

PLANNING FOR THE UPPER CAPTIVA FIRE & RESCUE DISTRICT

UPDATED
MARCH, 2022

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UCFRD Mission Statement

To protect the lives and property of residents and visitors through fire prevention, fire and rescue response, and emergency medical services.

UCFRD Vision Statement

To provide, maintain and develop the absolute best in Fire, EMS and Marine response to our entire community.

UCFRD Values

- Leadership
- Respect for people and property
- Service to all
- Non-discrimination and respect for diversity
- Transparency and openness
- Valuing community contributions
- Compassion
- Excellence

Preface

The number of homes and people on North Captiva Island have grown substantially in recent years. The UCFRD, in order to honor our vision statement, needs to stay abreast of island needs and anticipate future island needs. We have the benefit of lessons learned over many years of volunteer and professional response on the island and believe that we have sufficient staffing, fleet, station house and ancillary equipment to perform our jobs as intended for island residents, homeowners and guests.

While we have sufficient resources, we have long term concerns about the functionality and replacement of the fleet and station. Gone are the days of accepting obsolete equipment, donated from other departments, in the hopes of mustering a response. We believe that island residents and homeowners desire and deserve the best response possible on our quirky little island.

We have undertaken this long term planning process to clarify priorities moving forward. We intend to update this document each year in March in order to clarify priorities and incorporate items needed in the budget process.

Executive Summary

The district has made constant progress in its commitment to providing the best service possible for the community and surrounding waterways. The reputation of the Upper Captiva Fire & Rescue District, (UCFRD) continues to climb within the community within the district as well as the fire/ems community. This work presents a long term plan, with prioritized items, to ensure that this trend continues.

This plan is based on the needs of the community both near term and long term. The island is experiencing a burst of new residential and commercial construction. The growth adds to the number of lives and properties within the district. The UCFRD intends to progress along with the growth within the community. This plan includes maintenance and a continuation of services provided by the UCFRD. It is my hope that the Board of Commissioners will be able to partner with me in support of the maintenance posture, future planning initiatives, as well as provide support for the district's growth as our community grows and develops.

The full time, part time and unpaid support staff are all functioning well. There will be periodic reviews of employment contracts, pay, benefits and programs to ensure that we continue to be

able to attract the number and quality of personnel that we have and we believe that considering these factors each year during budget preparation will continue to be the best process moving forward.

We believe in a long term plan for the regular replacement of fleet vehicles. Life cycle elements of the station, and PPE/Ancillary equipment is essential to the stability of the district. We have chosen to consider these potential costs on a thirty year basis and have summarized our findings and presented the information in Attachment A.

Taking a closer look, we have looked at possible future costs due to inflation and calculated an annualized cost for the total of these elements, to be considered in the annual budget process. Our best calculation is that an average annual capital expenditure of approximately \$107,787 will be required to replace the considered items over a thirty year period.

The UCFRD is somewhat unique having the challenge in maintaining our accessways for emergency vehicle response. In recent years the annual budget has been approximately \$80,000. Commissioner Lavallie has organized this effort and we thank him for his tireless pursuit of better roads. A majority of the effort on roadways is to maintain the surface of the big five accessways: Rum Road, Harbor Bed Drive, Spanish Gold Lane, East Seair Lane and North Airport Road. In addition, grading and spot improvements on secondary roads are regularly evaluated and accomplished.

Through targeted fundraising from local property owners, coupled with matching funds from the UCFRD accessway budget, Commissioner Lavallie has spearheaded structural improvements to Kingfisher Drive and Mourning Dove Drive and planning is underway for similar improvement to Schooner Drive.

Each year in November UCFRD contracts to have the accessways cleared to a 15'x15' width and height for emergency vehicle access. In 2021 the cost of this contract was \$22,000. The trimming project includes established draft points where water is expected to be drawn in case of fire.

Public relations, inspections and enforcement are all ongoing efforts that UCFRD accomplishes while trying to respect the private property and individual choices of residents, homeowners and guests.

A special assessment, enacted in 2014 at an annual value of \$440,000, is scheduled to expire in 2024. An additional ten year assessment at a similar annual value will be put to the voters in late 2022. It is anticipated that with an additional ten year special assessment the commissioners will be able to reduce the annual property tax rate, capped at 3.75/1,000, and work toward an elimination of the special assessment in 2034.

Staffing

Full Time Positions

Typically, the fire service is run based on a three-shift structure. This provides consistent coverage and maximized work performance while allowing for adequate time off. This model has been proven in the industry to be sustainable indefinitely. The UCFRD decided in October of 2021 to switch from the legacy staffing model of two Chiefs working 2 days on/2 days off,(80 hour work week) to the more sustainable model of three Chiefs working a 56 hour work week. Amongst other advantages, this schedule allows another Chief to be available for call back in the event of a large incident. Creation of the third Chief position will also provide a promotional pathway for part- time and full-time for the staff within the department.

The additional cost associated with the third Chief was built into the FY22-23 budget; however, the third Chief position has temporarily been filled on a rotating basis by a part time employee. As such, the District has not absorbed the cost of benefits for the third full time position. The cost of the additional benefits will be built into the FY22-23 budget.

The impact of potential changes to full time personnel's pay and benefits will be considered each year during budget preparation.

Part Time Positions

There are 45 part time personnel, many of whom have advanced medical and leadership training, that fill the needed shifts ensuring that the UCFRD has four personnel on duty 24/7/365. Four personnel on duty at all times is critical to the department continuing with its favorable ISO rating. The part time personnel work on an hourly basis and the commissioners voted in favor of a one dollar per hour raise to each of the hourly classifications in October of 2021. The part time personnel work for UCFRD only when they are not scheduled by their "home" department.

Maintaining the staffing level at the department is a concern moving forward as we need to be able to attract sufficient part time personnel to part time work at UCFRD. To do so, we need to continue to pay a competitive hourly wage. The impact of potential changes to part time personnel's hourly rate will be considered each year during budget preparation.

Support Staff Program

Support staff consists of the Chaplain, David Bolme, and several unpaid citizens who respond to various calls when they are on island to render assistance to the paid personnel.

The Chaplain takes on the role of providing spiritual and other support to those in the fire service and those affected by emergency crises. The Fire Chaplain is non-denominational and non-sectarian, ministering equally to people of all faith traditions or those with no faith tradition at all.

For UCFRD, the Chaplain is a volunteer staff position. The Chief has committed to support the Chaplain position by providing basic needs such as turnout gear, uniform and funding of some essential training. This arrangement does provide benefit to the District and the Chaplain to help ensure the most effective support is being provided to the District, and that the protections of confidentiality provided to Chaplains under Florida and Federal laws are in effect.

The district has resurrected the “volunteer program” of willing and committed citizens who are focused on providing support services and manpower to the district for any call for service. To avoid confusion with the Florida Bureau of Fire Standards, Lee County, and the state of Florida, it is no longer in the district’s best interest to label the program as a “Volunteer” program. The title of “Volunteer” suggests that the staff are certified as volunteer firefighters as set forth by the state standards.



Chaplain Bolme, Commissioner Filipczak and Chief Martin

File Photo UCFRD

To alleviate this potential issue, we have adopted the title of “Support staff”. This allows for the formal relationship and affiliation. This classification will not burden the group with certification, training, and compliance requirements found with the volunteer title. These support staff have proven invaluable during calls in helping with scene security, logistical, and humanitarian support. These individuals are offered safety and any other relevant training allowed by the state to further improve safety, awareness and their capabilities.

This year, the staff have been offered training and certification in CPR and as wildland firefighters. This will provide the district with an additional 5 wildland firefighters for use in the case of a wildland type fire incident in the preserve, or even in the residential areas. This training was offered in partnership with the Florida Department of Forestry’s Fire Division. The advantage of increasing the availability of these types of firefighters from 4 to 9 is an incredibly large increase in our ability to respond and mitigate fire emergencies on the island.



Commissioner LaVallie and Chief Martin File Photo UCFRD

It is my fervent wish to continue and develop this program in the future. The district is staffed with true professionals, but they are much more effective with the support of our additional manpower support staff. Our unique bridgeless barrier island environment compels us to further develop this program to ensure the maximum benefit and capabilities of this vital manpower source.

Fleet

In the case of a major event on our island neighboring departments can and will respond with their own marine units; however, once on island, they can only respond with personal protective equipment and small tools. The fleet of equipment at UCFRD is all the equipment that we have available for initial response. The district is properly equipped with the units it currently has in service; however, there are serious concerns about the reliability of the units. For instance, the average age of the two engines is well past the NFPA recommendation for fire apparatus, even in reserve status. Even with a robust maintenance program in place the reliability of several units is tenuous. As such, a plan needs to be instituted for replacement of units to maximize performance and reliability. A piece by piece assessment follows.



Engine 191

File Photo UCFRD

The adopted replacement plan for this engine is underway to ensure a reliable and cost-effective means of providing the fire flow and suppression ability as required to maintain our ISO rating for the district. Engine 191's replacement is scheduled to arrive in late April 2022. This will provide the district with a reliable and configured apparatus that will serve the district well for decades to come.



Engine 191 Replacement Illustration Photo courtesy of Pierce Manufacturing



Engine 192

UCFD File Photo

Engine 192's current unit's mileage is 23,780. It is in fair condition and can reliably perform its task as hose tender and a secondary fire fighting pumper. It is, however, not configured for island operations, and will need to be replaced in the future. This will provide the district with the opportunity to replace this with an apparatus with our community needs in miOur nd.



Brush 191 and 192

File Photo UCFRD

Brush 191 and 192

The two Forestry units have solid firefighting platforms that are the property of the district. The mechanical state of each of the trucks themselves is also tenuous. However, with the agreement in place, should one require replacement, this has been planned for through the Florida State Department of Forestry. Easy transfer of the district's fire equipment to a replacement truck is of minimal cost and is easily facilitated on the island. Maintenance costs have been significant this past year, and are being observed to ensure that these remain within acceptable parameters.

Utility 191



Utility 191

UCFD File Photo

Perhaps the least known and one of the most hardest working workhorses of the fleet is the utility unit. This 2003 Ford F-350 is the first new truck ever purchased by the district.

This unit originally was configured for small fire and brush operations. With the arrival of the forestry units, it was decided that this unit could be better utilized elsewhere. It has been placed at Pineland Marina since 2019. It is the primary unit tasked with all district duties on the mainland. Its primary duty is to haul fuel and supplies to the marina so that they can be shipped by boat out to the island. All business with transportation to training, meetings, or assisting with large incidents off of the island fall to this unit.

One of its other vital tasks is to tow Marine 191 to places needed for service, or in the event of severe weather, to county designated secure areas for protection. This not only protects both units, but assures that the district can re-enter the island to perform its duties long before civilian venues are open and facilitate transportation.

The weather and atmosphere of our location is beginning to take a toll on the unit as a whole. While the engine and transmission are in excellent and serviceable condition, the body and frame of the vehicle are showing the known corrosion and deterioration that we see with all vehicles and equipment on the islands as a whole.



Crew Boat (Marine 192)

File Photo UCFRD

Crew Boat

The crew boat was donated to UCFRD by former island residents, Don and Joann Beiermeister. This craft is used for regular transport of staff and supplies from Pineland Marina to the island. Using the crew boat minimizes use of our more robust but less efficient marine unit. The crew boat continues to age, but with the recent power plant replacement and non-emergency duties, I

am confident that with care and service that it will continue to perform as intended for several years.



Marine 191

File Photo UCFRD

Marine 191 is a 2004 Contender that was donated to the district from the Lee County Sheriff's Marine unit once it had been replaced by the sheriff's unit. The power plants were plagued with unexpected issues this past year due to the age of the units and have resulted in large service costs. As they are the same age as the hull itself, they have begun to fail and pose a reliability situation for the district. Presently the unit has received all necessary repairs for reliable and safe operation.

The current power plants are 2-cycle engines that possess plenty of power, but are inefficient as far as fuel and oil consumption. A more efficient 4 cycle engine is a much more modern and economical option for the district in the future.

GPS, Radar and Electronics are all outdated and are in need of replacement. This includes warning and lighting systems.

The Chief will present a variety of options related to Marine 191 to the commissioners for their consideration in summer of 2022.



Utility 191

File Photo UCFRD

ATV and Golf Cart

This vehicle remains the workhorses of non-emergency work on the island. The golf cart remains reliable, and with the configuration and service program in place, the cart will remain in service with the district for years to come.

First Response UTV

The UTV (Ranger), however, is in its final stage of service. It serves as an initial response unit and ALS first response for EMS calls. As of 2016, it was projected to have a service life of 5 years. I am happy to say that it has performed as intended. However, a replacement of this unit is urgently needed.



Photo courtesy of Polaris

Replacement planning is underway, but deficiencies in the configuration such as limited seating and insufficient power for its secondary role in pulling the second drafting pump, drive us to look at a different model of vehicle. A desirable and capable configuration would look like a unit that seats 4 with a patient transport capability. A 1000 cc power plant is much more suitable to pull the pump trailer reliably anywhere on the island. A general cost for the unit is in the area of \$20,000.00.

The chief staff believe that the unit being evaluated would have an overall longer service life. This is due to its operating within its operational limits, as well as improvements in technology. We estimate that the service life would be around 10 years.



Rescue 191

File Photo UCFRD

Rescue 191 Ambulance/Squad

The ambulance is in satisfactory condition and should serve us well for several years. No major issues have been identified and our primary concern will be servicing and maintaining its status. The largest problem with this unit is the lack of running road time. Brake systems are significantly affected with idle time. The chief staff are working with the auxiliary and part-time staff to ensure that this unit keeps moving regularly so that reliable performance is ensured.



Pump 191

File Photo UCFRD

Pump 191

The auxiliary pump is in good condition and is expected to provide reliable service for the next ten to twelve years. This provides water supply redundancy as well as availability for increased water source pumping capacity for very large incidents. This pump provides the district with not only secure water supply, but ISO points for department pump capacity.



Photo courteous of Kubota USA

Tractor

Newly added this year was the acquisition of a Kubota tractor. The primary function of the equipment is to provide the district with means to conduct maintenance on the accessways in a more regular fashion, as well as provide readily available equipment for use in urgent or emergency cases.

Commissioner LaVallie and Chief Martin have collaborated to construct service schedules, fueling and operational structure in which to use, maintain, and service this equipment for future use. A future project will be to train willing fire staff to operate the tractor in the event of an emergency. This will provide trained operators in the event that Commissioner LaVallie or other civilian operators are unavailable. The condition of the tractor and its associated attachments are in good condition and will provide years of reliable service to the district.

Station

The station is undergoing minor updates such as lighting, paint, and necessary repairs. In every allowable instance, labor has been offered by the firefighting staff to provide cost relief to the district. It is understood that some projects will require credentialed and insured professionals, and thus will be part of the overall project cost.

A final phase of the kitchen renovation will be conducted towards the fiscal year of 2022. The refrigerators need replacing. The plan is to use funds within the operating budget to facilitate the replacement of at least one refrigerator, if not both units.



Station 191

File Photo UCFRD

The station's emergency generator has failed and, according to the service professionals, is no longer repairable. Volunteer Firefighter's Assistant Grant (VFAG) through the state of Florida has been applied for to assist with the cost of this emergency replacement. This grant is a 50/50 matching funds grant. Replacement cost was last estimated at \$25,000.00.

The windows in the station should be replaced in the near future. They are original to the building of the station and show signs of wear and a general degradation of their efficiency and integrity. Window technology improvements will allow for safer and more efficient performance and strength to be hurricane rated for protection of the station's second floor. An estimated cost of the project is \$25,000.00.

In addition to the replacement of the windows, future planning for bay door replacement needs to be considered. While serviceable, signs of rust and corrosion are present and the age of the doors are both factors in evaluating their eventual replacement. Bay door replacement will need to be considered in the future.

The pole barn project remains in process. This structure will be paid for with impact fees collected from new construction throughout the district. The ability to place the wildland fire units into a hard structure will ensure longer service life of the units, as well as provide needed space for the district's storage and operations with service and maintenance.

Personal Protective Equipment and Handheld Equipment

The UCFRD has developed an ongoing program to ensure that the personal protective equipment needs are continually provided for within the budget set forth. The equipment needed includes turnout/bunker gear ensembles, as well as self-contained breathing apparatus replacement.

Currently the district has twelve sets of turnout gear. All will expire in 2024. This program is moving forward and is alleviating the large capital outlay challenge that is pending in 2024. A proposal to supplement the planned replacement with 4 sets of shared personal protective equipment (PPE) will allow for the replacement/allocation program to continue until self-sufficient on an annual schedule.

Lastly, this will not alleviate the condition that the staff now face with having to share gear between firefighters. As stated in the past, this presents a cross contamination risk, as well as severely limits the district's ability to equip the number of off duty firefighters that are willing to respond to the island in the event of a large incident.

Turnout Gear

Turnout gear (PPE) has a service life of 10 years. This is an NFPA, OSHA and NIOSH mandate regarding firefighter safety. A reasonable and sustainable program has been implemented as of 2021 to ensure that compliant PPE is available to our staff at all times.

The plan to obtain 4 to 5 sets of gear per year to institute a constant and manageable program to obtain, maintain and replace is underway and working well. The goal is to obtain a set of PPE for each staff member.

The district's plan continues with the district to obtain 4 sets of gear per year. The annual cost will be approximately \$12,000.00 per year. It is of worthy note that \$10,000.00 of that cost will be TIPS grant eligible with a 50% match up to \$10,000.00 limit per year., Thus, district cost would be approximately \$7,000.00 per annum. It is also noted that inflation of the project cost will be approximately 2% per year as given by the manufacturing representative. Unfortunately, this has increased due to inflation, but at the time of this writing, it remains as listed.



Lt. Martin 2017

Photo courtesy of Author



Point House Trail Fire 2017

UCFRD File Photo

Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus

Self-Contained Breathing apparatus are now up to acceptable par numbers due to allocation of additional units obtained in 2018. The units are of all the same, series, and approximate age. This replacement project will require a complete replacement in a single project. This will ensure that compatibility and compliance remain intact, as well as providing an economical pathway of replacement.

It is my intent to obtain used SCBA that fall within the required guidelines. This plan is presented with the thought of replacing existing units with certified used units of suitable capability. The intent is to implement in year 3 of the plan or even further in the future as dictated by unit condition, NFPA, OSHA, and our insurance carriers as well.

Radios

The radio system was replaced in early 2021. While it is difficult to anticipate the directives from Lee County in terms of radio system upgrades we have anticipated that an upgrade will be required approximately every ten years.

Night Vision Systems

The UCFRD was able to obtain two sets of night vision equipment through the generosity of a Firehouse Subs grant. We believe that future grant funding will be available and have anticipated that replacements will be required approximately every ten years. This equipment has proved indispensable during night calls for service on land and on the water ways.

Small Tools

There are a variety of small tools owned and maintained by UCFRD; however, the cost of replacement and repair is small enough that consideration during annual budget preparation is sufficient, without long term planning.

Access Way Maintenance and Draft Points

This district is unique in its charter that lays authority in establishing and maintaining these venues. This poses unique challenges to the district both in planning, maintenance, and funding.

Commissioner LaVallie's leadership in this aspect of the district's operations has been extraordinarily successful and invaluable. His future planning and organizing is vital to ensuring that the community has safe, maintained, and accessible access for emergency vehicles to respond throughout the community.

Designated drafting points located throughout the community provide a secured venue for fire units to access firefighting water sources. This is essential to maintain the community's ISO rating and ensure that sustained firefighting water is available throughout the community. Each

site needs to be evaluated for serviceability and new potential sources located and evaluated for use. This will be a focus project in 2022 and 2023.

Another area of concern includes the growing trend of some property owners to continue to encroach on the agreed 15-foot square access way needed for emergency apparatus. Commissioner LaVallie has reported that this is becoming a more significant issue with the passing of time. A renewed effort to advise, enlist assistance from property owners, and educate using methods to help keep and maintain these access venues. Community assistance is vital to the success of this endeavor. This is not only for the benefit of the individual property owner, but the neighbors in their community.

The board of commissioners have been made aware of the NFPA 1 requirement that fire department access ways is 20 feet in width. Therefore, in order to comply with the standards set by NFPA, it is the chief's and board's wish that this be achieved to ensure reliable access be afforded to all emergency apparatus throughout our community. This will require a 10' easement between properties to ensure that this accessway is facilitated. It is understood that this will be an increase over the previous 7.5' easement per property. This initiative will be a large project that will require planning, community assistance, and maintenance in the future.

The district is at a point where access way maintenance has progressed and is ready for the next step in improving quality and resilience of the access ways throughout the community. The district wishes to continue with the progress that has been made within the past 2 years.

Topics such as funding, equipment lease, rent or purchase, material allocation, and venue priorities are in need of study and review. I believe that improvement projects should be executed as they have been in the past. The realized advantage of regular upkeep will ensure that the money and materials will make us more successful in enduring the elements, increased use and passage of time. I believe that the BOC has the consensus of the community to ensure that the forward progress of this initiative is not lost.

The community's financial support in specific initiatives have been instrumental in the ability of the district to execute focused area projects. These have proven not only to be area successes, but positive test examples on how construction methods can succeed in the varied soil and drainage conditions within the district. The district is committed to continued support in these partnerships in the future again to keep the momentum that is underway.

The island will be undergoing a complete power grid upgrade facilitated by Lee County Electrical Co-Op, (LCEC) starting in 2022. Contacts have been made with LCEC, and it is the intent of this office to keep an open communication venue as this community-wide project is

carried out. This project affords the district an opportunity to realign and improve access ways while LCEC carries out their upgrades along the access ways.

This construction will impact access way service with temporary closures as work commences, however the staff is committed to keep observation on areas of concern and adopt altered response plans to ensure efficient and prompt service throughout the community during this extensive project.

Public Relations

This is a critical part of the district's operations. The size of the community demands that the district remain engaged and aware of needs, concerns, and opportunities to improve the delivery of services to our community.

The creation and continuation of the Chaplaincy program needs to be sustained and supported. Chaplain David Bolme has been instrumental in providing staff and public support in times of need. His position is official, and recognized by the industry, Lee County, and the state of Florida.

Chaplain Bolme has partnered with Chaplains from Lee County fire districts to share and support each other in normal duties, as well as large incident collaborative efforts, should they be needed.



Chaplain D. Bolme Photo courtesy of T. Bolme

Public safety monitoring and reporting and announcements are also a priority in our community. Public Service Announcements regarding weather, local concerns, and community opportunities will be continued and fostered to ensure that the bond between the district and community remains open and strong.

This year the department will begin a program focused on the children that visit our community. This will be of small scope, but a program potential was realized as we see an ever-increasing number of children that are on the island. Station tours are conducted almost daily. It is our commitment to continue community outreach and this program will help realize this goal.



Salty Approach AirShow 2021

File Photo UCFRD

Sprinkler and elevator service programs will be continued, as well the smoke detector program. We believe that these are important programs to create, sustain, and present to the community to optimize safety and property conservation.

Inspections and Enforcement

Inspections

The inspection program within the district remains active and successful in ensuring that the commercial partners in the community remain informed and compliant with the life safety codes and standards as set forth by Lee County and the state of Florida.

The mission of the district is to protect lives and property through a method of regular inspections, education, and a collaborative effort to obtain compliance with the standards regarding fire protection and life safety.

This year's focus has been working with our busiest venues management and owners in improving safety within the establishment. I'm happy to report that they have been working with the district to improve fire and life safety conditions within their establishment and surrounding grounds.

Enforcement

Enforcement is most likely to be the least favorite sphere in which the district operates. This is a delicate balance between the need for safety, compliance, public opinion and pressure, as well as needs of the community. There continues to be an effort to outline and define the scope, as well as an overall look on this aspect of the district's responsibility.

Subjects such as house numbers, brush piles, open burning, and fireworks are included in the topics that occupy the subject of the district's enforcement stance and execution. While these are current subjects under review and evaluation, it is understood that these can be resolved.

It is the intent of the staff to maintain a consistent response and mitigation of these, and every other issue within the district. We currently possess and maintain close relationships with the other agencies involved in the safety of the community. These include Lee County Sheriff, Florida Wildlife Conservation, Florida Department of Forestry, Florida Bureau of Professional Standards, and Lee County Code Enforcement.

The staff is making every attempt to listen, learn, and evaluate our response and stance in each of the above listed issues, as well as other topics that appear from time to time. It is understood that the community's protection and well-being are the first and foremost priority of the staff, the board of commissioners and the district as a whole.

Constant evaluation, re-evaluation, and study of industry sourced information, are all integral in forming an organized response to issues in which compliance and enforcement are required. Communication between the command staff ensures consistent enforcement and education regarding all these issues. We strive for compliance through education, communication, and follow-up measures to ensure success.

Budget Ramifications and Special Assessment

The existing special assessment is due to expire in the year 2024. The funds from this assessment are vital in maintaining 2 of the department's 4 person shift staffing. Maintaining this staffing level is critical to maintaining the district's ISO rating of 4/4x. Without this staffing, the island ISO rating falls to a 9 or 10, depending on the evaluation formula used. In any case, most property owners will be uninsurable, or will find that their insurance premiums will increase dramatically.

The renewal of the special assessment will also allow the district to continue its forward progress in maintaining the established access ways throughout the community. The access ways only increase in their importance to our community as we see an increase in new residential construction, infrastructure upgrades, and potential commercial construction.

While efforts have been successful in consolidating spending and reducing operating costs, the growth of the community, as well as general economic factors make the need for a continuation of this assessment vital in maintaining the financial stability of the district. It remains a critical part of the financial solvency of the district and supports its ability to provide the level of service that the community has grown to expect.

Worthy of note is the decrease in the district's millage rate from 3.75 in 2018 to a current 3.5 mill rate. With the renewal of a special assessment, the millage rate can remain in this range in the future. This thought is supported with the increase of tax base from the new construction growth that the island is currently experiencing, as well as careful management of the operations of the district in the coming years.

Studies with the district's accountant, treasurer, and the fire chief are presently underway to assess the exact needs from a special assessment. As the island continues to grow, and property values remain favorable, the size of the needed assessment could decrease. However, inflation and general cost increases over the course of the 10-year course of the assessment need to be

studied and quantified before a reliable fund amount is presented to the board of commissioners and the public.

I believe that the district needs to look again at the level of unassigned reserves available. Currently I believe that the district has an insufficient sum available to deal with unforeseen emergencies. Being in the environment and secluded location that we are, I think our risk to sustain such an event is not an “if”, but more of a “when”.

I urge the board of commissioners to look at the current level, considering factors such as community growth, economic and any other related impacts during this evaluation. If an adjustment is found to be warranted, I ask them to take action to adjust the sum allocated for this purpose.

Fund Raising

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual fun run had to be suspended for the year 2020. However, Commissioner Jenkins was again able to coordinate and execute our most successful fun run ever in December of 2021. Over \$17,000.00 was raised from the event. This was a welcome return of this event and enjoyed by many.

The district intends to continue to participate in community events such as the scavenger hunt, island cleanup day, and support for other island-wide events and projects.

District merchandise sales from the station and through an online store constructed by David and Teresa Bolme have given us great success in establishing an ongoing fund-raising platform for t-shirt sales. This will give the district a long-term venue to continue with fundraising with merchandise.



2021 Fun Run



UCFRD File photos

Conclusions

The future of the district is bright and full of opportunities. The UCFRD has a solid base from which to operate in our community's times of need. The proposed plan is presented and offered as a tentative pathway to continue to develop and assure our continued ability to respond to calls for service within our community. These proposals will ensure that the district will be responsive to the community changes and remain able to execute proper response and mitigate incidents that occur within our community and surrounding waterways.

The calls for service increased 11.6% in 2021. This trend is shared by adjacent communities of all sizes. No signs of decrease are seen in the future for these neighboring communities. With the development underway, our district is no exception.

The allocation and upgrades in staff, equipment, facilities, and operational planning have made the UCFRD safe, compliant, and capable of mitigating emergencies in our community with a level of service provided by mainland agencies of similar size.

The annual costs for the programs regarding a third full time staff member, PPE, and managed fleet replacements pose a need for a focused look at the UCFRD budget. Fortunately, the needs for the district to progress with the pace of growth of the community over the next year are present and can be funded with planning, discussion, and stable funding.

Budgetary concerns and impacts were taken into consideration with regard to the proposals and recommendations listed above. These proposals are intended to provide longevity, sustainability, as well as ongoing evolution that keeps pace as the community grows and evolves in the future.