



## Woodbridge Fire District 2020 Parcel Tax Measure **Measure U – November 2020** **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is Measure U?**

**Measure U DEFINED:** Measure U is a local parcel tax measure on the November 3, 2020 ballot in northern San Joaquin County sponsored by Woodbridge Fire District. If approved by local voters, Measure U will authorize the District to collect an annual assessment from local property owners to supplement existing funding that WFD receives for its operations. Measure U local funding will help keep all fire stations open and maintain emergency rescue services for the Woodbridge Fire District. A “YES vote” approves funding for the District’s plan; a “NO vote” rejects the plan. All voters living within Woodbridge Rural Fire Protection District boundaries who are registered to vote will be eligible to vote on Measure U.

### **Why has the Woodbridge Fire District (WFD) placed Measure U on the ballot?**

The Fire District, governed by a locally elected Board of Directors, has been deliberate and fiscally prudent, doing more with less, even when faced with limited funding, rising expenditures and additional responsibilities. The reality is, as Woodbridge Fire has taken on more, the State has not provided adequate revenue to perform the additional duties. Unfunded mandates have stretched our resources so far that we can no longer ensure the complete safety of our community. Due to budget constraints, firefighting positions have been lost without being replaced. Our capital budgets are stretched so thin that firefighting equipment is typically used well beyond its reasonable life cycle and our fire trucks are often down for repairs. Some firefighting and lifesaving equipment is so old it no longer meets current safety standards. Full staffing of fire stations isn’t always financially possible. This has led to Fire Station 72 at West Lane and Armstrong Road being closed 42% of the time in 2019.

### **Does the District have other local tax measure funding?**

NO. The District has never gone to the public with a tax measure before now. After a comprehensive Feasibility Study completed earlier this year to inform Board decision-making, on August 6, 2020, the WFD Board of Directors voted to call for a local parcel tax election on the November 2020 ballot. Without additional funding, WFD will be forced to make tough choices to keep the community safe while also maintaining a balanced budget.

### **What is the actual question that voters will be asked to decide in November?**

“To maintain local fire protection and 911 emergency medical rapid response times; keep all fire stations open; maintain emergency rescue services; keep firefighting, lifesaving equipment/facilities up-to-date and restore/retain firefighter/emergency medical positions; shall Woodbridge Rural Fire Protection District’s measure levying 8 cents per building square foot on improved parcels and \$45 per unimproved parcel annually for fire protection/emergency response, until ended by voters, providing \$1.2 million annually, requiring independent oversight, and all funds for Woodbridge Rural Fire Protection District services, be adopted?”

### **How will Measure U funds be used?**

If approved by local voters, Measure U will:

- **Keep** all Woodbridge fire stations OPEN
- **Protect** rapid-response times for fire and 911 emergency medical services
- **Maintain** emergency rescue services
- **Upgrade** firefighting/lifesaving equipment and facilities
- **Restore/retain** firefighter and emergency medical positions

By law, all Measure U funds must stay local, dedicated to Woodbridge Fire District operations only.

**Have there been other WFD tax measures on the ballot?**

No. The District has never gone to the public with a tax measure request before now.

**What is required for Measure U to pass (win)?**

At least 66.7% of the voters who cast their ballots on Measure U in the November 3, 2020 Election must vote in favor of the measure for it to be approved.

**How much will Measure U cost?**

The cost to property owners is 8 cents per building square foot on improved parcels and a flat fee of \$45 per unimproved parcels annually.

**How much money will Measure U raise?**

Measure U will raise approximately \$1.2 million annually for Woodbridge Fire District operations.

**Is this the right time for a local parcel tax?**

No time is ideal to ask the community to support a new local tax. However, as the Woodbridge area, our state, nation, and the world continue to emerge from the devastating impact of COVID-19, passage of Measure U is needed so that emergency services will be there when our community needs them. Without additional funding, WFD will be forced to make tough choices to provide emergency services while also maintaining a balanced budget. No other funding currently exists to adequately fund WFD in its mission to provide 911 fire, rescue, and emergency medical response services to our community.

**What do WFD response times have to do with Measure U?**

Due to the lack of adequate funding, there are times when WFD first responders (firefighters) are not able to quickly respond to local 911 calls for help. This matters because the American Heart Association reports that brain deterioration starts between 4 and 6 minutes after a person stops breathing. Even a one-minute delay in response time increases mortality rates. One of the reasons Measure U is on the ballot is to raise sufficient funding to improve WFD response times for 911 calls.

**Will businesses share in the cost of Measure U?**

Yes, both commercial and residential property owners will be subject to the assessment.

**How can we be assured that the funds will be spent properly?**

Taxpayer protections are required, including: Independent Citizens' Oversight and mandatory audits will ensure funds are being spent properly. Funds can only be used for Woodbridge Fire and Emergency Services. Neither the State, nor any other government agency, can take Measure U funding and use it for other purposes.

**Doesn't the State or County provide funding for fire districts?**

Beyond the basic property tax funding that WFD receives (which is no longer sufficient to meet WFD emergency demands), no other funding currently exists to provide the funding that WFD needs to adequately serve the community.

**How will Measure U funding be collected and administered?**

If approved by WFD voters, the Measure U assessment will be collected annually from taxpayers on their local property tax bills. Measure U revenues will go directly to the District and will be subject to state laws and the District's Measure U commitments to ensure proper spending, e.g. conducting annual audits, establishing independent citizen oversight, etc.

**Who makes the final decision on Measure U?**

The locally elected Woodbridge Fire District Board of Directors is the legal entity that placed Measure U on the November 3, 2020 ballot. Ultimately, registered voters of the Woodbridge Fire District will have the final say when they vote for or against Measure U in the November 3<sup>rd</sup> Presidential Election.

**Where can I get more information?** Please contact: Administrative Officer/District Secretary Diana Tidwell by phone at (209) 369-1945, by email at [diana.tidwell@woodbridgefire.org](mailto:diana.tidwell@woodbridgefire.org), or visit our website at [www.woodbridgefire.org](http://www.woodbridgefire.org)