



# Kneeland Fire Protection District Proposed Special Tax Ballot Measure

## WHAT IS THE KNEELAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT?

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- The Kneeland Fire Protection District (KFPD) is an independent, single purpose special district formed in 1990 governed by a five (5) member Board of Directors who are elected by registered voters that live within the boundaries of the District.
- The District is authorized to provide community services within its jurisdictional boundary including: fire protection, rescue, emergency medical and other emergency response services.
- Kneeland Fire is a 100% volunteer-run organization and has an active crew of 10 dedicated volunteers.
- Currently, the Kneeland Fire boundary encompasses 25,000 acres (or nearly 40 square miles) and includes the area surrounding Kneeland Summit down towards Freshwater on Kneeland and Greenwood Heights roads.
- Additionally, Kneeland Fire has historically responded to a “Goodwill Response Area” that is more than twice as large as the District itself. One out of every three of the District’s emergency responses are to the Goodwill Response Area.
- All of the parcels within the District boundary are located in the State Responsibility Area (SRA). Although the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or CAL FIRE, is responsible for managing wildfires in the SRA **this is not a guaranteed service**, particularly during the wildfire season when state resources can be drawn down because of wildfires in other areas.

## HOW IS THE KNEELAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT FUNDED?

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Kneeland Fire has worked very hard to secure various revenue streams that allow us to leverage funds received in the way of special taxes levied on our District residents:

- Kneeland Fire currently collects two separate taxes that were previously approved by the voters of the District: Measure D approved as a part of District formation in 1990; and Measure L, approved by the voters in 2014. These special taxes provide approximately \$42,000 annually to the District.
- Kneeland Fire secures an additional ~\$33,000 from other varied sources including grants, generous community donations, mutual-aid response reimbursements from CalFire among other sources.
- In 2016, Humboldt County Measure “Z” (later Measure “O”), passed which enacted a temporary County Sales tax increase. Kneeland Fire benefited tremendously from these Measures which provided substantial funding to erect the Kneeland Fire House, purchase new equipment, and replace old equipment. In addition to funds from Measure Z, KFPD also replaced two of our oldest engines when Humboldt Bay Fire and Sacramento Metropolitan Fire made them available to Kneeland Fire at near zero cost to Kneeland taxpayers.
- Humboldt County emergency response exists as a patchwork of volunteer and paid departments and vast “Goodwill Response Areas”. In acknowledgement of the financial burden Kneeland Fire experienced responding outside of the District, County Supervisors approved ~\$50,000 annually in Measure “Z” funds to support Kneeland’s out-of-district services. Since 2017 Kneeland Fire had

received this out-of-district fiscal support from Measure Z and O. However, due to shifting allocation of Measure Z funds, these funds were no longer available to the District as of July 1, 2023.

## WHY IS A REPLACEMENT OF OUR SPECIAL TAX BEING PROPOSED?

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The proposed special tax is part of a broader strategy to formalize our response area and stabilize funding for Kneeland Fire. This will ensure that we are able to continue to provide the high-quality service our volunteers are known for including training standards on par with paid departments, rapid response times, and volunteers that are equipped with up-to-date safety and emergency response equipment. In particular, there are three primary reasons a new special tax is being proposed:

- 1) To secure a higher level of funding to meet the increased costs of compliance and general operations of Kneeland Fire,
- 2) To secure a level of funding that will allow us to annually set aside funds that would be available for unexpected equipment costs, equipment replacement costs and to help us meet our future goals,
- 3) To enact a special tax that better aligns with the combined ownership patterns of the entire response area. Defining Land Use Types to reflect ownership categories helps to prepare Kneeland Fire's proposed annexation of the Goodwill Response Area. Successful annexation of the Goodwill Response Area would expand the proposed special tax to parcels within the annexation area and would provide ~\$40,000 in additional tax revenue.

## WHAT WILL THE PROPOSED SPECIAL TAX COST ME?

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- **Annual Tax:** residents of the District are being asked to approve a special tax that will provide a source of funding for emergency and fire protection services. The annual tax will be applied to Assessor's Parcels within the Kneeland Fire boundary, based on land use types in the following manner:

Land Use Type	Annual Tax
Vacant	\$100.00
Improved	\$180.00
Vacant contiguous parcels under identical ownership*	\$220.00
Commercial/Industrial	\$300.00
Multi-family	\$250.00
Non-taxable lands (exempt)	\$0.00

\* Kneeland Fire reserves the right to increase the annual tax by 1% per year.

- These taxes are deposited in a fund for use by the District. Estimates indicate that, if approved by registered voters, the new special tax will generate approximately \$58,000 per year in revenue.

## WHY NOW?

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- The Humboldt County Fire Chiefs' Association has historically committed a portion of their annual Measure Z grant funding to support our out-of-district response. These funds are no longer available to the District as of July, 2023.
- The cost of equipment continues to skyrocket with inflation.
- The cost of regulatory compliance is increasing. For example, new safety regulations are anticipated in the coming years that will require more frequent replacement of equipment (which will apply equally to paid departments with high call volumes as well as volunteer departments).
- The District has long contemplated annexation of our Goodwill Response Area to align the District boundaries with our actual area of service. With the loss of Measure Z funding the prospect of annexation became a more urgent priority than it had in prior years. Adopting the new special tax would achieve two important goals related to potential annexation:

- 1) the new tax would simplify annual tax computations the District must calculate in order to submit to the County Auditor which would be important should annexation succeed, and
- 2) the new tax would provide a tax schedule that better aligns with the ownership patterns across the entire response area (e.g. including a rate for commercial, multi-unit as well as a contiguous parcel exemption); an important precursor to the pursuit of annexation.

## HOW WILL TAX REVENUES BE USED?

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The KFPD will report annually on the special tax revenues and expenses as part of the broader year-end fiscal review. This information will be made available to the public. Special tax revenues will make the following expenditures possible:

### Operationally:

- Ensure our volunteers have the equipment and training they need in the face of increasing costs,
- Better ensure Kneeland Fire's ability to respond to unforeseen equipment and operations costs,
- Enable Kneeland Fire to maintain compliance with changing rules and regulations that apply to fire departments.

### As Funds Allow:

While we will continue to seek grants and partnerships, looking to the future, Kneeland Fire has many aspirations we would like to achieve by the end of this decade. The most significant achievements we hope to attain include the following:

- Expand the fire house to include bathrooms, a kitchen and turnout washers (necessitating a septic system, building design, permitting, construction materials and labor, and appliances) to make training and response more convenient and support the health and safety of firefighters,
- Develop the capacity for the fire house to act as an emergency response center in the event of a natural disaster or other widespread emergency,
- Develop collaborations and secure more funding to support community implementation of fuels reduction and fire prevention activities,
- Purchase a Type III engine to support medical, rescue, and all-risk fire response in the more rugged parts of our response area and, most importantly,
- Pursue strategies that will ensure a long-term community-based and locally controlled revenue source to support the sustainable delivery of fire protection services for the entire Kneeland response area.

## WHAT ARE NEXT STEPS?

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Once the KFPD Board makes the decision to move forward with the ballot initiative process; the KFPD Board will hold a public hearing to introduce an ordinance outlining the initiative and adopt a resolution requesting consolidation of the election and ordering of such election by the Board of Supervisors. A notice will be posted on [kneelandfire.org](http://kneelandfire.org) and shared on social media. Following adoption of the resolution, the KFPD Board will submit a Notice to the County Clerk/Registrar Of Voters of the Measure Submitted to the Voters. The KFPD board seeks to have the measure on the ballot in the November 5, 2024 election.

**QUESTIONS?** Please contact us: [board@kneelandfire.org](mailto:board@kneelandfire.org) or visit our [website](#) for more information.