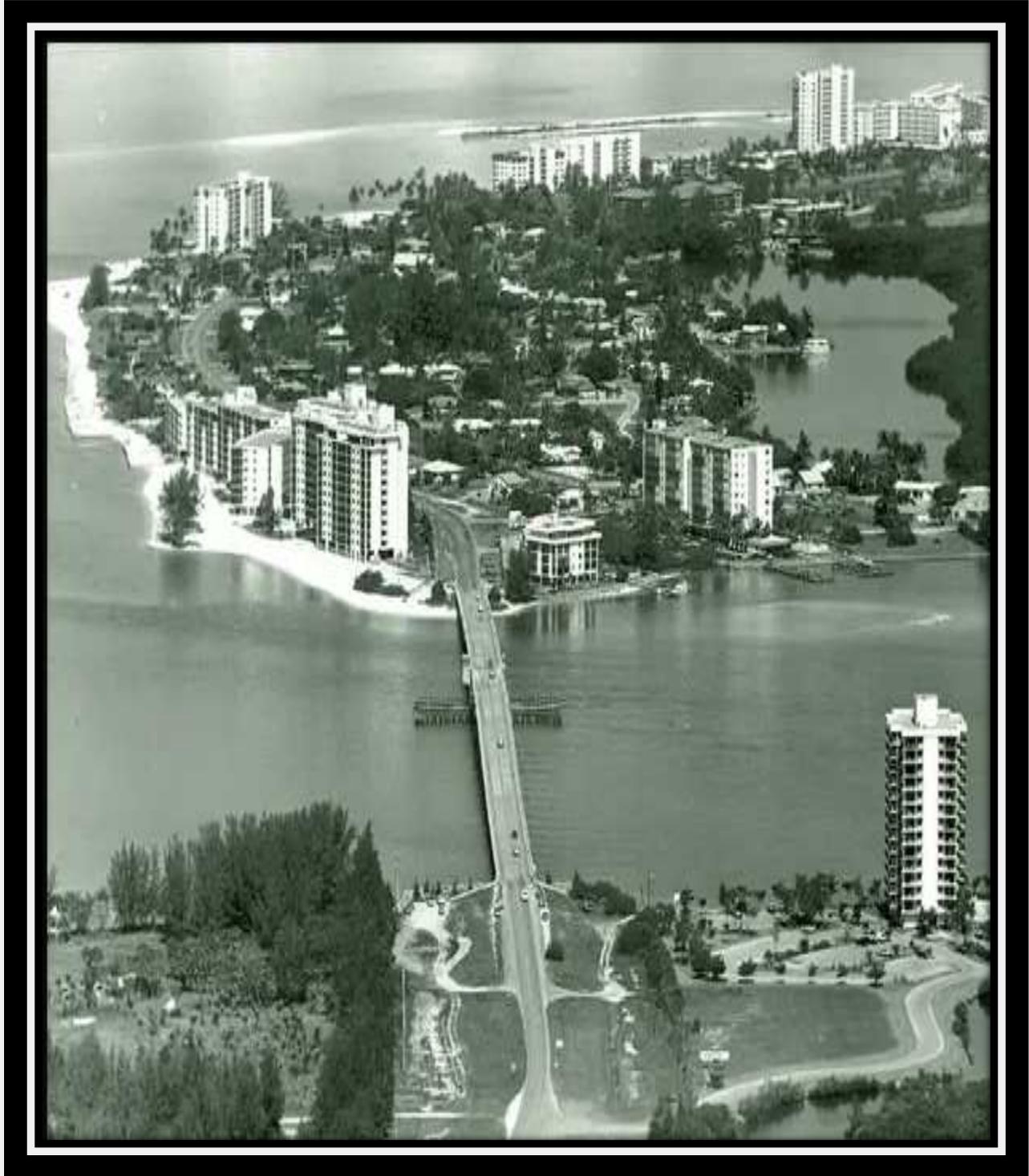




**Fort Myers Beach Fire Control District
Community Budget Information
Fiscal Year 2022/2023**



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Welcome

I am pleased to present to the Community the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 proposed Budget Packet for the Fort Myers Beach Fire Control District. Fiscal responsibility and Fire District Sustainability are some of the most sacred responsibilities I am vested with as your Fire Chief/District Manager. As the sole Fire and Emergency services provider, the District is dedicated to providing our community with the highest level of service in a fiscally responsible manner.

The Fort Myers Beach Fire Control District takes pride in our reputation of excellence in service to the community through our dedicated, committed, and highly qualified team of professionals. For over seven decades, the Fort Myers Beach Fire Control District has responded to both emergent and non-emergent calls for service with compassion, quality, and professionalism. We are, and always will be, a small community-based organization dedicated to serving our community no matter the need.

This community budget packet is designed to answer many common questions concerning your Fire District. This packet will also demonstrate to the individual taxpayer how their tax investment will be utilized in the upcoming fiscal year.

Respectfully,

Ronald L. Martin

Ronald L. Martin – Fire Chief/District Manager

Organizational Chart



Fire District History

The Fort Myers Beach Fire Control District (District) began with very humble beginnings in 1949 when the Beach Improvement Association organized a small volunteer fire department. Shortly after that, in 1950, the small volunteer fire department was organized under the Florida Special Acts as an Independent Taxing District. Before 1949, the City of Fort Myers Fire Department provided the only organized fire protection from City Fire Station number one in Downtown Fort Myers.

Independent and Dependent Taxing Districts are forms of local limited government created by the State, a County, or a Municipality to provide specific services to a defined area. In the case of the District, 1500 community residents petitioned Governor Fuller Warren and the Florida Legislators to form an Independent Special Taxing District for the control and prevention of fires.

Shortly after the formation of the Fire District, the community recognized a need for enhancement in emergency services once again. This time the enhancement in emergency services would be the transportation of the acutely sick and injured to the hospital. In the 1950s, these services were provided by funeral homes in the City of Fort Myers; island residents could wait for hours until they were transported to the hospital. This need gave birth to a volunteer organization, the Fort Myers Beach Rescue Squad, which co-existed with the Fire District for the next decade.

In 1963, the Fort Myers Beach Rescue Squad officially became a part of the District; subsequently, the District's Division of Emergency Medical Services was born. Currently, the District is one of two Fire Districts in Lee County authorized to provide emergency medical transport services to our community. Over the last six decades of providing this service, countless lives have been saved thanks to the District's ability to provide advanced care and rapid transport to the hospital.

Our community has undergone many changes in the last 73 years, and the Fire District is no different. As our community has grown and evolved, we have evolved, providing a wide variety of emergent and non-emergent services. Services provided include fire suppression and emergency medical services, fire code permitting and enforcement, public education and risk reduction, and disaster response and mitigation.

Special Districts

A Special District is a unit of local government created for a specified purpose, as opposed to a general-purpose government, i.e., Town, County, or City. Special Districts operate within a defined geographic boundary and are created by:

- Florida General Law
- Special Acts approved by the State Legislators
- Local Ordinance
- Rule of the Governor and Cabinet

Special Districts can be either "dependent" or "independent." If a single county or single municipality has one or more of the following powers over the special District, it is deemed "dependent":

- Authority to designate all of its governing body members to serve as the governing body for the Special District.
- Authority to appoint all members to the Special District's governing body.
- Authority to remove any governing body member at will during unexpired terms.
- Authority to approve or veto the Special District's budget.

A Special District is independent if it does not have any dependent characteristics described above. According to statistics produced by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity in 2022, every property parcel in the State is covered at least by one Special District. Statewide as of 2022, the number of Independent and Dependent Districts were as follows:

- Independent Districts - 1,218
- Dependent Districts – 615

Additionally, as of 2022, there were 63 Fire Control and Rescue Districts statewide, Pinellas and Lee County accounting for a high percentage of these Districts. Special districts have been essential to our State's development and economic vitality since 1822, when Florida was still a territory. Special Districts allow community members more control over essential services that are not easily

accessible or available by a general-purpose government. Another ancillary benefit of Special Districts is that a community can provide itself with a higher level of service than what is provided by a general-purpose government.

Special District Funding

As a limited form of local government with a defined purpose, the State Legislators limit the available funding mechanisms. The primary funding mechanisms available to Independent Special Districts are as follows:

- **Ad Valorem Tax**

Also commonly referred to as property or real estate tax, ad valorem is based on value. The greater the value of a parcel of property, the higher the tax assessment.

- ❖ Through its enabling legislation, every Independent Special District is provided a maximum millage rate it can impose. In the Fort Myers Beach Fire Control District, our maximum millage (mills) is 3.0 mills per \$1,000 of assessed value.

- ❖ The formula for calculating your Ad Valorem:

- Just/Market Value limited by Save our Homes Cap = Assessed Value
- Assessed Value – Exemptions = Taxable Value
- Taxable Value x Millage Rate/1,000 = Gross Taxes

- **Non-ad Valorem assessment**

This is a special assessment or service charge which is not based on the value of a parcel of property.

- **User fees**

These are fees authorized by Florida Statutes and enacted by an Independent Special Districts elected Board. These fees fund specific services such as emergency medical transport services, fire inspection, and permitting services. The goals of these fees are not for an Independent Special District

to generate profits but to offset costs and ease the Ad Valorem burden of those services on property owners.

Special District Funding versus Municipal (Town or County) Funding

When we compare and contrast funding sources between an Independent Special District and other municipal governments in Florida, one will quickly see the differences. An Independent Special District is limited in its authorized funding sources. In contrast, other forms of local municipal governments have access to many funding sources to limit the impacts on property taxes. Examples of funding available to municipalities that are *NOT* available to the Independent Special Districts are, but are not limited to, the following:

- Discretionary Sales Surtax
- Communication Service Tax
- Special Assessments
- Transient Rental Tax
- Governmental Service Fees
- Local Option Sale and Use Tax
- Local Option Gas Tax

As a result, other forms of municipal governments can keep Ad Valorem tax rates (property tax) low while supplementing revenue needs through other forms of taxation.

Non-Funded State Mandates

As a Special District, for the most part, we are insulated from non-funded state mandates imposed by the State Legislators upon local government. When the Legislators impose a mandate upon Special Districts, we must comply. These mandates do not carry any funding from the State. Some recent examples of non-funded state mandates are the following:

- Special District Performance Review Audit for FY 2022/2023 = \$75,000

- Fire Service Workplace Safety/Health Rules = \$150,000 plus recurring annual costs
- Website Disability Accessibility Requirements = Ongoing and recurring costs
- Firefighter Assumptive Illness/Injury Requirements = \$17,300

Understanding the District's Budget

Government agencies must report all revenues and expenses on a fund basis. Larger governments generally have multiple funds, including Special Revenue Funds, Capital Improvement Funds, and Enterprise Funds. Under normal circumstances, the District operates a single Fund called the "General Fund."

There are four sections of the District's budget:

- Revenues
- Funds carried forward from the prior year
- Expenses
- Reserves

Revenues

The District estimates the fees that will likely be collected for building inspections, rental property registrations, special event fees, and ambulance transports. In addition, other revenues such as donations, secured grants, and interest earned are also estimated. The Ad Valorem taxes are assessed based on the millage rate required to support expenses and reserves, less anticipated revenues, and funds carried forward from the prior year.

The equation is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 &+ \textit{Expenses} \\
 &+ \textit{Reserves} \\
 &- \textit{Revenues} \\
 &- \textit{Funds carried forward from the prior year} \\
 &= \textit{Millage rate required to generate taxes to balance the above}
 \end{aligned}$$

Funds Carried Forward From the Prior year

The District estimates the Fund balance for the current fiscal year and accounts for this balance in the revenue section of the upcoming budget. Once the year is complete, and accounting is finalized, remaining funds are carried forward into the upcoming budget. The adjustment is achieved through a resolution adopted by the Board of Fire Commissioners. This generally coincides with the completion of the audited financial statement.

Expenses

The District forecasts the expenses for the budget considering several factors, depending on the type of expense. Wages generally comprise 75% - 80% of the operating budget and are calculated based on collective bargaining agreements. The Florida Retirement System determines retirement expenses, and Lee County establishes health insurance rates. Several expense categories are based on historical trends, such as repairs and maintenance for facilities and equipment, utilities, communication fees, legal, professional services, and standard operating supplies. While other expenses, namely commercial insurance and specific contractual obligations, are bid annually or periodically.

Debt service is budgeted according to an amortization schedule provided by the lender and must be budgeted in compliance with executed agreements.

Capital purchases can often account for a large portion of the budget. The District funds capital equipment through the Capital Sustainment and Replacement Reserve. Equipment is assessed annually to determine if replacement estimates, both end of useful life and replacement cost, are accurate. Based on the assessment, the replacement can be postponed, or conversely, the replacement is accelerated. Mission-critical assets may be replaced on a stricter schedule to avoid failure during crucial operations.

Reserves

Assigned Reserve levels are based on the District's current and future needs and are reviewed each year during the budget process. Each government entity must establish reserves tailored to its needs.

The District's largest Reserve is for Capital Sustainment and Replacement. The depreciation amount for capital assets with a value of \$5,000 or greater is added to this Reserve each year to fund the replacement of equipment. When equipment is scheduled for replacement, the estimated cost is placed in the budget, the Reserve account is reduced by the same amount.

The Emergency Disaster Reserve allows for continued operations in the event of a natural or manmade disaster; the amount is determined by estimating the cost of an all-out operation of 30 days.

The Millage Sustainment Reserve has been gradually building over several years. The expressed purpose is to sustain operations should a recession or other long-term economic stressors occur. A secondary goal of this Reserve is to stabilize the millage rate to mitigate financial and operational impacts on the community.

The District also retains a Reserve to aid in potential costs associated with the Firefighter Presumptive Illness legislation passed in 2020.

FMBFD Budgetary Philosophy

To understand the District's Budgetary Philosophy, a critical document that is publicly available is our Strategic Plan. Another essential component to understanding the District's Budgetary Philosophy is one of sustainment. The District is "built-out"; we do not have vast opportunities for new development, which equates to new tax revenues. Therefore, a principal focus year over year is the sustainment of District Operations.

The Strategic Plan is important because the goals established are set by internal stakeholders and our community. In addition, the Strategic Plan is a living document and helps set funding goals yearly. In Fiscal Year 2022/2023, the following are some of the funding priorities as identified in the District's Strategic Plan:

- Strategic Priority #3: Implement financial and revenue strategies to sustain current and meet future needs.
 - *Objective: Monitor funds and plan for facility replacement*
 - *Objective: Implement a long-term system of contributions and withdraws to maintain capital and infrastructure, and organizational health*

- Strategic Priority #4: Achieve Operational Efficiency
 - *Objective: Development and implementation of an Information Technology plan*
 - *Objective: Develop and implement a cyber-security resilience plan*

- Strategic Priority # 6: Efficiently and effectively respond to emergencies
 - *Objective: Ensure efficient and effective vehicle replacement and maintenance*
 - *Objective: Ensure adequate protective equipment and turnout gear for emergency responders*

- Strategic Priority #9: Recruit and train for excellence throughout the workforce.
 - *Objective: Ensure all employees have the opportunity for growth and development*

- Strategic Priority #10: Ensure capacity to meet staffing needs at all levels of the organization.
 - *Objective: Personnel Retention*

- Strategic Priority #11: Utilize the strategic planning and performance management system to guide the organization to perform at a high standard.
 - *Objective: Assess financial strategies to ensure long-term sustainability and excellent service.*

FMBFD Historical Budget Review

20-Year Operational Expense Trend

Over the past 20 years, the District has averaged annual operating expenses of approximately \$3,000,000. This cost does not reflect added cost of personnel.

Table 1 demonstrates the District's operating cost trends over the past 20 years.

In fiscal year (FY) 2022/2023, operational expenses are projected to be approximately \$4,961,035 representing a 9.1% increase from the current fiscal year. The main contributing factors to this growth are inflation in consumables, equipment, and fuel costs.

Personnel Cost

In FY 2022/2023, Personnel Services is projected to be \$11,905,440 *see Table 2*; this represents an increase of 2.6% from the current fiscal year.

The main contributing factors to this growth are the Cost of Living and the need to make wage adjustments. Providing competitive wages that match our local cost of living is essential for the District to retain and acquire new talent for the organization's future.

Through either retirement, voluntary resignations, or termination over the last twelve years, the District has turned its workforce 1.5 times.

Even with an increase of 2.6%, the District is still within industry norms of personnel costs consisting between 70-80% of its total operating budget.

Table 3 demonstrates the 20-year trend comparing the cost of personnel and the District's operational cost.

FMBFD Preliminary Budget 2022/2023

In the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022/2023, the principal funding goals will be the sustainment of District Operations and planning for a large Capital Infrastructure Project.

2022/2023 Expenses

In the upcoming fiscal year, the District is projecting an increase in its total operational expenditure of 4.5%, or \$718,950 *see Table 4*. Total operating expenditures are the total operating expenses of the District, including personnel costs. The main contributing factors to this increase are unprecedented inflation rates and changes in the local labor market conditions that require adjustment of District wages.

Reserves

The District maintains five assigned reserve accounts *see Table 5* which are:

- Capital & Infrastructure/Bridge Reserve
- Disaster Reserve
- Millage Sustainment Reserve
- Firefighter Presumptive Illness
- Other Post Employment Benefit (OPEB)

At fiscal year-end 2021/2022, the District projects a total reserve balance of \$8,471,735 *see Table 5*.

All District reserves are "Assigned" by the Board of Fire Commissioners (BOFC), meaning these funds have a specified purpose and cannot be utilized without BOFC approval.

Capital and Infrastructure/Bridge Reserve (C&I/Bridge)

- Purpose #1: Long-term planning for the Capital and Infrastructure replacement of assets with a value of \$5,000 or greater and groups of assets with a value of \$5,000 or greater.
- Purpose #2: This is the reserve account that the BOFC has authorized District staff to draw upon annually for needed revenue while awaiting new tax revenue from the Tax Collector. Upon receipt of new tax revenues, the amount utilized is replaced.

- The C&I/Bridge reserve is built out through 2038, forecasting the replacement of capitalized equipment, District fleet, and facilities (Station 32 & Station 33) *see Table 6*.
- The C&I/Bridge reserve operates on a straight-line depreciation method, with built-in allowances for inflation. This determines the District's annual savings goal for replacing each asset.
- Establishing and maintaining a Capital and Infrastructure reserve represents excellence in fiscal stewardship and management as it benefits the taxpayer through a stabilized millage rate yearly.

C&I/Bridge Reserve Balances

- *Projected balance YE21/22 = \$6,081,741*
- *FY2022/2023 Contributions = \$1,224,520*
- *FY2022/2023 Purchases = \$1,387,290 see Table 7*
 - In FY 2022/2023, I will be recommending the following key changes to this reserve account:
 - Recommendation #1: Changing the funding model for Fire Engine replacement from a 20% cash and an 80% finance model to a self-funded or cash acquisition policy.
 - Recommendation #2: Transferring \$3,000,493 to a new assigned Capital Building Project reserve for Station 31/HQ construction.

Disaster Fund

- Purpose: This fund exists to fund 30-days of District operations during times of disaster, such as a major hurricane directly impacting the community *see Table 8*.
 - Balance = \$1,200,000

Millage Sustainment

- Purpose: This fund was created by the Board of Fire Commissioners in the post-great recession years. This fund is meant to provide a short-term solution for District solvency should an economic crisis occur.
 - *Savings goal = is \$1,200,000*
 - Current balance = \$1,064,145
 - In FY 2022/2023, I will recommend to the Board of Fire Commissioners that we change the organizational funding goal for this Reserve to \$2,000,000.
 - This new funding goal will be a multi-year incremental goal meaning there will be no impact on the millage rate to meet this Goal. The principle justification for this recommendation is the historic uncertainty economically, sociologically, and politically in both the domestic and international environments. A drastic change in one of these areas can cause a swift and potentially profound change to local economic conditions.

Firefighter Presumptive Illness Reserve

- This is a small reserve maintained by the District to cover the cost associated with the Presumptive Cancer Legislation.
 - Balance = \$50,000

Other Post Employment Benefit (OPEB)

- In FY 2022/2023, I will be recommending to the BOFC that this fund be closed and funds reallocated to other Assigned Reserves as follows:
 - *Current Balance = \$765,850*
 - *Re-allocation = \$629,995 to C&I/Bridge for self-funding of Engines*
 - *Re-allocation = \$135,855 to Millage Sustainment Fund*

Capital Building-Station 31/HQ Reserve

- In FY 2022/2023, I will be recommending to the BOFC that the District creates a new Assigned Reserve specifically for the construction of Fire Station 31/HQ project.
 - Establishing funds = Transfer current accumulated funds saved for Station 31/Hq replacement from C&I/Bridge Reserve
 - *Starting Amount = \$3,000,493*
 - *Future funding = Unallocated Funds at Year-End*
 - *Funding Goal = 50% of the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) of the new facility*

The changes proposed to the District reserve *see Table 8* in FY2022/2023 have specific fiscal strategies, which are as follows:

- Improvement of the District debt capacity (debt to income ratio)
- Respond to changing cost of credit by moving to a self-funding methodology for larger capital assets
- Establish specific financial goals for funding the new Fire Station 31/Headquarters project

Total Authorized District Staffing

In FY 2022/2023, the District's authorized Staffing will consist of 63 positions and three emergency service delivery models. Due to the District staffing shortage and to control overtime wages and forced overtime impacts on staff, the District established the following emergency service and delivery models. These three models are as follows:

- Ideal (Excellent): Consisting of:
 - Three staffed Fire Apparatus
 - Two staffed Ambulances
 - One staffed Battalion Chief

- Moderate (Good): Consisting of:
 - Two staffed Fire Apparatus
 - Two staffed Ambulances
 - One staffed Battalion Chief

- Minimum (Fair): Consisting of:
 - Two staffed Fire Apparatus
 - Two staffed Ambulances
 - No staffed Battalion Chief

Fiscal Year 2022/2023 Budget Proposal

Recommended Rate

After careful review and consideration of the District's needs, I will be recommending a Millage rate of **2.9851** *see Table 9* based on the following:

- This will account for continued inflation

- Increase the District emergency response model to Moderate or Ideal on more days once staffing numbers are increased

- It is projected to provide unallocated funds at year-end, which the BOFC can assign to the replacement of Station 31

Community Budget Information FY 2022/2023: List of Tables

Table 1: 20-Year Operational Costs

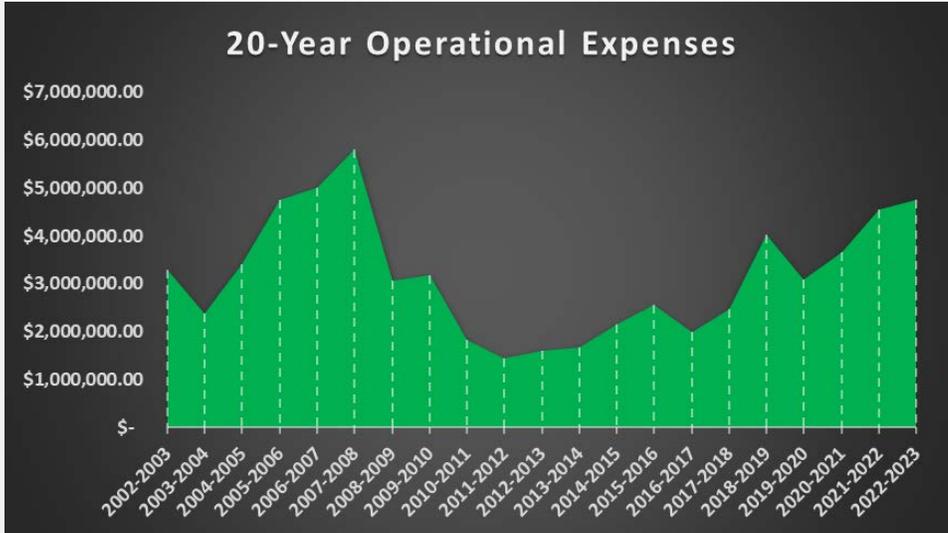


Table 2: 20-Year Personnel Cost

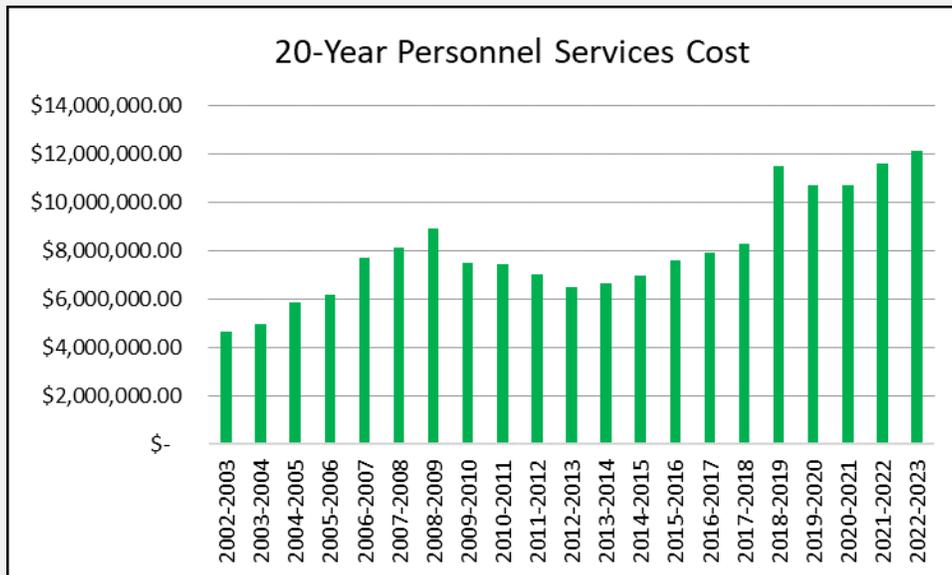


Table 3: 20-Year Operational vs Personnel Service Cost



Table 4: 3-Year Operational Expense Trending

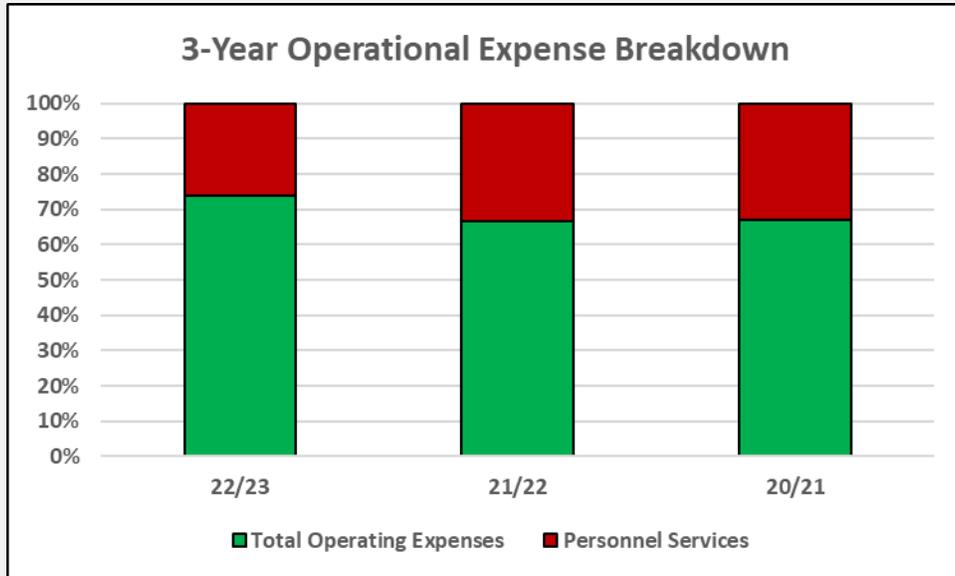


Table 5: FY2021/2022 Reserve Balance Projection

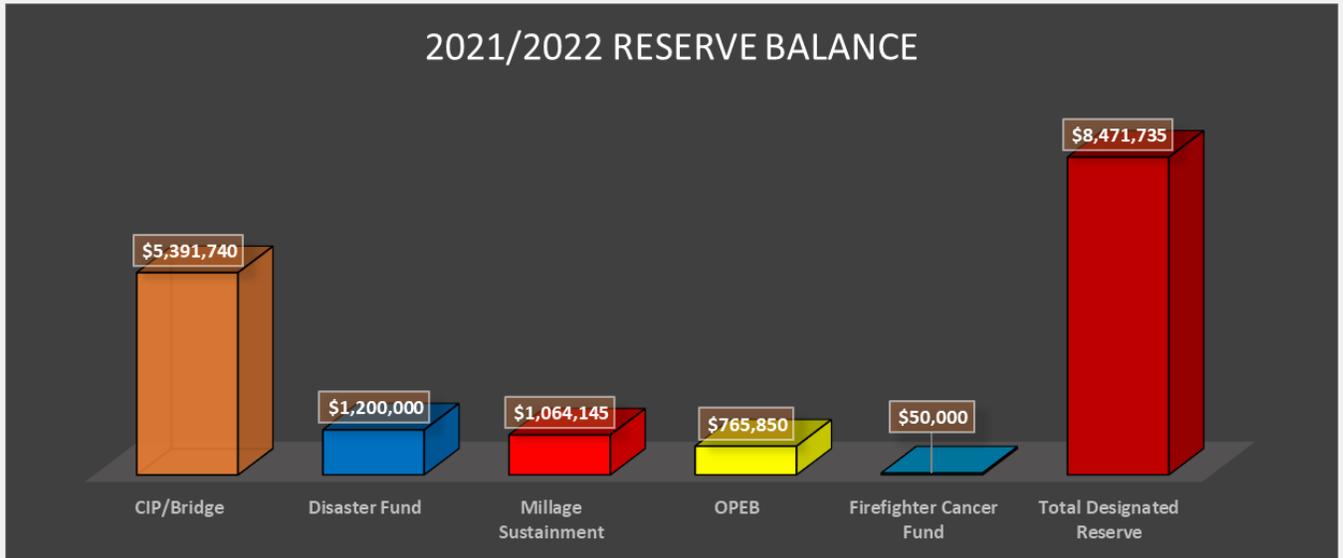


Table 6: C&I/Bridge Contributions and Purchases

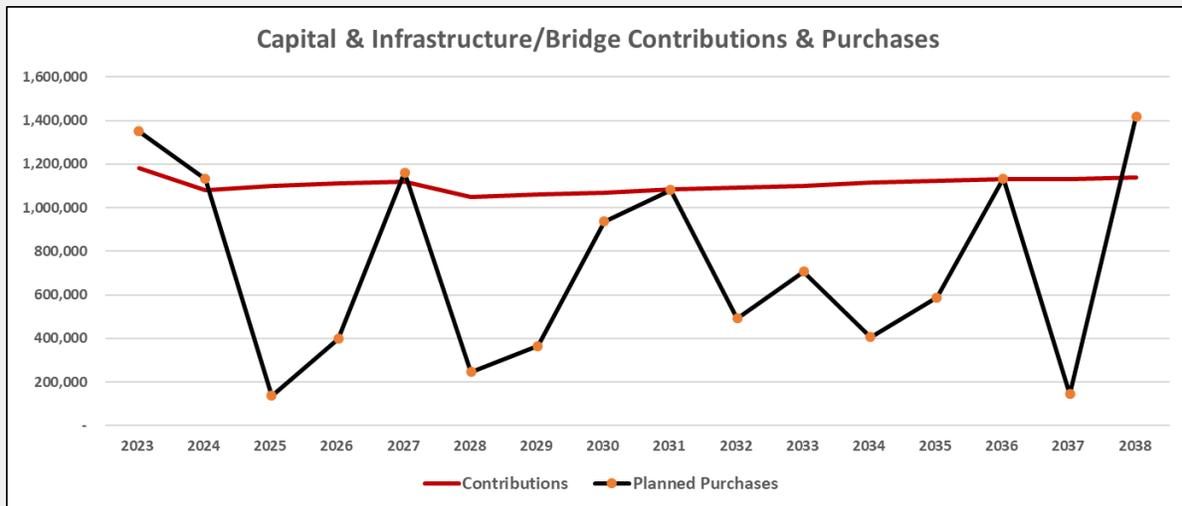


Table 7: 2022/2023 C&I/Bridge Expenditures

Capital Sustainment and Replacement Program						
Activity for year ending September 30, 2023						
	Note	Balance 9/30/22	Scheduled Contribution	Plan Adjustments	Scheduled Expenditure	Ending Balance 9/30/23
Apparatus (Engines 20%)	3	436,213	216,700	552,933	-	1,205,846
Vehicles	1	1,112,919	263,670	147,995	(1,010,000)	514,584
Suppression/Protection/Life Safety		362,356	91,187	-	(15,900)	437,643
Communications		120,239	46,149	-	(52,285)	114,103
EMS	4	89,129	64,153	(17,801)	(89,305)	46,176
Technology		214,571	34,363	-	(40,000)	208,934
Furniture/Office Equip.		160,831	5,915	(137,661)	(12,800)	16,285
Building Improvements		159,286	161,808	113,452	(167,000)	267,546
Buildings (20%)	2	3,336,618	340,575	97,785	-	3,774,978
Transfer to 31/HQ Fund						(3,000,493)
Totals		6,081,741	1,224,520	667,124	(1,387,290)	3,585,602

Table 8: FY2022/2023 Projected/Restructured Reserves

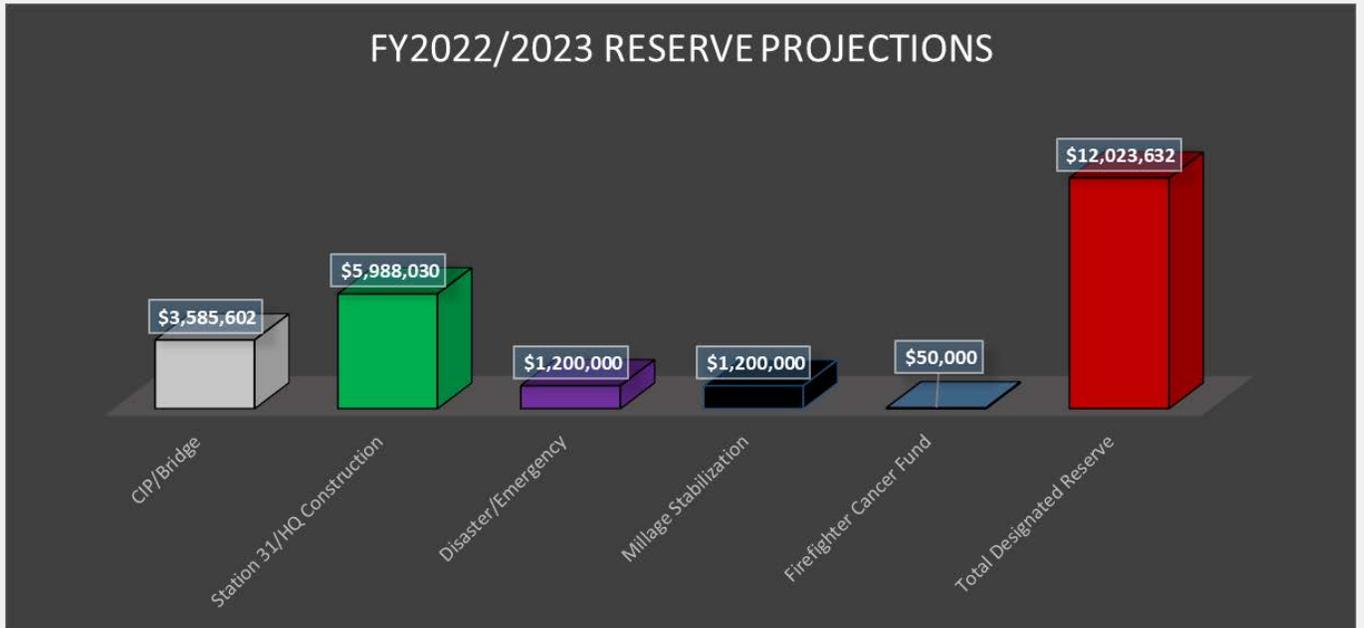


Table 9: FY2022/2023 Budget at Recommended Rate

Fort Myers Beach Fire Control District			
Proposed Budget for Year-end September 30, 2023 SUMMARY VERSION			
		22/23 Budget	%
1	<i>Mills</i>	2.9851	
2	<u>Revenues</u>		
3	Ad Valorem taxes	15,035,717	92.9%
4	Impact fees	9,190	0.1%
5	Intergovernmental	13,900	0.1%
6	Charges for services	804,300	5.0%
7	Miscellaneous	287,000	1.8%
8	Proceeds from the sale of capital assets	40,000	0.2%
9	Proceeds from debt	-	0.0%
10	Total Revenue	16,190,107	100.0%
11	Fund Balance/Reserves Brought Forward	12,700,000	44.0%
12	Total Revenues and Funds Brought Forward	28,890,107	
13			
14	<u>Expenditures</u>		
15	Personal Services	11,905,440	70.6%
16	Professional & Contractual	1,488,900	8.8%
17	Communications & Freight	103,140	0.6%
18	Occupancy and Commercial Insurance	279,800	1.7%
19	Repairs and Maintenance	303,330	1.8%
20	Miscellaneous & Contingency	33,690	0.2%
21	Operating Supplies & Tools	731,100	4.3%
22	Education & Training	276,360	1.6%
23	Other Services	101,550	0.6%
24	Capital Expenditures	1,383,695	8.2%
25	Debt service	259,470	1.5%
26	Total Operating Expenditures	16,866,475	100.0%
27			
28	Designated Fund Balance (Reserves)	12,023,632	41.6%
29	Total Expenditures and Reserves	28,890,107	

Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the Fort Myers Beach Fire Control District an Independent District?

This is a common question, and the answer is three-fold:

- 1.) When the District was formed, Lee County, Florida, was predominantly a rural county. Most of the County's population and municipal services were located in and around the City of Fort Myers. In addition, at the time of District formation in 1949, Lee County had only won its independence from Monroe County, Florida, 62 years earlier. So the provisions of Public Safety Services to remote areas of the County were challenging.
- 2.) Secondly, the District defined geographical boundaries incorporate the Town of Fort of Myers Beach and portions of unincorporated Lee County, which includes San Carlos Island.
- 3.) As in 1949, having an Independent Taxing District allows our local community members to fund, prioritize, and provide an essential public safety service based on our community's needs. An example is our ambulance transport service. Our community has prioritized the need for this service for over six decades. Because our community has local control, we are the only barrier island community in Lee County with two dedicated ambulances.

Special districts have been essential to our State's development and economic vitality since 1822 when Florida was still a territory. Special Districts allow community members more control over essential services that are not easily accessible or available by a general-purpose government. Another ancillary benefit of Special Districts is that a community can provide itself with a higher level of service than what is provided by a general-purpose government.

Special Districts are instrumental in the success of our State and Local Economies.

Why is the Fire District always the highest of all Independent Districts listed on my property taxes?

Many community members pose this question, especially during tax and budget season. We will answer this in three parts.

- 1.) If we look at local government spending, education, public programs, public works, and public safety services (police, fire, and EMS) are some of the most costly services for local government.
- 2.) Public safety services is a personnel-driven service industry, meaning public safety does not build or produce a physical, tangible product. Instead, in public safety, our product is the highly trained medical clinicians and firefighters who provide service to the community. As a result, a large portion of public safety entities budgets, 70%-80%, are assigned to personnel services.
- 3.) Operating costs for public safety services are unique and different from other forms of municipal government. Public safety services equipment, tools, vehicles, and uniforms are highly regulated for safety and performance standards to protect the workforce and the community.

Can you explain how the District determines the number of Firefighters needed to protect and serve the community?

Fire and emergency medical services is highly regulated through laws, codes, and industry standards in all facets of its operations. These regulations are passed through by various entities, including but not limited to the following:

- Florida State Division of the State Fire Marshal
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
- Occupation Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
- Various Federal State Regulators

One area, which is highly regulated through law and industry standards is Emergency Operations staffing. In the Fire Service, staffing is governed by the industry-wide standard: *NFPA 1710 - Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by the Career Fire Departments*.

While NFPA standards are not laws, they have been recognized by both Federal and State courts as the standard for minimum acceptable performance. As a result, NFPA 1710 is now the industry benchmark used when conducting a critical analysis of a fire department's performance.

Nationally, only 37% of all Fire Agencies can fully meet the extensive requirements of NFPA 1710.

NFPA 1710 does help the District determine its Effective Response Force (ERF), which is the number of firefighters needed to efficiently and safely operate at a fire scene. To determine the District's ERF, we use our adopted community risk assessment and the guides from NFPA to determine our most likely fire emergency, which is as follows:

- Assumptions: 2,000 Square Feet, two-story single-family dwelling without basement, and no additional threatened structures

- The District's performance goal is to have 17 firefighters on the scene within 12 minutes of the 911 call.
 - 17 firefighters is the District's ERF to our most probable type offire incident.

Once the ERF is determined, the District then evaluates the frequency with which these fire incidents occur. Utilizing this data, the District has developed three emergency service delivery models. Each model is designed to consider the opposing factors of providing the highest level of service to the community with the community's ability to fund these services.

The District's three emergency service delivery models are as follows:

- Ideal Emergency Service Deliver Model (*Excellent Service to the Community*)
 - Consists of two (2) staffed Fire Engines with 3-persons
 - One (1) Ladder Truck staffed with 3-persons
 - 2- Ambulances with 2-Persons
 - 1- Battalion Chief
- Moderate Emergency Service Delivery Model (*Good Service to the Community*)
 - Consists of one (1) staffed Fire Engine with 3-persons
 - One (1) Ladder Truck staffed with 3-persons
 - 2-Ambulances with 2-persons
 - 1-Battalion Chief
- Minimum Emergency Service Delivery Model (*Fair Service to the Community*)
 - Consists of one (1) staffed Fire Engine with 3-persons
 - One (1) Ladder Truck staffed with 3-persons
 - 2-Ambulances with 2-persons

The ERF per NFPA 1710 greatly expands with the size or complexity of a fire; for example, a fire in a High-Rise building in our District requires a total of 42 Firefighters to comprise the ERF. This is a daunting standard for most fire agencies in Lee County to meet. Therefore, the Lee County Fire Chiefs Association has adopted an Automatic Aid system so that surrounding fire agencies can meet NFPA 1710 standards.

Participating in the Lee County Automatic Aid system provides many ancillary benefits to the District and individual taxpayers, which are as follows:

- When the District is at Moderate or Minimum Service Delivery Models, it ensures that our community receives an Effective Response Force.
- When the community experiences a more significant event, the District will receive the appropriate number of firefighters to mitigate the emergency.

Who is the NFPA?

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is a global self-funded nonprofit organization established in 1896. NFPA works to eliminate death, injury, property, and economic loss due to fire, electrical, and other related hazards. NFPA Standards are developed through committees; these committees consist of groups of professionals from all facets of life and industry. A common misconception about NFPA committees is that it is driven solely by the Fire Service and Unions. This is not entirely the case; NFPA committees are comprised of a variety of experts in the industry.

FMBFD staffing compared to out-of-state community staffing

My family member worked part-time as a firefighter in a small Midwest town, similar to the Fort Myers Beach Fire District, and they had only one or two people on a Fire Engine. So how did they meet NFPA 1710, and doesn't that mean the District is overstaffed?

This is a great question; every community must make its own decision based on its unique economic, political, and legal profile. Although this community did not

meet NFPA 1710 standards, and that is okay, many communities cannot meet this standard; only 37% can meet this standard in its entirety.

Running a Fire Apparatus with one or two persons is not ideal; it places the firefighters and the community at risk. In our Fire District, there are times when a fire apparatus is staffed with only two individuals. However, these instances are typically for a short duration, and there are immediate operational limitations on the functionality of that unit.

Finally, is the District overstaffed in emergency operations? The answer to that question is No! The District attempts to meet the minimum performance standard for our community with fewer people and an automatic aid agreement. If the District attempted to meet the minimum performance standard of NFPA 1710 with the recommended personnel, it would staff its fire apparatus with four personnel instead of three. This would take our authorized emergency operations staffing from 45 to 66, which is not a fiscal possibility.

References

News Press (2015, June). *Fort Myers Beach: A look back in time*