

## **Frequently Asked Questions: Ukiah Valley Fire District Annexation**

### ***What is happening at Mendocino LAFCo and why did I receive a mailing about a Notice of Protest?***

An agency called Mendocino Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) is charged with regulating the boundaries of special districts and on October 4, 2021 approved the annexation of the City of Ukiah into the Ukiah Fire District (i.e. the boundary adjustment). On November 8, 2021 LAFCo will hold a Protest Hearing to receive written protests filed against this approval. Landowners and registered voters residing within the City of Ukiah may file a written protest if opposed to the annexation.

### ***What has been proposed by the City of Ukiah and Ukiah Valley Fire Protection District (UVFPD)?***

The UVFPD has proposed annexing Ukiah city limits, which would make that area officially part of their service territory.

*The reasons for the annexation include: (1) Further strengthen the operating relationship between the Fire District and Ukiah; (2) Establish a fair and equitable funding resource for fire and emergency response services for all Ukiah Valley residents; and (3) Ensure fiscal stability of fire and emergency medical response services for the long-term benefit of Ukiah Valley residents served by the Fire Authority. (From the LAFCo Notice of Protest Hearing, posted October 8, 2021.)*



### ***Doesn't Ukiah Fire District already provide service inside the city limits?***

Yes, they do because the Ukiah Valley Fire Protection District ("Ukiah Fire District") and the City of Ukiah have joined forces as a single agency operating as the Ukiah Valley Fire Authority. Under this umbrella, the Fire Authority provides services to approximately 16,000 residents inside the City and approximately 17,000 outside City boundaries. That's about 33,000 people. In 2020, they had over 3,700 calls for service, and two-thirds of those were within the City. However, Ukiah city residents don't pay the same fire-specific property taxes that residents outside the city do. Under the proposed boundary adjustment, there would be equal application of the fire-specific property taxes to all those served by the Ukiah Valley Fire Authority, whether they are inside or outside city boundaries.

### ***What would change for city residents if they were formally part of UVFPD boundaries?***

Right now, City residents are not within the Ukiah Fire District's boundaries and do not pay the same amount of fire-specific property taxes. Formally including the City within the Fire District's boundaries would extend the fire-

specific property taxes, Measures J and B, to city property owners. These taxes are already paid by property owners outside city boundaries, and amount to about \$120 per property per year.

***I am a resident of Ukiah. How much will this cost me per year?***

For property owners, the average cost would be about \$120 per single-family residence. Renters will not be taxed.

***I own a business in Ukiah. How much will this cost me per year?***

For owners of commercial properties, the amount will depend on the type of business. Costs may range from \$180 for a small “mom and pop” style business to \$900 for a larger, big-box type of business.



***Why is this boundary adjustment being proposed now?***

Due to the effects of climate change, more intense fire risks, and increasingly costly regulatory mandates, the demands on fire services have escalated faster than the growth in resources, which has threatened the ability to provide timely, adequate services.

Since the merger, the City Council, Ukiah Fire

District Board of Directors, and staff have worked toward potential solutions to meet these challenges to reconcile funding and service levels, and have collaborated on this proposal for annexation.

***How much money will the annexation generate for the Fire Authority?***

Estimates show that approximately \$900,000 to \$1 million in new annual revenue could be generated to fund fire protection and emergency medical response services. Formally including the City within the Fire District’s boundaries would apply the Fire District’s two existing special district funding measures (Measures J and B) to City property owners through their property tax bill, calculated as a flat amount per benefit unit on a given parcel. It would create an equitable application of Measures J and B across the entire area that is served by the Ukiah Valley Fire Authority. It would also help ensure a sustainable, responsive fire service.

***What will the additional money be spent on?***

The funding provided through extending these special district property tax measures to City residents would go to support the operation of the Ukiah Valley Fire Authority and could not be taken by the state or federal governments. Despite industry and government standards that call for at least 33 firefighters to serve a population Ukiah’s size, our Fire Authority only has 19 authorized full-time firefighters along with a small contingent of dedicated volunteers. This means slower response times and smaller response teams, and also means they have to prioritize response operations when multiple calls for service come in at the same time. Additional revenue collected through the extension of the fire specific property taxes to city residents would allow

additional hiring to improve staffing levels, which would provide more rapid emergency response services. It would also enable the Fire Authority to purchase more modern equipment to be best prepared for increasingly dangerous fire seasons.

***Don't I already pay a sales tax for fire services (Measure P)?***

Yes, the City of Ukiah has Measure P — a half-cent sales tax that is applied to all taxable purchases in the city limits, whether those purchases are made by someone who lives inside or outside city limits. The revenue is divided between Police and Fire services. Those resources are being used carefully with transparency and oversight to fund public safety personnel, equipment, and training. But the population has grown, the fire risks have become increasingly fierce, and the regulatory mandates more expensive. Measure P is insufficient to meet the full need of a fully operational, fully responsive fire and emergency response system.

***Why can't the Fire Department just operate within existing budgets?***

There are extraordinary pressures to do more with limited resources. The Ukiah Valley Fire Authority is working hard to implement strategic fire mitigation programs to keep our community safe and reduce the risk of future fire damage. Additionally, population growth has increased the number of service calls for fire or emergency medical response. At the same time, new regulatory mandates create costly new requirements that cut away at the existing department budgets. To achieve appropriate staffing levels and maintain the right equipment to service a community of our size, additional resources are required.

***Where can I get more information?***

Information can be found [here](#). Additional questions may be directed by email to Fire Chief Doug Hutchison at [dhutchison@cityofukiah.com](mailto:dhutchison@cityofukiah.com).

