



CAMBRIA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

MEETING	TIME & DATE	LOCATION
Fire Protection Committee	10:30 AM Thursday, January 15, 2026	Cambria Veterans' Memorial Hall, 1000 Main Street, Cambria, CA 93428

## **AGENDA**

### **Regular Fire Protection Committee Meeting**

**Date & Time: 10:30 AM, Thursday, January 15, 2026**

**Location: Cambria Veterans' Memorial Hall, 1000 Main Street, Cambria, CA 93428**

**Virtual Access (Zoom): Please click the link to join the webinar: [HERE](#)  
Webinar ID: 849 2706 4037  
Passcode: 390217**

Copies of the staff reports or other documentation relating to each item of business referred to on the agenda are on file in the CCSD Administration Office, available for public inspection during District business hours. The agenda and agenda packets are also available on the CCSD website at <https://www.cambriacsd.org/>. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting or if you need the agenda or other documents in the agenda packet provided in an alternative format, contact the Confidential Administrative Assistant at 805-927-6223 at least 48 hours before the meeting to ensure that reasonable arrangements can be made. The Confidential Administrative Assistant will answer any questions regarding the agenda.

### **1. OPENING**

- 1.A Call to Order**
- 1.B Establishment of Quorum**
- 1.C Election of Vice Chair and Secretary**
- 1.D Chair Report**
- 1.E Committee Member and Staff Communications**
- 1.F Ad Hoc Committee Reports**

### **2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Members of the public may now address the Committee on any item of interest within the jurisdiction of the Committee but not on its agenda today. Future agenda items can be suggested at this time. In compliance with the Brown Act, the Committee cannot discuss or act on items not on the agenda. Each speaker has up to three minutes.

### **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

- 3.A Consideration to Approve the November 20, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes**

### **4. REGULAR BUSINESS**

- 4.A Discussion Regarding Cambria Fire Station Apparatus Bay: Health and Safety**

**Considerations for Modernization & Upgrades**

- 4.B Discussion Regarding Cambria Fire Station Upgrades to Address Aging Infrastructure and Current Standards and Review Capital Improvement Project List**
- 4.C Review and Discussion of Fire Protection Funding Outlook, Including Update on Feasibility of Benefit Assessment**

**5. FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(S)**

**6. ADJOURN**



## CAMBRIA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

### MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 20, 2025, REGULAR FIRE PROTECTION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CAMBRIA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

A regular meeting of the Fire Protection Committee of the Cambria Community Services District was held at the Cambria Veterans' Memorial Hall, located at 1000 Main Street, Cambria, CA 93428, on Thursday, November 20, 2025, at 10:30 AM

#### **1. OPENING**

##### **1.A Call to Order**

Chairperson Gray called the meeting to order at 10:30 am.

##### **1.B Establishment of Quorum**

A quorum was established.

Committee members present: Tom Gray, Arthur Chapman, Ronald De Luca, Tony Safford, and Gordon Heinrichs. David Pierson was absent.

Staff present: General Manager Matthew McElhenie, Confidential Administrative Assistant Haley Dodson, and Fire Captain Craig Brooks.

##### **1.C Chair Report**

Chairman Gray reported that committee member David Pierson is resigning his membership on the committee effective November 21, 2025. Mr. Gray praised Mr. Pierson for his leadership in the Cambria Firesafe Focus Group and his dedication to making Cambria a firesafe community by helping to obtain grant funding for and managing fuel reduction projects throughout the community. He said the application process to replace Mr. Pierson will open immediately.

##### **1.D Ad Hoc Subcommittee Reports**

There were no subcommittee reports.

##### **1.E Committee Member and Staff Communications**

Mr. De Luca inquired about the status of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Mr. Gray said there may be an updated draft ready in in January for review by the Committee to review.

Mr. Heinrichs asked if anyone is pursuing planning for evacuation routing. Mr. Gray reported staff is seeking an easement on Rancho Marino and adjacent private properties for an emergency evacuation roadway that would be improved and maintained with access limited to officially authorized emergencies, opened only for maintenance and not opened for recreational access from the public. Staff will come to the Board of Directors with a progress report in the near future.

Captain Brooks reported that the Fire Department is preparing a priority list of items in the fire station requiring replacing and upgrading to meet current standards for the Board of Directors budgeting process.

Mr. Safford commended the work of staff in acquiring the grant funding for a replacement fire engine. Mr. McElhenie described the process for disbursing the funds as a reimbursement grant. The lead time from ordering to receiving delivery is 3-5 years.

The Committee followed with discussion of potential funding methods for fire equipment and building upgrades or replacement as well as water and wastewater facility improvements. Mr. McElhenie noted that the effort to seek a benefit assessment faces considerable legal hurdles, since such assessments are limited to specific benefits to properties rather than general benefits for the public at large.

## **2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

## **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

### **3.A Consideration to Approve the September 18, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes**

Member Safford moved to approve the minutes as written

Member De Luca seconded the motion.

The motion was approved: 4-Ayes; 0-Nays; 0-Abstain; 1-Absent

## **4. REGULAR BUSINESS**

### **4.A Discussion of Proposed Updated Language Regarding Open Fire Restrictions in CCSD Municipal Code**

Captain Brooks explained the proposed changes to the current Municipal Code ordinance restricting open fires.

Following discussion of standards for spark arrestor screens, Mr. Safford suggested that “functional” be added to the language for screen requirements.

### **4.B Presentation by Vice Chair Pierson on Proposal for Wildfire Sensor Network**

Vice Chair Pierson was not present to make the presentation. Chairman Gray led a discussion of the proposal for a sensor network. The high cost of the network makes it currently cost prohibitive. Member Safford will contact the Morro Bay Fire Department for information on their sensor network. Members commented that this type of sensor network has potential value to improve the safety of the community.

### **4.C Discussion Regarding Potential Cambria Fire Department Facility Upgrades**

Captain Brooks received a 911 call. He and his crew had to leave the meeting and was unable to give a presentation. The General Manager discussed the priorities for fire department facility and equipment improvements and replacements. It was noted that, as the costs exceed any annual budget for the District, these will be prioritized over time and included in the District budget as funds are available.

Captain Brooks returned to the meeting. He will communicate to the Chief the need to prioritize the list of improvements and replacements for inclusion in the District’s annual budgets.

**5. FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(S)**

Chairperson Gray asked for any future agenda items. He discussed the idea of a special meeting of the committee to make a detailed tour of the Fire Department facilities.

**6. ADJOURN**

Chairperson Gray adjourned the meeting at 12:24 p.m.

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CAMBRIA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

TO: Fire Protection Committee  
FROM: Michael Burkey, Fire Chief

AGENDA NO. 4.A.

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Meeting Date: January 15, 2026    Subject: Discussion Regarding Cambria Fire Station Apparatus Bay: Health and Safety Considerations for Modernization & Upgrades

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**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Addressing the identified health and safety concerns in the Fire Station apparatus bay will require capital investment to upgrade ventilation, diesel exhaust capture, flooring, lighting, drainage, and other infrastructure components. Preliminary cost estimates for design, engineering, and construction of these improvements are expected to range from \$500,000 to \$1,200,000, depending on the extent of system upgrades, integration with existing HVAC systems, and code compliance requirements.

Ongoing operational costs may increase slightly due to maintenance of upgraded mechanical systems, but these costs are anticipated to be offset by reduced health risks to personnel, improved operational efficiency, and potential reductions in workers' compensation and liability exposure related to occupational hazards. Funding for these upgrades would need to be considered within the broader Fire Station Modernization & Upgrade capital plan and could be phased over multiple fiscal years to align with budgetary capacity.

Implementing these improvements will support compliance with NFPA 1500, IAFF best practices, and OSHA guidelines, ensuring the safety and long-term health of fire personnel while mitigating potential regulatory or liability risks associated with continued use of aging apparatus bay systems.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Committee is asked to review and discuss health and safety concerns related to the Fire Station apparatus bay, with a focus on firefighter occupational exposure, operational safety, and regulatory compliance. As detailed in the Fire Station Modernization & Upgrade Needs List (Attachment), key areas of concern include the adequacy of the existing diesel exhaust capture and ventilation system, apparatus bay airflow and pressure control, flooring and drainage conditions, lighting, insulation, and the interface between the apparatus bay and living or administrative spaces. While the current exhaust capture system is functional, it may not meet current NFPA and IAFF standards for diesel exhaust exposure mitigation, raising potential long-term health risks, including respiratory issues and cancer. Additional infrastructure improvements—such as enhanced integration of ventilation with HVAC systems, upgraded bay doors with safety sensors, improved lighting, and optimized drainage—are identified as necessary to reduce slip, trip, and fall hazards and enhance overall operational safety. This discussion will enable the Board to evaluate the health and safety implications of continued use of aging apparatus bay systems, ensure alignment with NFPA 1500 and related occupational safety standards, and consider the prioritization of apparatus bay upgrades within the broader Fire Station modernization strategy.

It is recommended that the Fire Protection Committee discuss the Cambria Fire Station health and safety considerations for modernization & upgrades.

**ATTACHMENTS:** Cambria Fire Station Apparatus Bay: Health and Safety Considerations for Modernization & Upgrades



# CAMBRIA CSD FIRE DEPARTMENT

Michael Burkey, Fire Chief

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## Cambria Fire Station Apparatus Bay: Health and Safety Considerations for Modernization & Upgrades

### 1) Apparatus Bay Exhaust & Ventilation System – *Upgrade Existing*

Need: Upgrade existing diesel exhaust capture system components (hoses, seals, mounts, filters, sensors) and integrate with station HVAC for negative pressure control.

Justification: Existing system functions but may not meet current IAFF/NFPA capture efficiency and energy control standards. Enhancing performance improves air quality and aligns with modern occupational health requirements.

References:

- NFPA 1500: Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program
- NFPA 91: Standard for Exhaust Systems for Air Conveying of Vapors, Gases, Mists, and Noncombustible Particulate Solids
- IAFF Fire Station Design Guide (2021 update)

### 2) SCBA Compressor and Cylinder Room – *Upgrade Existing*

Need: Upgrade SCBA fill station and air cascade system to current NFPA 1989 standards; add electronic monitoring and improved ventilation/filtration; inspect containment fill station for OSHA compliance.

Justification: Modern SCBA systems require verified breathing-air quality, automated moisture monitoring, and safe containment during refills.

References:

- NFPA 1989: Standard on Breathing Air Quality for Emergency Services Respiratory Protection
- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134 (Respiratory Protection)

### 3) PPE/Turnout Gear Room & Decontamination Area

Need: Create a designated clean/dirty transition zone with separate PPE storage, extractor laundry, sink, and proper floor drains.

Justification: Prevents cross-contamination between contaminated gear and living quarters; supports NFPA decon and cancer prevention initiatives.

References:

- NFPA 1851: Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Protective Ensembles
- NFPA 1581: Fire Department Infection Control Program
- IAFF/IAFC Fire Station Design for Health & Wellness

### 4) Living Quarters Modernization (Sleeping, Restrooms, Kitchen, and Common Areas)

Need: Renovate aging dorms and restrooms for improved privacy, comfort, and energy efficiency; ensure ADA compliance and gender-neutral accessibility; upgrade appliances and HVAC filtration.

Justification: Enhances firefighter health and morale, ensures compliance with ADA and modern design

standards, and improves energy efficiency.

References:

- ADA 2010 Standards for Accessible Design
- California Building Code (Title 24)
- NFPA 101: Life Safety Code

#### 5) Structural & Seismic Upgrades

Need: Conduct a structural evaluation and retrofit to meet current seismic and essential services facility standards. Include roof tie-downs, wall bracing, and apparatus bay slab load review.

Justification: The fire station is a critical facility that must remain operational post-earthquake. Compliance with California Essential Services Building Seismic Safety Act is required.

References:

- California Building Code (Title 24)
- California Essential Services Buildings Seismic Safety Act (Health & Safety Code §16000 et seq.)

#### 6) Fire Alarm, Detection, and Suppression Systems

Need: Replace aging alarm panel and detectors; ensure smoke, CO, and heat detectors meet NFPA 72 standards; install sprinklers if required by current code for essential facilities.

Justification: Modern systems enhance early warning, reliability, and integration with dispatch.

References:

- NFPA 72: National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code
- California Fire Code (CFC)

#### 7) Electrical and Backup Power Systems

Need: Upgrade electrical panels, wiring, and lighting to meet energy and safety codes; install or replace automatic transfer switch for generator; prepare infrastructure for EV apparatus charging.

Justification: Ensures power reliability during disasters and future-proofs the station for fleet modernization.

References:

- NFPA 70: National Electrical Code
- California Electrical Code (Title 24, Part 3)

#### 8) Fitness & Wellness Facilities

Need: Add a small fitness/training area and private health screening/medical evaluation space.

Justification: Supports firefighter wellness, rehabilitation, and compliance with NFPA medical screening and fitness recommendations.

References:

- NFPA 1582: Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program
- IAFF/IAFC Fire Service Joint Labor Management Wellness-Fitness Initiative

## 9) Communications/IT & Radio Infrastructure

Need: Modernize dispatch room/network racks; add battery backup (UPS), surge protection, and reliable radio coverage throughout station.

Justification: Ensures reliable communications and data security, especially during power loss or emergencies.

References:

- NFPA 1225: Standard for Emergency Services Communications
- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.268 (Communications Systems Safety)

## 10) Hazardous Materials & Fuel Storage Safety

Need: Evaluate and upgrade flammable liquid storage, install secondary containment, proper signage, and venting; update SDS access and emergency eyewash station.

Justification: Reduces fire and environmental risks and meets fire code requirements.

References:

- California Fire Code (Chapter 57 – Flammable and Combustible Liquids)
- NFPA 30: Flammable and Combustible Liquids Code

## 11) Accessibility & Public Interface

Need: Upgrade exterior and lobby areas for ADA-compliant public access; include accessible parking and community meeting area improvements.

Justification: Compliance with ADA Title II for public agencies and improved community engagement.

References:

- ADA Title II Regulations (28 CFR Part 35)
- California Building Code (Accessibility Requirements)

## 12) Policy and Documentation Updates

Need: Update written safety, PPE maintenance, respiratory protection, and medical evaluation programs to align with upgraded facilities.

Justification: Ensures administrative compliance complements facility upgrades and maintains NFPA and OSHA compliance.

References:

- NFPA 1500: Occupational Safety & Health Program
- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134 (Respiratory Protection)

## 13) Site and Apparatus Bay Improvements

Need: Improve bay flooring, drainage, lighting, and insulation; install automatic bay doors with safety sensors and modern weather sealing.

Justification: Enhances safety, energy efficiency, and reduces wear on apparatus and equipment.

References:

- NFPA 1500: Fire Department Occupational Safety
- California Building Code (Structural and Fire-Resistive Construction)

## Summary of Upgrade Priorities

Priority	Category	Action Type	Compliance Driver
1	Health/Safety	Upgrade exhaust & PPE/decon areas	NFPA 1500, 1851
2	Infrastructure	Seismic & structural retrofit	CBC, H&S Code §16000
3	Operational Readiness	Electrical, backup, comms	NFPA 70, 1225
4	Human Factors	Living quarters & ADA	CBC, ADA
5	Long-term	Wellness & policy integration	NFPA 1582, 1500

CAMBRIA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

TO: Fire Protection Committee  
FROM: Michael Burkey, Fire Chief

AGENDA NO. **4.B.**

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Meeting Date: January 15, 2026      Subject: Discussion Regarding Cambria Fire Station Upgrades to Address Aging Infrastructure and Current Standards and Review Capital Improvement Project List

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**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Discussion of the Cambria Fire Station upgrades will not result in an immediate fiscal impact. However, potential future fiscal impacts may occur depending on the scope, phasing, and timing of identified improvements. Costs associated with facility upgrades—such as plumbing, electrical, HVAC, roofing, seismic, accessibility, and energy efficiency improvements—would be evaluated and prioritized through the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) process. Any recommended projects would be subject to future Board review, identification of funding sources, and inclusion in the District’s adopted budget and CIP prior to implementation.

**DISCUSSION:**

As a 28-year-old fire station, significant upgrades are needed due to aging infrastructure, evolving safety standards, and increased operational demands. Over nearly three decades, building systems such as plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and roofing have deteriorated, resulting in higher maintenance costs and potential safety risks. Planned upgrades would address current building codes, seismic standards, energy efficiency, and accessibility requirements.

It is recommended that the Fire Protection Committee discuss the Cambria Fire Station upgrades to address aging infrastructure and current standards, and review the Capital Improvement Project list.

**ATTACHMENTS:** Fire Department Capital Improvement Project List  
Fire Station Renovation Analysis: Estimated Costs, Case Studies, and Sample Budget

**CAMBRIA CSD FIRE DEPARTMENT  
GENERAL FUND: CAMBRIA CSD FIRE DEPARTMENT**

RANKING	PROJECT NAME	SOURCE OF FUNDS	PROJECT ESTIMATE	ADDITIONAL BUDGET REQUEST	CURRENT YEAR ACTIVITY			ACTIVITY TO DATE	
					CURRENT FY BUDGET	FY EXPENDITURES	FY BUDGET AMOUNT REMAINING	PROJECT TO DATE BUDGET	PROJECT TO DATE EXPENDITURES
B	BALLISTIC VESTS FOR ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE	FIRE	\$ 15,000		\$ 15,000	\$ 4,085	\$ 10,915	\$ 15,000	\$ 4,085
2	ROOF, DRY ROT AND RAIN GUTTER REPAIR & PAINT	FIRE	\$ 150,000		\$ -	\$ 12,765	\$ (12,765)	\$ -	\$ 12,765
2	FIRE ENGINE - TYPE 1	FIRE	\$ 1,500,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
2	REPLACE RESCUE BOAT WITH RESCUE SKI	FIRE	\$ 21,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
2	GATE & FENCING	FIRE	\$ 40,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
3	REPLACE WATER TENDER FUEL TANK	FIRE	\$ 600,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
3	REPLACEMENT	FIRE	\$ 12,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	<b>TOTAL</b>		\$ 2,338,000	\$ -	\$ 15,000	\$ 16,850	\$ (1,850)	\$ 15,000	\$ 16,850
<b>FIRE STATION IMPROVEMENTS</b>									
3	TURNOUT LOCKERS & STORAGE ROOM	FIRE	\$ 45,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
3	SLEEPING QUARTERS	FIRE	\$ 450,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
3	METAL BUILDING (APPARATUS BAYS, STORAGE & GYM RELOCATION)	FIRE	\$ 220,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
3	BATHROOM REMODEL	FIRE	\$ 50,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
3	FIRE TRAINING BUILDING	FIRE	\$ 500,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
3	KITCHEN REMODEL	FIRE	\$ 70,000		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	<b>TOTAL</b>		\$ 1,335,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	<b>DEPARTMENT SUBTOTAL</b>		\$ 3,673,000	\$ -	\$ 15,000	\$ 16,850	\$ (1,850)	\$ 15,000	\$ 16,850
	<b>GENERAL FUND GRAND TOTAL</b>		\$ 6,982,132						
	Budgeted (B)		\$ 1,854,132						
	Priority 1		\$ -						
	Priority 2		\$ 2,851,000						
	Priority 3		\$ 2,277,000						
	<b>TOTAL</b>		\$ 6,982,132						



# CAMBRIA CSD FIRE DEPARTMENT

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## Fire Station Renovation Analysis: Estimated Costs, Case Studies, and Sample Budget

### Estimated Costs:

- **Construction Costs:** Typically construction costs for fire stations typically range from \$400 to \$700 per square foot. For a 10,000-square-foot facility, this translates to approximately \$4 million to \$7 million.
- **Additional Expenses:** Beyond construction, other costs include site acquisition and preparation, design and engineering fees, permitting, inspections, furnishings, and contingencies. These can add 20–30% to the base construction cost, bringing the total estimated cost to between \$6.2 million and \$10.5 million.

### Case Study:

**Templeton Fire Station Expansion:** The Templeton Community Services District has sought proposals for the expansion of its fire station. The project involves preparing preliminary drawings, cost estimates, and potential construction documents for the expansion. The goal is to accommodate current needs and future growth, ensuring compliance with NFPA, ADA, and OSHA regulations.

The Templeton Fire Station, located at 206 5th St., Templeton, CA 93465, was completed in 1996, making it approximately 29 years old as of 2025. The two-story, 4,150-square-foot facility has undergone multiple additions over the years to accommodate the growing needs of the community.

### Templeton Fire Station – Most Recent Renovation Activity (as of 2024–2025)

- **Facility Age:** Built in 1996, the station is now 29 years old.
- **Current Size:** Approximately 4,150 square feet over two stories.
- **Recent Action:** The Templeton Community Services District (CSD) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in 2023 for architectural and engineering services related to the expansion and renovation of the fire station.

### Renovation vs. Replacement:

When deciding between renovation and replacement, consider the following:

- **Renovation:** Typically costs less upfront but may be constrained by the existing structure's limitations.
- **Replacement:** Higher initial investment but offers a modern facility tailored to current and future needs.

In Cambria, factors such as the current station's condition, compliance with modern safety standards, and the community's growth projections should inform the decision.

Engaging with local architects and construction firms experienced in public safety facilities is crucial to obtain accurate estimates and ensure the project meets Cambria's specific requirements.

Here’s a sample budget breakdown for a mid-sized fire station replacement (around 10,000–12,000 sq ft), with an estimated total cost of \$8 million:

Sample Fire Station Replacement Budget	
Category	Estimated Cost
Site acquisition/preparation	\$500,000 – \$1,000,000
Construction (core facility)	\$5,000,000 – \$6,000,000
Design & engineering fees	\$800,000 – \$1,000,000
Permitting & inspections	\$100,000 – \$200,000
Furniture, fixtures & equipment	\$300,000 – \$500,000
Contingency (10–15%)	\$500,000 – \$800,000
Total Estimated Cost	\$7.2M – \$9.5M

Renovation vs. Replacement		
Factor	Renovation	Replacement
Cost	\$2M–\$5M (varies)	\$5M–\$20M+ depending on size/location
Disruption	Often requires working around operations	May allow continued ops at old site
Modernization	Limited by existing structure	Fully customizable, future-proof
Code Compliance	May trigger upgrades (ADA, seismic, etc.)	Built to meet all current standards
Lifespan Extended	10–20 years	40+ years

The cost to replace a fire station can vary widely based on location, size, and specific needs, but here are some typical ranges:

- Small rural station (1–2 bays): \$2–5 million
- Mid-sized suburban station (2–3 bays, basic facilities): \$5–10 million
- Large urban station (4+ bays, specialty spaces, training areas): \$10–20+ million

Key cost drivers include:

- Construction costs per square foot: Usually between \$400–\$700+, depending on region and materials
- Site acquisition/preparation: Especially costly if the land is limited or requires major work
- Specialty features: Decontamination zones, training rooms, living quarters, backup generators, etc.
- Equipment and furnishings: Beds, lockers, kitchen appliances, office equipment
- Design and engineering fees: Typically 10–15% of the total project cost

CAMBRIA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

TO: Fire Protection Committee  
FROM: Michael Burkey, Fire Chief

AGENDA NO. 4.C.

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Meeting Date: January 15, 2026                      Subject: Review and Discussion of Fire Protection Funding Outlook, Including Update on Feasibility of Benefit Assessment

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**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no immediate fiscal impact associated with reviewing and discussing this item. Future implementation of a benefit assessment would require budgeting for consultant fees, administrative costs, and public outreach, estimated at \$50,000–\$100,000, depending on scope. Successful establishment of a benefit assessment could provide long-term funding stability for the Fire Department.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Cambria Community Services District (CCSD) provides fire and emergency services to the community through a combination of property tax allocations, service fees, and other funding mechanisms. In recent years, rising costs for personnel, equipment, and facility maintenance have created increasing pressure on the Fire Department budget. To ensure the continued provision of high-quality fire protection services, the Board and staff have explored potential funding strategies, including the use of a benefit assessment.

**BENEFIT ASSESSMENT FEASIBILITY:**

Staff has evaluated the feasibility of establishing a benefit assessment to supplement Fire Department funding, including consultation with financial and legal advisors experienced in special district funding mechanisms. As part of this evaluation, staff reviewed the core requirements of a benefit assessment under Proposition 218, including the need to identify a special and proportional benefit to assessed parcels that is separate and distinct from the general public benefit provided to the community at large.

This analysis identified several significant challenges specific to fire protection services:

- First, fire protection inherently provides a community-wide benefit. Fire suppression, emergency medical response, wildfire mitigation, and disaster response protect not only individual structures, but also public infrastructure, evacuation routes, environmental resources, and neighboring properties. Because these services are designed to protect the community as a whole, it is legally difficult to isolate a “special benefit” that accrues to individual parcels beyond the general benefit enjoyed by all residents and visitors.
- Second, proportional benefit is extremely difficult to quantify for fire services. Fire risk is influenced by numerous dynamic and overlapping factors, including vegetation, topography, weather conditions, access, construction type, occupancy, and proximity to other structures. These factors change over time and do not lend themselves to a defensible, parcel-by-parcel formula that would withstand legal scrutiny under Proposition 218.
- Third, a significant portion of Fire Department costs are fixed and readiness-based, rather than incident-based. Staffing, training, equipment, facilities, and 24/7 availability must be maintained regardless of call volume or location. Because benefit assessments require costs to be directly tied to parcel-specific benefits, the readiness nature of fire protection further complicates the ability to justify an assessment methodology.

Finally, fire protection services include emergency medical response and disaster response, which by their nature serve people rather than parcels and often occur in public rights-of-way or impact multiple properties simultaneously. Courts have consistently found that services primarily benefiting the public at large are poorly suited for benefit assessments. While a benefit assessment could theoretically provide a stable revenue source, the legal, technical, and evidentiary hurdles associated with demonstrating special and proportional benefit for fire protection services make this approach high risk, costly to implement, and vulnerable to legal challenge.

By contrast, a parcel tax or special tax is specifically designed to fund general public services, including fire protection and emergency response. A parcel or special tax does not require demonstration of parcel-specific benefit or proportionality and instead relies on voter approval to authorize community-wide investment in essential public safety services.

For these reasons, staff concludes that while a benefit assessment was evaluated, a parcel tax or special tax represents the most legally defensible, transparent, and implementable funding option for long-term Fire Department sustainability, subject to Board direction and voter approval.