Funding from a countywide half cent sales tax will allow the Petaluma Fire Department to implement several significant improvements to emergency services. Several needs were recently confirmed during a comprehensive analysis of the Fire Department. This tax measure would fund a staffed ladder truck and increase paramedic first-response. Funds would support the construction of a new Fire Headquarters to place the ladder truck in a more city-central location, improving response times, and improving rapid access to multi-story buildings in the downtown area. Current Fire Stations would receive short- and long-term improvements to meet current code requirements, receive seismic improvements, expand to meet operational needs, and effectively accommodate a diverse workforce. This tax measure will also significantly support Petaluma's neighboring fire agencies, allowing increased staffing and capacity to expand emergency assets and resiliency in the south county, helping wildfires from becoming major incidents that may impact the City." **Jeff Schach, Petaluma Fire Chief**

### REVENUE WILL PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING BENEFITS TO COUNTY RESIDENTS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ✓ Recruitment and retention of local firefighters           | ✓ Red flag and winter storm upstaffing                  |
| ✓ Improved response times                                   | ✓ Provide staffing to rural and underserved communities |
| ✓ Increased wildfire prevention, preparedness, and response | ✓ Supports an improved local dispatch center            |
| ✓ Expanded paramedic services                               | ✓ Enhanced vegetation management and fuels reduction    |
| ✓ Infrastructure improvements                               | ✓ Provides collaborative technology platforms           |

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How much will this tax generate?**  
This ½ cent sales tax is expected to generate approximately \$60 million annually to address the current and future funding challenges that face EVERY fire agency in the county.
- **How will the expenditures be governed?**  
Revenue will go directly to fire agencies. Their governing bodies, either City Councils or District Boards will be responsible for ensuring that the funds are spent in accordance with the ordinance. Additionally, an independent oversight committee will review the expenditures of each agency.
- **How much funding will my local fire department get?**  
Petaluma will directly receive 7.19 % of the annual tax revenue, estimated at nearly \$4.5 million.
- **What will the funding be used for?**
  - A staffed Ladder Truck for specialty equipment, emergency access, and paramedic 1<sup>st</sup>-response.
  - Funding for a new fire station and safety/operational improvements to current fire stations.
  - Enhanced wildfire prevention and mitigation.



For more information, please visit  
[SonomaChiefs.org](https://SonomaChiefs.org)





# NEW STRATEGY

- Petition driven initiative:
  - Requires 50% +1 to pass
  - Polls at 65%-67%
  - Goal is to pass above 66.67% to negate threat of potential 'roundtable' measure
- Changed FSWG Representation
- Improved Union – Union relationship
- Strong campaign managed by L-1401





# NEW ORDINANCE



Managed by the Sonoma County Fire Chiefs Association



Change of allocation



Community Oversight Committee enhanced



Emphasis placed on adding local firefighters and building fire stations



# NEW OVERSIGHT

- Independent Oversight Committee

- Independent County Residents – no active fire chiefs, fire directors, County employees, or spouses to any such individuals.
- Eleven (11) appointed members:
  - Two (2) from Mayors' and Councilmembers' Association of Sonoma County
  - Two (2) from a list submitted by the labor organizations responsible for collective bargaining
  - Three (3) appointed by Sonoma County Fire Chiefs Association
    - One (1) from the general public
  - Two (2) appointed by the Sonoma County Fire Districts Association
    - One (1) from the Sonoma County Taxpayers Association
- Three-year term with eligibility to reappoint



# ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AUDIT

- Performance Audit
  - Each agency shall prepare and distribute to the Committee an annual report which includes the amount received from the measure and how it was allocated.
    - A summary of the positions and start up, equipment and facilities that were funded with revenue.
    - The specific activities that support fire prevention, including vegetation management.
    - Status of facility capital improvement projects that are funded with revenue from the tax.
    - Demonstration of compliance with the requirements of this plan that the funds shall be used to pay for enhancing operations.
    - Any remaining funds from allocations provided in previous years, and an explanation for proposed use of such funds.





# NEW ALLOCATION PLAN

## Sonoma County Chiefs Association - Countywide Expenses Funding

- REDCOM Dispatch Fees (including Cities)
- REDCOM Command Center Staffing (1 – BC, 3 – Captains, & 1- Admin)
- Lexipol
- Fire Safe Sonoma - \$250k/year
- Countywide Technology
- Red Flag & Winter Storm Upstaffing
- Recruiting/Training Programs
- Sonoma County Chiefs Association Administrative Support
- Funding agreement sustainability
- Additional vegetation management projects

14.07%

Agency	Percentage of Tax
City of Healdsburg	2.51%
City of Petaluma	7.19%
City of Rohnert Park	5.50%
City of Santa Rosa	14.40%
City of Sebastopol	1.80%
City of Sonoma	1.18%
Cazadero Community Services District	1.14%
Cloverdale Fire Protection District (including the City of Cloverdale)	2.78%
Gold Ridge Fire Protection District	2.89%
Graton Fire Protection District	1.06%
Kenwood Fire Protection District	1.87%
Monte Rio Fire Protection District	2.43%
North Sonoma Coast Fire Protection District	2.39%
Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District	5.00%
Occidental Fire Protection District	1.61%
Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District (including the City of Cotati)	3.50%
Schell-Vista Fire Protection District	1.20%

Sonoma County Fire District (including the Town of Windsor)	6.61%
Sonoma Valley Fire District	5.20%
Timber Cove Fire Protection District	2.47%
Community Service Area 40 (Bodega)	0.13%
Community Service Area 40 (Camp Meeker)	0.39%
Community Service Area 40 (Fort Ross)	0.02%
Community Service Area 40 (Lakeville)	1.97%
Community Service Area 40 (Two Rock)	0.03%
Community Service Area 40 (Valley Ford)	1.96%
Community Service Area 40 (Wilmar)	2.28%
Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District - Fund and manage Countywide Vegetation Management Crews	5.00%
County of Sonoma – Fire Prevention and Haz-Mat Division	0.42%
County of Sonoma Auditor – Controller – Treasurer – Tax Collector Administrative Fee	1.00%



# PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION

- Unions
- Vegetation management
  - Firesafe Sonoma
  - Farm Bureau
- Outreach
  - City Managers Association
  - Mayors and Councils
  - Taxpayer groups
  - Board of Supervisors
  - Civic groups and Business owners





# CITY OF PETALUMA SPECIFIC IMPACTS

- Facilities funding to support Petaluma's Public Safety Facilities Master Plan
  - New construction of central station
  - Remodel or replacement of current fire stations and the fire prevention bureau.
- Staffed Ladder Truck
  - 9 new firefighter positions
  - Truck also responds as an additional paramedic 1<sup>st</sup> response unit
- Staff support for operational oversight, EMS coordination, and wildfire prevention
- Indirect financial support:
  - REDCOM Fees - \$365,000/year
  - Lexipol Fees - \$10,000/year
  - Upstaffing costs – red flag and winter storm
  - Technology enhancements
  - Training enhancements
  - Vegetation Management projects







# QUESTIONS?

