



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 1/28/2025

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): County Administrator's Office, Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District

Staff Name and Phone Number: Christel Querijero 565-2431, Maggie Luce 565-1796, Chief Jeff Veliquette 795-6011

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): 1st, 2nd, 3rd

Title:

10:00 A.M. Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District Development Impact Fee Program

Recommended Action:

- A) At the request of Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District, conduct a Public Hearing to consider nexus study to establish and collect development impact fees for fire protection services on behalf of Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District and introduce and adopt an ordinance to impose the Fire District's impact fees; and
- B) Authorize the Chair to execute the attached Services Agreement with Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District to collect and pass-through the impact fees.

Executive Summary:

The Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District (District) Board of Directors have adopted a resolution requesting the County of Sonoma adopt an ordinance to establish development impact fees for their service area. Fire Districts do not possess the authority under Government Code § 66000 *et seq.*, known as the Mitigation Fee Act (Fee Act), to impose these fees on their own and must coordinate with either a county or city entity with land-use authority to establish impact fees.

The District contracted SCI Consulting Group to prepare an impact fee Nexus Study in June 2024 (Attachment A) to establish the legal and policy basis for the collection of new fire impact fees. This nexus study utilizes a proportional square footage-based fee structure consistent with Assembly Bill No. 602. This Board item recommends adoption of an Ordinance (Attachment B) and approval of Services Agreement (Attachment C) that will enable the County to collect development impact fees on behalf of the District to fund critical facilities, apparatus, and equipment needs that will arise with new development within their service area.

Discussion:

Background

The County of Sonoma has been working with local fire service agencies to provide more efficient, effective, and sustainable fire services for Sonoma County since 2014. These efforts have resulted in several activities, including fire agency consolidations and revenue enhancement efforts. On March 5, 2024, voters passed the sales tax measure entitled, "Improved and Enhanced Local Fire Protection, Paramedic Services, and Disaster Response Initiative and Sales Tax Petition" (Measure H). This tax measure approved one-half of a cent per dollar sales tax

on the sale and use of tangible property within Sonoma County to supplement existing funding for wildfire prevention and preparedness, paramedic services, and emergency and disaster response.

On [March 23, 2021 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4853125&GUID=F04591C0-7768-434B-B6AD-3770E6841155&Options=&Search=>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4853125&GUID=F04591C0-7768-434B-B6AD-3770E6841155&Options=&Search=>), the Board of Supervisors adopted an ordinance and authorized agreements to establish and collect development impact fees for fire protection services on behalf of Sonoma Valley Fire District and the Sonoma County Fire District. Development Impact Fees are an available revenue enhancement to specifically address the impacts of new development on District infrastructure and services. The Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District held a public hearing on June 19, 2024 and obtained the approval of their District's Board to establish a Fire Impact Fee Program (Attachment D).

The Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District provides first-responder fire protection services to approximately 80 square-mile east of the cities of Rohnert Park and Petaluma in Sonoma County. The District serves the City of Cotati, the community of Penngrove, and the surrounding unincorporated areas in the County. The District provides fire prevention, fire suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, and other related emergency services to its residents. The District has conducted outreach to potentially affected stakeholders. It is the position of the District that no capacity exists to serve new development. The District asserts that if the District's fire system capacity is not increased to satisfy the additional demand, the quality and responsiveness of the District's fire protection and emergency response services will deteriorate.

On January 14, 2025, the Board considered options to establish a two-year Impact Fee Reduction Program for affordable housing. This action was based on the Board's desire to reduce impact fees to lessen barriers to build affordable housing. This item focused on options to reduce parks and traffic fees and did not recommend reductions on the existing Fire Impact Fee programs nor the proposed Rancho Adobe Fire Impact Fee program.

Fire District Nexus Study

The District has retained the services of SCI Consulting Group to prepare a Fire Impact Nexus Study ("Nexus Study"), which was prepared pursuant to the "Mitigation Fee Act," as found in California Government Code § 66000 et seq (the "Act"). This Nexus Study meets the requirements set forth in Assembly Bill 602, including the use of a proportional square footage-based fee structure for nexus studies adopted after July 1, 2022, among other requirements. The purpose of the Nexus Study is to establish the legal and policy basis for the imposition of new fire impact fees on new residential and nonresidential development within the service area of the District. The fee's purpose is to fund the one-time cost of expanding the District's facilities, apparatus, and equipment needed to maintain accommodate new development. The term "facilities" or "fire system facilities" represent land, stations, and other buildings and the term apparatus refers to engines, ambulances, and other vehicles. The Nexus Study and Fire District Board's Resolution support the following fees:

FIGURE 1 – MAXIMUM FIRE IMPACT FEE SCHEDULE

Land Use Category	Unit	Maximum Fire Impact Fee
Single Family Housing	BSQFT	\$2.00
Multi-Family Housing	BSQFT	\$2.77
Mobile Home	BSQFT	\$1.57
Assessory Dwelling Unit => 750 sq. ft.	BSQFT	\$2.00
Assessory Dwelling Unit < 750 sq. ft.	- - - Exempt - - -	
Retail / Commercial	BSQFT	\$2.51
Office	BSQFT	\$4.15
Industrial	BSQFT	\$1.75

The Nexus Study establishes that a reasonable relationship exists between the use and the amount of the fee and the type of new development upon which the fee is imposed. Additionally, the Mitigation Fee Act specifies that the fee shall not include costs attributable to existing deficiencies in public facilities but may include the costs attributable to the increased demand for public facilities reasonably related to the development project in order to refurbish existing facilities to maintain the existing level of service or achieve an adopted level of service that is consistent with the County and City General Plans.

Before adopting the Nexus Study, the District Board conducted a public hearing on June 19, 2024. After considering the Nexus Study, and after considering the testimony received at the public hearing, the District Board adopted a Resolution which made the following findings:

1. The Fire Impact Fee program and Fire Impact Fee proposed in the Nexus Study and approved pursuant to this Resolution are for the purposes of funding the cost of fire protection and emergency response facilities, apparatus, and equipment attributable to new residential and nonresidential development in the District; and
2. The Fire Impact Fee proposed in the Nexus Study and approved pursuant to this Resolution will be used to expand the District’s facilities and equipment, and replace and expand the District’s apparatus and vehicles to serve new development; and
3. The uses of the Fire Impact Fee proposed in the Nexus Study and approved pursuant to this Resolution are reasonably related to the types of development projects on which the fees are imposed in that fee revenue from the development projects will be used to expand the District’s facilities and equipment, and replace and expand the District’s apparatus and vehicles to meet the additional demand generated by the new residents and employees and new structural area created by the development projects; and
4. The Fire Impact Fees proposed in the Nexus Study, and approved pursuant to this Resolution, bear a reasonable relationship to the need for fire protection and emergency response facilities, apparatus, and equipment in that each development project will create additional need for the District’s fire protection and emergency response services and a corresponding need for new or expanded facilities, apparatus and equipment. The fee will be imposed on different types of development projects in

proportion to the additional service population generated and structural area created by new development projects; and

5. The Nexus Study demonstrates that there is a reasonable relationship between the amount of the Fire Impact Fee and the cost of the fire protection facilities, apparatus, equipment attributable to the development on which the fee is imposed in that the costs are based upon the level of existing development served by the District's existing fire protection facilities and applied proportionately to seven land use categories in proportion to the need they create for expanded fire facilities, apparatus, and equipment.

Community and Stakeholder Outreach

The District has conducted community outreach specifically targeting likely stakeholder entities including:

- City of Cotati
- County of Sonoma
- Building Industry Association of the Bay Area
- North Coast Builders Exchange
- North Bay Association of Realtors
- Area Developers
- Affordable Housing Advocates

Ordinance and Services Agreement

If adopted as proposed, the County's ordinance will become effective on March 29, 2025. The City of Cotati has also introduced and intends to adopt a companion ordinance that will impose the same fire impact fees within the City's jurisdiction. The City's ordinance is currently set to become effective on March 14, 2025. The Nexus Study relies on the imposition of fees in both the incorporated area of Cotati and surrounding unincorporated areas, as the Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District's service area includes the entire incorporated jurisdiction of the City of Cotati as well as surrounding unincorporated areas including the community of Penngrove.

As part of the recommended action for this item, the County intends to enter into a Service Agreement with the District regarding the ongoing administration of the fire impact fee program and compliance with Mitigation Fee Act. The Fire District has developed the Nexus Study to support these fees in compliance with the Mitigation Fee Act and has agreed to complete required reporting and maintain compliance with the Mitigation Fee Act as it evolves. If state law changes, the Fire District bears the responsibility for developing updated Nexus Studies and making additional findings as necessary to modify their procedures to continue to comply with state law. Should further consolidation of fire districts result in modifications to the District's service area, then the District must prepare and adopt an amended nexus study to support continued collection of the fee by the County.

Strategic Plan:

n/a

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Agenda Date: 1/28/2025

Prior Board Actions:

[3/23/21: Fire District Development Impact Fees for Sonoma Valley Fire District and Sonoma County Fire District <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4853125&GUID=F04591C0-7768-434B-B6AD-3770E6841155&Options=&Search=>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4853125&GUID=F04591C0-7768-434B-B6AD-3770E6841155&Options=&Search=>)

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY24-25 Adopted	FY25-26 Projected	FY26-27 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	0	0	0
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	0	0	0
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources	0	0	0

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

There is no impact to the County General Fund resulting from the adoption of the Ordinance. Any costs associated with administering the fee program on behalf of the District will be recouped by the Collection / Administration Agreement included as an attachment, including County Counsel time to prepare the Ordinance and Agreements.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None

Attachments:

- Attachments A - District Nexus Study
- Attachment B - Ordinance
- Attachment C - Collection / Services Agreement
- Attachment D- District Resolution
- Attachment E - Presentation

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None