

**KENWOOD FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
JULY 13, 2021**

**Agendas and Board Packets are available at our website: [kenwoodfire.com](http://kenwoodfire.com)**

**MEETING:** Meeting called to order at 16:01 hrs. Directors Cooper, McIntosh, Doss, Moretti, Gruchawka and Chief Bellach were present. Lawyer Bill Adams and Consultant Dennis Rosatti were also in attendance.

**Public Hearing on Proposed District Special Tax Ballot Measure:** Director Moretti opened the public hearing. He recognized Consultant Dennis Rosatti and Council Bill Adams. Bill Adams reported to the public how the draft resolution and Attachment A of the proposed Ordinance were achieved by the District. He stated that the District has had a special tax for the last 35 years of \$40.00 per residential and \$150.00-\$200.00 for commercial and Ag land depending on the use code. The amount of funding that the District has come up with is around \$300,000.00 needed annually. The proposed Ordinance has to be approved by the voters. The District cannot impose a tax without voters approval. The Ad Hoc committee met and came up with the proposed Attachment A to reach the \$300,000.00 annual revenue needed for the District.

Tony Ghisla, from the public, asked what made the distinction between agricultural and vacant land. Chief Bellach stated the County creates the use codes. If the parcel is coded agricultural with a residence, then that parcel would only be charged the agricultural rate. If the parcel is coded residential, then only the residential rate would be charged. All coded vacant land would be charged the vacant rate only.

Bill Adams added, that every year in April, the Board would need to have a public hearing to create the tax roll. This is when the District will be able to provide a list of all the tax use codes to make sure they are coded and taxed correctly.

Joe Benguerel, from the public, asked if the District has figured out how much money would be coming in at the proposed rates. Director Moretti replied with approximately \$300,000.00. We have two main issues moving forward. One is the current salaries paid to our firefighters. Kenwood is one of the lowest paid agencies in the County. We need to bring our salaries up closer to what other agencies are paying. The second issue is the facility. It needs major improvements. Moving forward, current budget projections have us running in a deficit. The goal is to provide an effective firefighting force with sufficient equipment to protect the community.

A question from the public was asked regarding ADU's (Auxillary Dwelling Unit). Woud ADU's be part of the tax under residential? Bill Adams replied that they would be included in the total square footage.

A question from the public was asked if there were any benefits from consolidating with another agency. Chief Bellach stated yes, there would be cost savings, as well as taking on the assessment tax of the consolidating agency, replacing the Districts current assessment.

Bob Uboldi, from the public, stated he has talked with other grape growers in the District and the feeling is the \$25.00 per acre charge is a little high.

Stacey Kunde stated that the grape growers are not the District's clients. 85% or more of the 911 calls are for medical. When we do have fires, we (District) are not coming to save vineyards, we are coming to save lives. Her opinion was vineyard land should be called fire retardant land. Vineyards are slowing down, if not stopping the fires. She felt that taxing them at this level is excessive. She stated that they (Kunde Winery) are very supportive of Kenwood Fire. Keith Kunde stated they have 1,800 acres with 600 acres of vineyard. The last 3-4 years they have been losing money every year. During the fires, Cal Fire came in and took water from the lakes for about 10 days to help extinguish houses that were on fire, but would not touch their property, which he understands. The cost to fill the lakes is \$10,000.00-\$15,000.00. Keith also stated that they have over 100,000 square feet in structures on the properties as well, so they would be getting hit for another \$10,000 to \$12,000 as well. He felt the people that use our services should pay for it. Keith and Stacey both stated that they would support the Fire District with needs, as far as out houses and fuel. They did this during the 2017 fires. It has been a struggle for them to keep the winery and property in the family, with most wineries now owned by big corporations.

A question was asked from the public if there was a way to adjust the caps on the assessment for owners with multiple parcels?

A question from the public was asked what would this money be used for? Chief Bellach stated the funds would be used to get us out of deficit spending, putting funds aside for capital improvements and Apparatus replacement and bringing our current firefighters up to a reasonable pay scale.

Bob Uboldi, from the public, stated that if the District were to obtain revenue from the County, in addition to their regular tax revenue, the Board could make the decision to adjust the assessment rates below the Attachment A amounts annually as needed.

The question was asked what is the total cost for one employee? Chief Bellach stated that one firefighter at bottom step costs the District approximately \$110,000.00. This is inclusive to all benefits and startup costs. It was also asked if we could have more community help through volunteers. Chief Bellach replied that it is very difficult to get in District volunteers that can respond 24 hours-7days a week. This is due to the changing demographics of the community. The amount of hours and training needed to be a volunteer are huge.

Matt Clawson from the public asked, if the \$300,000.00 from this assessment would not get us to be able to consolidate. Director Moretti stated, this was correct and added this would help stabilize the District. Matt Clawson stated that if the County is pushing towards consolidation, then the District should be pushing for the County to fund it. Chief Bellach stated the District has been asking for funding from the County to help us move towards consolidation and to date has not received anything.

Director Doss added that there is a County Supervisor Board Meeting on July 20h, Fire Issues throughout the County will be discussed. Kenwood and Bodega are specifically mentioned as the two most in need for support from the County. .

Matt Clawson from the public stated that a 400% increase was a lot. Director Doss stated that since 1996 there has been no increase.

A comment from the public was asked, what about what Glen Ellen did where they had sponsors names on the apparatus. Did that work? Yes it did to purchase apparatus and have the donators names put on the engine.

Jim Geib from the public stated he keeps hearing about Sonoma Valley Fire District in regards to consolidation. Has any other agencies or ways been looked at? Chief Bellach stated we have looked into CALFIRE as a County wide agency. The cost was too expensive as well as looking into Sonoma County Fire District.

Director Moretti ask if there was a motion to reconsider Attachment A and make changes to the parcel code tax amounts. Motion was made by Director Doss, 2nd by Cooper, all AYE. Director Moretti closed the public hearing at 4:50PM.

Director Doss stated in 1996 we voted to pass the current assessment. We added fulltime (Engineers and Captains) approx. 5-6 years ago. Taking a look at our budget and doing projections over the next few years we had to figure out what do we need to stay alive, i.e. Salaries, remodeling, additional staffing and septic system work. The Board has no control over the County Use Codes. \$300,000.00 was the goal to come up with. Director Doss stated he would like to see the tax at \$18.00 instead of \$25.00 for the agricultural.

Director Moretti supported reducing the agricultural rate. He also stated that if something happens to this agency everyone will end up paying more for insurance.

Director Gruchawka asked if we had the total agricultural acreage to get an estimate of how much revenue would be lost reducing the agricultural rate from \$25 to \$18. Chief Bellach stated the total acreage is 1,065.

Director Moretti stated we could reduce the rate, reduce the cap and is open for discussion. He felt that we could take a cut in the overall \$300,000.00 then increase the

residential and commercial rates. Director Gruchawka agreed.

Director Moretti called for a 5 minute recess at 5:05 pm.

Director Moretti called the meeting back to order at 5:11 pm.

Bill Adams stated that the new proposed amendment to the Attachment A will be Agricultural land from \$25.00 to \$16.00 per acre.

Motion made by Director Moretti, 2nd; Cooper. Director Doss called for a discussion. He stated he was not clear on removing the cap and believed we would be ok with a cap. Director Gruchawka stated he thought we would be ok, by reducing the amount of revenue by reducing the rate per acre then the cap.

Director Doss made a motion for an amendment to the cap be \$4,800.00 for 300 plus acres and under one acre have no charge. 2nd by Moretti. All AYE

Stacy Kunde spoke from the public stating that this is a 400% increase of residential - currently paying \$40.00 per parcel and now having to pay \$5,700.00 when they don't use the fire service.

**MINUTES:** MSP McIntosh/Moretti to approve the minutes of June 3, 2021 and June 17, 2021 Special Board Meetings and June 8, 2021 Regular Board Meeting.

**ROSTER REPORT:** 19 Volunteers, 6 Part-Time & 5 Full-Time

**CLAIMS:** MSP Moretti/McIntosh to approve CR #20-21-13 for \$15,908.24 and CR #21-22-01 for \$47,780.58 and payrolls 06/04/21 for \$18,735.26 and 06/18/21 for \$21,216.36

**OLD BUSINESS:** MSP Moretti/Cooper to have a consideration of approval of draft District Resolution No. 2021/2022-01 and proposed District Ordinance No. 2021/2022-01 to place a District special tax on the ballot for voter approval on November 2, 2021.

**CHIEF'S REPORT:** Chief Bellach reported that the Association Room needed some work to refresh the room and update it for sleeping arrangements. One of our volunteers who is a wood worker offered to build the beds at his cost. Removal of the cabinets and sink along with sheet rock and floor work would cost approx. \$5,430.00. Moved for action item next month.

KFA had requested a time/day change for later Board meetings. Engineer Molesworth stated that this would be to have the public present to engage for meetings regarding the Measure. Moved for discussion/action item next month.

KFA has received funding for 3197 and is requesting to paint it red to match the fleet. Tony Ghisla stated that KFA received a \$15,000.00 grant for the water tender. Moved for action item next month.

Chief Bellach thanked Engineer Molesworth for putting together a Valley wide LED project that was approved by the County BOS to put LED signs at all Fire Stations County wide.

Consultant Dennis Rosatti reported that the polling is continuing, due to the few number of voters, we have to be sensitive to the voters. Currently at 71% in favor of a Measure. More to follow.

SCFDA July 22, 2021 In-Person Meeting Canceled Due to lack of turnout. August will be the first in person meeting.

**GOOD OF THE ORDER:** Tony Ghisla asked about last month's meeting and talk with Supervisor Gorin and spoke about funding needed to consolidate with Sonoma Valley Fire. He stated if we are forced to consolidate, we need to look at other options and do what's best for the community and agency.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attest:

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