

Representative Jimmy Panetta (CA 19) and Leaders in Cambria Highlight Federal Investment in Cambria Ambulance Station Replacement



By Iggy Fedoroff and Dawn Kulesa

On Wednesday July 17, 2024, U.S. Representative Jimmy Panetta, along with local leaders and first responders including SLO County District 2 Supervisor Bruce Gibson, CCHD Board President Cecilia Montalvo, CCSD General Manager Matthew McElhenie, CCHD Operations Manager Tim Nurge and Linn's Restaurant owner John Linn toured the Cambria Community Healthcare District's ambulance station after Panetta announced a Federal grant of \$1 million the Congressman had secured for the District in the U.S. Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations Bill. "Our first responders provide vital service to our citizens and must have reliable resources to fulfill that important role in our community," said Representative Panetta. "This Federal grant also is the foundation upon which the citizens of Cambria can pass a bond measure to ensure the completion of the Cambria ambulance station as well as the safety of our community. The Federal government is proud to play its part. You need a partnership to get things done — one based on mutual trust and friendship," Panetta added.

The CCHD plans to replace the current 67-year-old ambulance station on Main Street. The building is in need of major infrastructure improvements and is beyond its useful lifespan. Retrofitting is not economically feasible. "Some have asked why not just fix it," Cecilia Montalvo said. "That's more expensive than replacing it," given the extensive asbestos remediation and replacement of electrical and other infrastructure such as plumbing that would be required.

In order to continue to provide high-quality emergency services to residents and visitors, now and into the future, the District is proposing a \$5.9 million bond measure (C-24) this November to complete the project totaling \$6.9 million. The bond's passage would allow the District to replace the outdated and inadequate building with a solar-powered, energy-efficient facility that would also provide a multipurpose apparatus bay housing expensive ambulances away from the corrosive coastal environment, secure storage for complex medical equipment and provide an indoor decontamination area for ambulance crews as well as improved working conditions for them and administrative staff.

Operations Manager Nurge noted, "We are also one of the last few healthcare districts that operate ambulances in the state and part of that is because of this amazing community. Any call we are dispatched to takes a minimum of two hours to get back to Cambria. If we get called up to Big Sur, those calls can last three, four or even five hours. We staff two ambulances, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so that Cambria is never left uncovered for hours on end, which is something we haven't always been able to afford. This isolated geography is served at times when minutes truly matter."

"The Cambria Community Healthcare District provides a lifeline to our residents and visitors when they need it most" said Board President Montalvo. We are incredibly grateful to Congressman Panetta for assisting us in receiving this \$1 million grant. With this Federal partnership, funding the remaining costs of our replacement facility will be more affordable to local taxpayers."