

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission will conduct a public hearing at or after 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, in the Sonoma County Administration Building, 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A, Santa Rosa, California, at which time all interested persons may be heard on the following item:

File No. 2024-13: Reorganization of Gold Ridge and Monte Rio Fire Protection Districts

The Gold Ridge Fire Protection District has filed a proposal with the Commission seeking the dissolution of the Monte Rio Fire Protection District and subsequent annexation of that District territory to Gold Ridge. The affected territory includes the unincorporated community of Monte Rio in the lower Russian River region.

The assets and liabilities of the Monte Rio Fire Protection District will be taken on by Gold Ridge Fire. Gold Ridge Fire is currently providing staffing services to Monte Rio under contract. The proposal indicates that service levels in the Monte Rio area would be improved subsequent to the reorganization, in particular with regard to staffing levels.

Gold Ridge Fire has voter-approved special taxes in the form of parcel taxes and assessments on commercial properties; these taxes would be imposed on the territory of Monte Rio Fire. Gold Ridge's tax rate structure is different, and generally higher than, existing special taxes approved by Monte Rio Fire's constituents.

For example, a typical single-family home will be subject to annual assessments of \$265 rather than the \$200 levied by Monte Rio Fire. The Gold Ridge Fire Protection District can advise landowners of their assessment rates; the District can be reached at (707) 823-1084.

The proposed action has been evaluated for compliance with the State of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and found to be exempt from the Act's provisions, in that no new or different services are proposed.

If the commission approves the proposal, it will conduct a protest proceeding whereby registered voters and landowners within Monte Rio Fire's territory may indicate opposition to the reorganization. If sufficient levels of protest are received, the Commission may vacate approval or call for a referendum where registered voters will be called upon to vote on the proposed reorganization.

At the hearing in March 2025, LAFCO will consider any relevant oral or written testimony and evidence presented or filed regarding the proposed reorganization.

Copies of all documents relating to the actions may be reviewed at the Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission office, 111 Santa Rosa Avenue, Suite 240, Santa Rosa, California, 95404, (707) 565-2577. Please direct comments, questions, and requests to the office. To be included with hearing materials, written comments must be received by February 26, 2025. Written comments received after that date will be provided to the Commission at the public hearing.

ALL INTERESTED PERSONS ARE HEREBY INVITED TO BE PRESENT AND HEARD ON THE MATTERS DESCRIBED IN THIS NOTICE.

If you challenge the actions of the Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission on the formation of the district in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues raised at the public hearings described in this notice or in written correspondence delivered to the Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission at, or prior to, the hearings.

By: Mark Bramfitt, Executive Officer

Date: January 21, 2025