

Coastside Democrats Candidate Survey

An email address is required to ensure integrity. Please note this form in its entirety will be posted for Public Review.

Email *

ryan.mcgraw@gmail.com

Thank you for your interest in applying for the endorsement of the Coastside Democrats. Please complete this submission by **Friday, September 4, 2026**. All Club members will vote on candidate endorsements.



Coastside Fire Protection District (CFPD)

The CFPD provides *fire protection services* for the City of Half Moon Bay and the Communities of Montara, Moss Beach, Princeton, El Granada and Miramar in addition to the surrounding unincorporated areas with a total District size of 50 square miles and serves a population of 30,000 residents.

The District operates three fire stations to provide the *emergency services*: Fire Station 40 in Half Moon Bay, Fire Station 41 in El Granada and Fire Station 44 in Moss Beach.

CFPD holds district-based elections for its five Board of Directors to staggered four-year terms. There are three districts that are up for election in 2026: Districts C (Hanna), D (Sherrill), and E (Burke).

1. Candidate Name *

Ryan McGraw

2. As a Club under the California Democratic Party, we only endorse fellow Democrats. *
Please state how long you have been registered to vote as a Democrat:

- ☒ Always been a registered Democrat
- ☐ Have been a registered Democrat for the last ten years
- ☐ Have been a registered Democrat for the last five years
- ☐ Just registered as a Democrat this election cycle.

3. I certify the information provided on this application and in any subsequent interview or written submission is true and correct. *

☒ Yes

☐ No

Statement Questionnaire

4. Why are you running for this office? *

I am running for the Coastside Fire Protection District Board because this is my community, and I believe my experience gives me a unique opportunity to give back to it.

I have had the privilege of serving as a Volunteer for the Coastside Fire Protection District from a fire engine, working directly with our residents during emergencies and seeing firsthand what our firefighters need to provide the level of service our community expects. In my professional role as a Deputy Fire Marshal with the Menlo Park Fire Protection District, I also see another side of the fire service—prevention, construction, community risk reduction, emerging technology, public education, and the long-term planning that can prevent an emergency before it happens.

I am also a resident, a father, a former small-business owner, and someone who has personally relied on emergency medical services. I understand that the decisions made by the Fire Board ultimately affect real people: the firefighter responding in the middle of the night, the senior who calls 911 for help, the family preparing for wildfire, the business owner trying to understand a requirement, and the taxpayer expecting their money to be managed responsibly.

I am not running because I believe the District needs a dramatic change in direction. The Coastside Fire Protection District has a long history of strong leadership, community support, and responsible stewardship. I am running because I believe I can contribute to that success and bring a perspective that combines emergency response, fire prevention, construction, public health, business, and direct community involvement.

I want to help prepare the Coastside for what comes next—whether that means wildfire, emergency medical demands, aging infrastructure, access and water challenges, communications, or the changing needs of our community.

Most importantly, I want to serve. The Coastside has given a great deal to me and my family. Running for the Fire Board is an opportunity to use my experience, relationships, and knowledge to give something back and help ensure that the people protecting our community have the support they need to continue doing it well.

5. What will be your top priorities if elected? *

If elected, my top priority will be to build upon the strong foundation the Coastside Fire Protection District already has while preparing our community for the challenges ahead.

Preparedness and Regional Cooperation. Emergencies do not stop at jurisdictional boundaries. I want to strengthen relationships with neighboring fire agencies, law enforcement, public works, health care providers, utilities, schools, and community organizations through joint training, disaster exercises, and shared planning. Identifying gaps before an emergency gives us the opportunity to solve them before they matter.

Wildfire Prevention and Community Education. Vegetation management, weed abatement, Zone 0, and home hardening can feel overwhelming and expensive. I want to focus on practical education, demonstrations, vendor fairs, and affordable solutions that help homeowners and renters understand what they can realistically do to protect themselves, their property, and their neighbors.

Infrastructure, Access, Water, and Communications. Our geography creates unique challenges for emergency access, evacuation, water supply, mutual aid, and radio communications. I want to ensure the District remains actively involved in the regional conversations and partnerships necessary to maintain and improve the infrastructure our firefighters and residents depend upon.

Data-Driven Decision Making. I support using the Community Risk Assessment and Standards of Cover, National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) information, and other available data to better understand call volume, response performance, community risk, and changing service demands. Data should help the Board identify achievable improvements, establish priorities, and measure whether our decisions are producing results.

Reducing Preventable Demands on 911. Our emergency medical system is increasingly being asked to address needs that extend beyond traditional emergency response. I want to encourage partnerships, public education, shared services, and conversations about expanding appropriate health care resources on the Coastside so that emergency resources remain available when they are truly needed.

Responsible Stewardship. The Coastside has benefited from years of careful planning by current and previous Fire Boards. I want to continue responsible oversight of our finances, labor relationships, apparatus, facilities, equipment, personnel, and long-term infrastructure needs. My goal is not change for the sake of change; it is to protect what works and identify opportunities to make a successful District even stronger.

Finally, I want to keep the Fire District connected to the people it serves. Online communication is valuable, but there is no replacement for being present in the community, listening to residents, talking with our firefighters, and building relationships face to face.

My priorities ultimately come back to three principles: Prevent. Prepare. Partner. Prevent emergencies where we can. Prepare our community and our responders for the emergencies we cannot prevent. And build the partnerships necessary to make the Coastside safer and more resilient.

6. Please explain how your background and experience have prepared you for this office. *

As a Deputy Fire Marshal with the Menlo Park Fire Protection District, I work on the front line of fire prevention, public education, emerging technology, and community risk reduction. As a Firefighter Engineer with the Coastside Fire Protection District, I also have a direct connection to the emergency response needs of the community I call home.

I am fortunate to regularly work alongside some of the most knowledgeable fire service professionals in the industry. I participate in drills, training events, demonstrations, and educational programs involving agencies from throughout the country. These experiences give me the opportunity to learn how other communities approach their challenges, understand what has worked—and what has not—and bring those ideas and perspectives back to the Coastside.

My qualifications, however, extend beyond the fire service. My experience as a live-in senior caregiver and as the father of a six year old has taught me the importance of listening, patience, and effective communication across generations. My daily interactions with local small-business owners, residents, contractors, and neighbors give me an understanding of community needs and concerns at a foundational level.

I also understand emergency response from the apparatus itself. I have spent many nights on a fire engine serving our community during major emergency events. Those experiences provide a direct understanding of the personnel, equipment, infrastructure, communications, and interagency relationships that ultimately depend upon the decisions and long-term planning of the Fire Board.

My foundation in public service began long before my professional career. I earned the rank of Eagle Scout, received a degree in Community Public Health, spent nine years working in construction, and owned a fire protection systems business. Together with my experience in fire prevention and emergency response, these experiences have given me a well-rounded perspective on public service, business, construction, prevention, emergency operations, and the importance of community.

I believe that combination matters. A Fire Board Director should be able to understand the operational needs of the people on the engine, the prevention challenges facing a property owner or business, the financial realities of implementing improvements, and the concerns of the residents the District exists to serve.

Most importantly, the Coastside is not simply a district I want to represent. It is my community. I have served it from a fire engine, raised my family here, worked alongside its residents, and experienced firsthand the responsibility that comes with protecting it. I would bring that same commitment, experience, and perspective to the Fire Board.

7. What do you see as the major issues on the Coastside? *

Two of the most persistent challenges throughout the fire service are access and mutual aid. My daily work with the Fire Code gives me a practical understanding of these challenges and, just as importantly, an understanding of what the Fire District can realistically influence.

On the Coastside, access presents a unique challenge. We have limited transportation routes that must serve residents evacuating an area while simultaneously allowing firefighters, law enforcement, emergency medical resources, and mutual-aid companies to get in. Maintaining and improving the infrastructure that supports that movement is an important part of emergency preparedness.

Station 40 is considered a “must-cover” station, meaning an engine company must remain available to maintain coverage. Meeting that operational need requires considerable planning, coordination, and cooperation among neighboring agencies. Our road and transportation infrastructure directly affects the ability to move personnel and apparatus as daily staffing and mutual-aid needs change throughout the region.

Communications infrastructure presents another challenge. The Coastside's topography can make reliable emergency communications difficult. Through my operational understanding of these systems and my relationships with agencies throughout the county, I can help support continued collaboration and infrastructure improvements that strengthen critical communications throughout the District.

But infrastructure is only part of communication. We also need to consider how information reaches our residents. The Coastside has some of the most robust community programs in the county, yet through my interactions with residents, I have repeatedly found that valuable information does not always reach its intended audience.

Digital communication, websites, and social media are important tools, but they cannot be our only tools. I have seen how effective direct, interpersonal communication can be in connecting residents with programs and resources they did not know existed. We should continue bringing information directly into our neighborhoods, community organizations, schools, businesses, and events.

Strong emergency access gets resources where they need to go. Strong communications keep responders connected. Strong community relationships make sure our residents are connected as well.

8. Is there anything in your background which, if you receive the Club's endorsement, could cause embarrassment to the club? If so, please provide the details. *

None.

9. Who is supporting your campaign at this stage (e.g., endorsements, donors), and are there any potential conflicts of interest we should know about? *

Susie Morasci - Half Moon Bay City Council Candidate

Lau Hodges - Local Business Co-Owner and Half Moon Bay Resident

Kristen McGraw - Hatch PTO President

Breanna Lafontaine - CUSD School Board Trustee

Ari Delay - Retired Fire Chief, Retired Coastside Battalion Chief, Current La Honda Fire Chief

Cris Serrano - SMC Sheriffs Sergeant and Half Moon Bay Resident

Specific Questions for Your Office

10. For which District are you running?

☐ District C

☒ District D

☐ District E

11. California special districts face chronic, critical inequities and other challenges in funding. Describe this challenge for CFPD and how you would work to address it. *

We are fortunate on the Coastsides to have strong community support for our Fire District and the services it provides. As a Special District, that relationship with the community carries both an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure that public resources are managed carefully and with the long-term needs of the Coastsides in mind.

The Fire Board, both past and present, has a long history of successful stewardship. Labor agreements, fire apparatus, facilities, equipment, and other critical infrastructure have been consistently monitored, maintained, and updated with careful consideration.

As a Director, my goal would be to build upon that success. Good governance does not always mean changing direction. It also means recognizing what is working, protecting the investments already made by the community, planning responsibly for future needs, and asking the right questions before making decisions.

Maintaining a strong Fire District requires long-term planning, responsible financial oversight, support for our personnel, and continued investment in the apparatus and infrastructure they depend on. I would approach those responsibilities with respect for the work that has already been accomplished while looking for opportunities to make an already successful organization even stronger.

12. What would you identify as CFPDs biggest challenges in maintaining or improving its service level? How as a Director would you affect that? *

One of the most effective ways to improve the level of service we provide is through the use of a Community Risk Assessment and Standards of Coverage, supported by data-driven analysis. This approach is widely used throughout the fire service to better understand community risk, available resources, and service demands.

Information collected through the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS), including call volume, incident type, response performance, and actions taken, can help identify trends and better define the needs of our community. As a Director, I would support using this information to identify the factors we have the ability to influence and improve. Data should help us ask better questions, establish realistic goals, measure our progress, and make informed decisions about where our resources can have the greatest impact.

Data alone, however, does not provide every answer. I believe in bringing together the people who have a vested interest in the outcome—including our firefighters, neighboring agencies, supporting organizations, community partners, and residents. Through open discussion and mutual education, we can better understand different perspectives and work toward obtainable goals.

Maintaining and improving the fire and emergency response infrastructure that supports the men and women serving the Coastside would be one of my primary goals as a Director. That includes not only physical infrastructure and equipment, but also the relationships, agreements, communications, and partnerships that allow multiple agencies to function effectively together.

I have also personally been the recipient of emergency medical care. That experience reinforced for me how important it is that our emergency response system is ready when someone needs it. Supporting the personnel who provide that service, maintaining strong relationships with our partner agencies, and making informed decisions about the resources they depend upon are responsibilities I would take seriously as a Director.

13. What are some examples of how the Board could improve its engagement with the community and local government ? *

I have personally seen the value of face-to-face interaction. Digital communication is an important tool for keeping people informed and providing greater access, but it is not a replacement for direct conversation and personal interaction with the community.

Board meetings have always provided an opportunity for community involvement, with residents able to participate in person or online. I believe maintaining both options is important. Online access makes participation possible for residents who may not otherwise be able to attend, while in-person meetings provide an opportunity for meaningful conversations, questions, and relationships that are difficult to replicate through a screen.

Community engagement should also extend beyond the boardroom. Board members should be visible and accessible at community events, neighborhood meetings, preparedness activities, schools, and other opportunities where residents already gather. Sometimes the best way to understand a community concern is simply to be there, listen, and have a conversation.

Technology can help us communicate with more people, but strong community relationships are built through personal interaction, accessibility, and trust.

14. How could the Board, working with its community partners, strengthen community resiliency and disaster preparedness? *

I have been fortunate to participate in numerous disaster drills, exercises, and presentations involving multiple agencies and disciplines. These exercises are vitally important because disasters do not recognize jurisdictional boundaries. They provide a realistic opportunity to understand how overlapping agencies will communicate, coordinate, and work together when our community needs them most.

Every time we conduct these exercises, we identify gaps. Sometimes they involve larger operational issues, but often the most valuable lessons are surprisingly simple—communication methods, equipment compatibility, terminology, responsibilities, or resources that one agency may not realize another can provide. Identifying those issues during an exercise gives us the opportunity to solve them before an actual emergency.

Including all of the agencies and organizations that may have a role in a disaster also brings different expertise to the table. Fire, law enforcement, public works, health care, utilities, schools, emergency management, community organizations, and other partners each see a disaster through a different lens. That diversity consistently produces ideas and solutions that would not have been identified otherwise.

Preparedness should also extend directly to our residents. One neighboring agency, for example, developed first-aid kits specifically around the needs of its community and made them available for residents to purchase. I would like to see us continue exploring practical programs like this—giving Coastside residents the education, equipment, and resources they can actually use to become better prepared.

A resilient community is not created after a disaster occurs. It is built beforehand through training, partnerships, education, and preparation.

15. New regulations regarding removing vegetation and hardening homes in Zone 0 are slated to be implemented soon. How will you work with the community to prepare for these changes? *

Vegetation management, weed abatement, and Zone 0 are terms that many Coastside residents understandably associate with significant costs. An important part of wildfire prevention is helping residents understand that compliance and improved fire safety do not always require expensive landscaping projects or major renovations.

Education about alternatives, building design, defensible space, and practical home-hardening measures can give residents options that fit their property and their budget. I have seen great success with vendor fairs where local businesses and industry professionals demonstrate current products, technology, landscaping alternatives, and simple improvements that residents can use to make their homes and yards more fire resilient.

Many of these improvements can be completed by homeowners and renters themselves at minimal cost. Providing residents with practical demonstrations, reliable information, and access to knowledgeable vendors turns wildfire prevention from simply another requirement into something people can realistically accomplish.

I believe the Fire District should continue to emphasize education and prevention while helping our community understand not only what the law requires, but why it matters and what affordable options are available. The goal should be to work with residents to achieve meaningful improvements in wildfire resilience while recognizing the financial realities of living on the Coastside.

16. As first responders, how is CFPD impacted by the fact that health care resources are minimal on the Coastside. What can be done to improve the situation? *

The 911 system is increasingly being used as a primary point of access to health care. In a community where emergency resources can quickly become overwhelmed, it is important that residents understand the urgent care and other health care resources available to them.

I am a firm believer in prevention in all forms. Just as we work to prevent fires and other emergencies before they occur, we should look for opportunities to reduce preventable demands on our emergency medical system by improving access to appropriate health care resources.

Discussions surrounding shared services and local health care development should be a priority. The Fire District should be willing to work collaboratively with our cities, county, building and planning departments, developers, health care providers, and other agencies to identify gaps in service and explore opportunities to bring additional health care resources to the Coastside.

Submit When Finished

Click Back to return to a previous question. Click Submit when you are done.

Feel free to contact demclubcoastside@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Final results will be posted on <https://coastsidedems.org>

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