

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kenwood Fire Station Remodel Moving Forward with \$1 Million Grant from Representative Mike Thompson

SONOMA VALLEY, CA — The Sonoma Valley Fire District (SVFD) is moving forward with a major remodel and modernization of the Kenwood Fire Station, supported in part by a \$1 million federal Community Project Funding (CPF) grant secured through the office of Representative Mike Thompson.

Located at the corner of Highway 12 and Randolph Avenue since 1964, the Kenwood Fire Station has long served as a vital emergency response hub for the Kenwood community.

“It is a perfect location as it provides easy access to both east/west Highway 12 and to the Kenwood community,” said Sonoma Valley Fire Chief Steve Akre. “We have no intention of changing the location, but the station does need upgrades.”

Originally designed to support a primarily volunteer fire department, the station was not built to accommodate full-time staffing, sleeping quarters, or expanded living facilities. Since the consolidation of the Kenwood Fire Protection District into the Sonoma Valley Fire District, the station now houses three full-time Firefighter/Paramedics around the clock.

Representative Thompson added that he is: “Proud to work with the team at Sonoma Valley Fire District on the Kenwood Fire Station project to secure \$1 million dollars to help modernize the station to accommodate 24/7 staffing. Updating the station will ensure the fire station has the proper facilities to house enough staff on call to respond to emergencies at all times. I’m excited that our federal funding request has passed the first step in the process and I will continue to work hard to ensure this important funding is signed into law and delivered”

“The need to upgrade and modernize the station has been high on the priority list,” Chief Akre said. “When Bob Uboldi was the Kenwood Fire Chief, he and the Board began planning and putting reserve money aside to eventually start a remodel. They anticipated the eventual need to have 24/7 staffing at the station.”

Retired Kenwood Fire Chief and current Sonoma Valley Fire District Board Director Bob Uboldi said the project reflects years of long-term planning.

“The station was never designed to have full-time 24/7 crews because we had more than 20 dedicated volunteers living in Kenwood,” said Uboldi, who served as Kenwood Fire Chief for 17 years. “However, the times have changed and we could see the need for full-time staffing coming. The district had been saving money for many years to contribute toward a remodel.”

Uboldi added that the district previously installed a new septic system in anticipation of the future expansion.

“The new design of the station is exceptional and will provide adequate living and operational space for the foreseeable future,” he said.

Construction is scheduled to begin this fall. The project was designed by locally based architectural firm COAR Design Group of Santa Rosa, which specializes in fire station design.

“Having worked on many fire station projects, this one has special meaning to me,” said Jeff Katz, Principal of COAR Design Group. “I live in Sonoma and drive past the station every day on my way to the office in Santa Rosa. I am excited to be part of adapting this iconic structure, which has served for years as home to the volunteer Kenwood Fire Department, to better serve the Sonoma Valley Fire District and the Kenwood community.”

SVFD Deputy Chief Bob Norrbom, who is overseeing the project, said COAR was selected because of its extensive experience designing fire stations.

“They provided a layout design that meets our current and expected needs,” Norrbom said. “We are very happy with the layout. It flows well and gives firefighters an efficient pathway to the engine bays.”

Norrbom noted that Katz has designed more than 100 fire stations, including Santa Rosa’s new Fountaingrove fire station.

The remodel is currently estimated at approximately \$8 million.

“The costs to build or remodel fire stations have skyrocketed over the past few years, so we are very fortunate to receive the funding from Representative Thompson,” said Chief Akre.

The upgraded station will include: Four dorm rooms, a kitchen and living area, new bathrooms and showers, an exercise room, three new apparatus bays facing Highway 12 for improved ingress and egress and significant code and operational upgrades to meet Essential Services standards.

“This is an extensive and much-needed modernization, including larger engine bays that are necessary because modern fire trucks are taller and longer than their predecessors,” said Deputy Chief Norrbom.

The station’s existing community room and kitchen will remain unchanged and continue serving as a voting location, meeting space, and venue for community events hosted by the Kenwood Firefighters Association, including the annual crab feed.

Chief Akre emphasized that emergency service levels to the Kenwood community will not be impacted during construction.

“We will have to move a few things around, but nothing will stop us from our mission of providing great service to Kenwood,” he said.

Funding for the project comes from several sources, including reserve funds previously saved by the Kenwood Fire District, municipal bond financing, Measure H sales tax revenues, and the newly awarded federal grant.

Former Kenwood Fire District volunteer Tony Ghisla has been leading the project’s funding efforts. Municipal bonds for the project will be completed through Isom Advisors.

“Isom is well-known in the municipal financing arena with a solid reputation,” said Tony, “They have done many projects throughout the state, including the remodel of Kenwood School.”

Repayment of the bond will be funded through Measure H, the voter-approved Sonoma County sales tax measure passed in 2024.

“We are most fortunate that the voters of Sonoma County approved the Measure H sales tax in 2024,” said Chief Akre. “This has allowed fire districts throughout the county to improve service levels by increasing staffing, purchasing new equipment, and, in many cases like Kenwood, remodeling stations.”

Chief Akre also expressed appreciation for the federal support received through Representative Thompson’s office.

“We are very pleased and fortunate to have received a \$1 million grant from Representative Mike Thompson’s office,” Akre said. “He has been incredibly supportive of the fire service, and we greatly appreciate his efforts to secure this grant, which will help offset the cost of the Kenwood station remodel.”

For additional information about the project, please contact:

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