



# San Diego County Fire Protection District

## AGENDA ITEM

### GOVERNING BODY

NORA VARGAS  
First District

JOEL ANDERSON  
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER  
Third District

MONICA MONTGOMERY STEPPE  
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND  
Fifth District

**DATE:** September 24, 2024

**FP02**

**TO:** Board of Directors, San Diego County Fire Protection District

### SUBJECT

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE XX OF THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE ORDINANCE CODE, RELATING TO THE RAMONA FIRE PROTECTION AND AMBULANCE/PARAMEDIC FEES AND CHARGES (9/24/24 – FIRST READING; 10/08/24 – SECOND READING UNLESS ORDINANCE IS MODIFIED ON SECOND READING) (DISTRICTS: 2)**

### OVERVIEW

On December 14, 2021, the Ramona Municipal Water District (RMWD) Board of Directors voted to divest and transfer fire protection and emergency medical services within their district to the San Diego County Fire Protection District (SDCFPD). On February 8, 2022 (1), the SDCFPD Board of Directors adopted a resolution in support of the RMWD resolution and directed County staff to take all necessary actions to transfer responsibility for fire protection and emergency medical services from the RMWD to the SDCFPD. On August 1, 2022, SDCFPD officially assumed fire protection and emergency medical responsibilities for the community of Ramona.

As part of the reorganization, SDCFPD assumed responsibility for the RMWD special tax on Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDU) which funds fire protection and ambulance transportation services in the community of Ramona. In 1983, the RMWD first started to charge property owners through an ordinance. In 1997, the EDU ordinance was reclassified as a special tax through a voter approved ballot measure, which set a rate of \$188.52 per EDU to maintain the service levels and continues to be collected. The EDU special tax and ordinance is currently within the RMWD code and will require transfer and adoption into the San Diego County Administrative Code. Ramona residents will not experience any property tax changes associated with today's actions. All special tax revenue collected from the Ramona EDU will continue to be used to support fire protection and emergency medical services in Ramona.

Today's request is for the Board of Supervisors to adopt the EDU ordinance and special tax into the San Diego County Administrative Code.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On September 24, 2024:

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1. Approve the introduction of the Ordinance (first reading):

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE XX OF THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE ORDINANCE CODE, RELATING TO THE RAMONA FIRE PROTECTION AND AMBULANCE/PARAMEDIC FEES AND CHARGES

If, on September 24, 2024, the Board takes actions recommended in Item 1 above, then on October 08, 2024:

1. Consider and adopt (unless ordinance is modified on second reading):

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE XX OF THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE ORDINANCE CODE, RELATING TO THE RAMONA FIRE PROTECTION AND AMBULANCE/PARAMEDIC FEES AND CHARGES

#### **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

Today's proposed ordinance supports the reorganization of fire protection and emergency medical services, which is intended to support the existing level of services for the residents of Ramona. The adoption of the EDU ordinance into the San Diego County Administrative Code will maintain necessary funding to ensure equitable fire and emergency response across the SDCFPD. The EDU ordinance allocates resources exclusively to the community of Ramona that would otherwise need to be provided by general purpose revenue or through reduced fire and emergency services in other communities in the SDCFPD. Codifying the EDU Ordinance into the San Diego County Administrative Code is critical for providing equitable fire protection and emergency medical response needs in the heavily impacted and underserved communities in the SDCFPD.

#### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The proposed actions in today's request support the County of San Diego's Sustainability goals to provide just and equitable access to fire protection and emergency medical services by ensuring the SDCFPD can meet and address future needs for fire protection and emergency medical services of the community.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the adoption of the EDU ordinance and special tax. All special tax revenue collected from the Ramona EDU will continue to be used to support fire protection and emergency medical services in Ramona. There will be no change in net General Fund costs and no additional staff years.

#### **BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

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READING UNLESS ORDINANCE IS MODIFIED ON SECOND  
READING) (DISTRICTS: 2)

### **ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

On 08/12/2024, with 3 of 5 advisory board members being present, the San Diego County Fire Protection District Fire Advisory Board received an update on the Ramona EDU Ordinance Adoption into the San Diego County Administrative Code and voted unanimously in support of the resolution.

### **BACKGROUND**

To support fire protection and paramedic ambulances services in Ramona, the Ramona Municipal Water District (RMWD) funded these services through charges imposed on property owners, calculated based on Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDU's). This system was implemented in 1983 and allowed the district to adjust fees annually as needed. By the 1996-1997 fiscal year, the charge was set at \$188.52 per year per EDU, generating over \$2,000,000 annually which accounted for 83% of the department's funding.

In 1996, Proposition 218 was passed by the State of California that changed requirements for levying taxes and fees. Proposition 218 included a mandate that local governments can only enact, extend, or increase a special tax with a 2/3 voter approval.

In 1997 RMWD introduced a Proposition to voters to reclassify its EDU property tax as a special tax to ensure uninterrupted funding for fire and paramedic services. The Proposition sought to maintain the existing EDU rate. The measure was passed in November 1997 and the special tax has continued to be collected since.

On December 14, 2021, the Board of Directors of the Ramona Municipal Water District (RMWD) unanimously voted in support of the adoption of a resolution of application to initiate proceedings with the San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission (San Diego LAFCO) for divestiture of fire protection and emergency medical services and transfer of responsibility for these services to the San Diego County Fire Protection District (SDCFPD).

On August 1, 2022, SDCFPD began providing fire protection and emergency medical services to the community of Ramona. The transfer of services also included authority to levy, assess, and collect all charges pertaining to the EDU ordinance (Attachment B, Section 7.(g)). The EDU special tax revenue is used exclusively in Ramona to maintain fire and paramedic ambulance staffing levels that meet the community's needs. Through the LAFCO proceedings, the commission authorized SDCFPD to keep the EDU ordinance within the RMWD Legislative Code. This allowed for SDCFPD to issue and collect the special tax without interruption, while focusing on bolstering fleet needs, station maintenance and providing excellent emergency services to the Ramona community. County Fire has since established its processes for administration, issuance, and collection of the Ramona EDU special tax and requests to codify the ordinance into the San Diego County Administrative Code to complete the transfer of services.

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**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**  
N/A

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today's proposed actions support the Community Initiative of the County of San Diego's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan by ensuring that adequate fire and emergency medical services are available to support and improve community safety and resiliency.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Strong', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

*Andrew Strong for*

EBONY N. SHELTON  
Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

ATTACHMENT A – RAMONA FIRE PROTECTION AND AMBULANCE/PARAMEDIC  
FEES AND CHARGES

ATTACHMENT B - LAFCO RMWD CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION