

Pace Fire Rescue District

**Fiscal Year
2019/2020**

**Proposed Budget
&
Summary
Report**

Submitted by:

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Background and Research

Before the Fiscal Year 2019/2020 Budget the Pace Fire Rescue District was funded through a Municipal Services Benefit Unit (MSBU). This funding mechanism was enacted through County Ordinance in 2018¹ by the Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners.

During this time fire services were funded through the fire service fees from the MSBU. Each fire district throughout the nine (9) departments funded through the MSBU brought in various monetary amounts from fees in their respective districts. The requirement by the county for the MSBU funding was that all funds from the fire service fees went into "one-pot" and was distributed throughout the county fire services with the exception of Navarre Beach (Special MSBU), Midway Fire District (*Special District 2.2 millage rate*), Holley Navarre Fire District (*Special District Flat Rate*), Avalon Fire Rescue (*Special District 2.0 millage rate*), City of Milton, and City of Gulf Breeze.

During the first ten (10) years of the MSBU, there were no increases in the fees to allow for the growth of the larger more rapid growing departments and communities. This held these departments back due to having to help cover the cost of smaller lower run departments. However, during this period the PFRD experienced an approximately 101% increase in calls for service. The district must resist the temptation to view itself as the “ rural, small-town it once was, the district is rapidly developing, and the services and resources the district provides its communities should reflect that.

PFRD began the process of becoming an Independent Special District for the department to be able to develop and provide the services at levels the citizens of the district deserve. In 2018, the district obtained Independent Special District status through the Florida Legislative process and was ratified by the citizens of the district in November 2018.

¹ Santa Rosa County Ordinance 2018-10

Funding Mechanism

PFRD will now be funded through an Ad Valorem Tax with rates set by the Board of Fire Commissioners each year. The rates cannot be assessed above 2.5 mills in any given year without prior approval of the citizens of the district². Rates will be set as required by law and sent out through the Property Appraisers Truth in Millage Notices (TRIM). The funds will be collected through the Santa Rosa County Tax Collector for a fee.

Taxable Value of Property in the District

The current value of Taxable Property in the District for FY 2019/2020 is projected at \$1,660,529,545.00³.

Labor, Wages, and Incentives

PFRD is currently operated at lower personnel levels than the National Average of four (4) personnel per apparatus⁴. We are currently staffing an Engine Company and a Ladder Company on each of the three (3) shifts. Our current manning allows for three (3) personnel on each apparatus. Minimum staffing should be four (4) personnel per apparatus to meet the 2in/2out requirement as mandated by the State of Florida for the safety of personnel⁵.

Three (3) additional positions (Firefighter/EMT or Firefighter/Medic) are proposed to be added to staffing. Preference will be given to Firefighter/ Paramedics due to the invaluable advanced life support services provided by the district. This addition would be a step in the right direction by allowing for four (4) personnel on the Ladder Company and three (3) personnel on the Engine

² *Laws of Florida 2017-221*

³ *Santa Rosa County Property Appraisers Office*

⁴ *NFPA 1710*

⁵ *Florida Statute 633.508, OSHA 29 C.F.R. s. 1910.134(g)(4)*

Company until which time funding permits the addition of further personnel. A plan is being drafted to provide coverage for the Wallace Fire Station (Station #4) up to five (5) days a week during peak times to reduce response times to the north end of the district. This area is short on water supply due to the current Santa Rosa County Land use code which allows for properties to be developed without requiring fire hydrants due to the lot size. Operating an engine out of this station will help in lowering the district's ISO rating for that area which is not currently recognized due to no response from that station. This will be accomplished by utilizing one (1) full-time firefighter and one (1) part-time firefighter to begin this project, funded by the \$25,000.00 budgeted for part-time and over-time salaries.

Incentive Program

The addition of including an incentive program for education and certification will aide in the Recruitment & Retention of personnel. This trend has already been adopted by many departments in the Northwest Florida area. We encourage personnel to obtain their college degrees and state certifications to establish a more credible workforce. The following are the academic qualifications and certifications that will be recognized. It will be up to the employee to obtain these certifications at their own expense, and to ensure continuing education credits are obtained to keep the certifications. This Recruitment and Retention Program has proven to be an effective tool with many agencies throughout the American Fire Service.

Bachelors	Associates	Fire Officer 1	Instructor	Inspector	Health & Safety Officer	Pump Operator	Live Fire Instructor
\$1200	\$600	\$500	\$500	\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300

Since the PFRD is now an Independent Special District we are the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)⁶ on fire services including prevention and inspections of new and existing construction

⁶ Florida Fire Prevention Code

and plans review of new construction. Based on this increased responsibility a Chief Fire Inspector position is proposed to be added to staffing to form the Fire Prevention Division.

Over the past three (3) years the Administrative Assistant position has been left unfunded and the Fire Chief has covered most of those duties. The district is at a point where it is no longer feasible for one (1) person to handle the duties and responsibilities of Fire Chief and Administrative Assistant. It is proposed that this position be filled this budget year.

PFRD currently has the lowest starting pay in the area. This problem festered over a ten (10) year period of pay compression due to lack of funding combined with explosive growth and will not be corrected overnight. Currently, PFRD starting pay for a firefighter without EMT is \$30,374.56 which is one (1) of the lowest in the area. The budget reflects a proposed increase across the board which would bring our starting pay to \$32,197.04 for firefighters without their EMT certification and \$33,799.08 for those with their EMT certification. This will make the district more competitive in seeking out quality recruits for future positions and in the retention of personnel.

Benefit Expenses

Retirement:

Before the approval of moving to a Special Independent District the only retirement available was a 401(k) plan through Edward Jones. This has been detrimental to the recruitment and retention of personnel over the years. We are now able to offer a Public Safety Retirement Plan through the State of Florida which will be instrumental in recruitment and retention of personnel.

Health / Life Benefits:

Employee Health Care coverage.
Long term & Short Term Disability.
Statutory Life Insurance for full-time employees.
Statutory Cancer coverage full-time firefighting employees.

Statutory Life and ADD for Volunteer personnel.

Workers Compensation

Worker's compensation insurance is carried as required by law. PFRD was notified that there is an insurance increase for the Fiscal Year 2019/2020.

Non-Labor Expenses:

Fire Training:

The cost incurred for educational fire training & EMS classes, events, and conferences.

Permits and Licensing:

Advanced Life Support
Emergency Reporting
DEA License
Santa Rosa County Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity
Target Solutions

Travel expenses:

Travel costs for meetings, training classes, and conferences.

Uniforms:

The cost incurred for uniforms for personnel.

Turn Out Gear:

Personal protective gear for personnel involved in firefighting operations.

Medical Physicals:

The cost incurred for annual physicals for firefighting personnel.

Pre- Hiring Expenses:

The cost incurred for required background investigations/checks including pre-employment physicals for Career and Volunteer personnel.

Capital Expenditures

The following capital expenditures will be new to the district during this budget cycle:

1. New Engine payment replacing aging equipment that is twenty (20) years old. (In Progress. This is the first step in implementing a replacement schedule) NFPA
2. Place Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) in Ladder 21 and Engine 21 for CAD.
3. Construction payment at the Pea Ridge Station (Station #3) to build living quarters and offices for 24/7 coverage. (In Progress once complete it will be staffed 24/7 with 3 career personnel)
4. Replacement of one (1) set of Extrication Tools which are over twenty (20) years old.
5. Knox Box vaults for Ladder 21 and Engine 21. These are secure the Knox Box keys on the apparatus to track who removes the keys for usage.

Apparatus	Year	Age	Replacement Year
Engine 2104	1999	20	2022
Engine 2105	1999	20	2024
Engine 2106	1999	20	2019
Rescue 21	2009	10	2023
Ladder 21	1997	22	2021
Tanker 21	2009	10	2024
Chief 21	2017	2	2027
Battalion Chief	2004	15	2020
Inspections	2003	16	2021
Service 21	2008	11	2022

Reserves / Contingency Fund

Since the inception of the MSBU funding in 2007, there has been no forethought to building a reserve/contingency fund in the event of a catastrophic event. There is a need to begin building this reserve/contingency fund in the budget to cover any future catastrophic event(s) that may occur. This will allow the district to have funding to cover the unexpected cost(s) due to man-made or natural disasters.

Summary

The fact that PFRD has grown in population tremendously over the last several years, calls for service has increased, as well as other services provided by the district. Staff's recommendation that PFRD will need a minimum of \$2,457,584.00 for fiscal year 2019/2020. This will allow for the payments on new apparatus and buildings as well as additional personnel needed for the overall operations of the district. The taxable appraised value properties in the district are \$1,660,529,545.00. The millage rate is recommended to be set at 1.4800 mills to allow funding for the budget as recommended.

There will be some properties that will see increases in fire protection fees and some will see a reduction. However, there has been a stifling of development in fire protection over the last ten (10) plus years due to not having regular increases to keep up with the growth of the communities. Last year the study, which was commissioned by the Board of County Commissioners, recommended that the 2018/2019 budget for PFRD be at 1.93 million. This equates to a \$527,584.00 difference in funding for the 2018/2019 fiscal year. The recommended budget for 2019/2020 at \$2,457,584.00.