

Can we afford it?

The Cuba Joint Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners has voted to purchase two (2) new pieces of fire apparatus to replace several trucks that have reached the end of their useful life.

Currently - the Fire District has six (6) trucks, ranging in age from a 1992 pumper to a 2018 pickup miscellaneous vehicle. Our second oldest truck is a 1998 aerial.

The 1992 pumper is currently out of service and listed for sale.

Since its inception in 2012, the Fire District Board of Commissioners has tried to maintain a "pay as we go" existence, paying cash (\$320,000) for a 2017 pumper/tanker, the pickup miscellaneous vehicle (\$55,000) and bringing all of our firefighters Personal Protective Equipment (PPE – turnout gear) into compliance with applicable Federal and State requirements. We have also replaced several pieces of small equipment (portable pumps, portable generators, hose, etc.), much of which has been in use for twenty to thirty years. All of this has been done without incurring any debt for the District and its tax payers.

Unfortunately, the fact that so many of our trucks are ageing out at the same time, and because of the increased cost of maintaining and replacing trucks, we can no longer maintain our pay as we go practice.

The biggest problem for the District is the replacement of our 1998 aerial. Originally purchased for \$330,000, it will now cost anywhere from \$800,000 to over \$1,000,000. Inflation at its' finest.

Over the past seven (7) years the Fire District has been able to put an average of \$117,000 per year into our reserve funds to cover the repairs and replacement of equipment and apparatus. This has been accomplished without ever having to increase the annual budget or go over the famous New York State 2% property tax cap – even when the allowable increase was less than 1%. Out of these reserves, and with the remaining operating funds dedicated to fixed expenses, we have brought the Fire District equipment fairly up to date, and are providing good quality equipment for our firefighters to use in protecting our Fire District taxpayers and residents.

Our only stumbling block now is the timely replacement of trucks. Because of their specialty nature, and the increasing safety demands required by Federal and State mandates, truck prices have increased at a rate twice the "accepted" rate of inflation.

As a result, the Board of Fire Commissioners, in conjunction with the officers of the Fire Department, are reducing the size of our fleet of vehicles, and attempting to bring the remaining ones more current while still maintaining the amount of equipment that the insurance industry requires in order to give area policy holders decent insurance rates.

The Cuba Joint Fire District Board of Commissioners, after months of research and debate, feel that by upgrading all of our apparatus now, rather than later, would be in the best interest of the District.

We know that a million dollars sounds like a lot to spend but, by financing this amount now versus trying the "pay as you go" policy can be done **without having to increase the annual budget** and still allow the District to continue to put monies away into reserves for future replacements. And we may not have to finance things. We have researched bonds, financing and leasing. Fire Districts can now lease apparatus, and more and more manufacturers are offering this option.

We do, however, need voter approval to follow any of these routes. That is why we have placed Proposition 1 on the ballot of our annual election which will be held on December 10, 2019, from 3 to 9 Pm, at the A. A. Arnold Community Center at 4 Green Street.

The Fire District Board of Commissioners ask you to approve this proposition.

If anyone has any questions, please contact any Commissioner (see below). There is also a slide presentation on the Fire District portion of the Cuba WEB site, under Community - Fire District, that contains more detailed information on this topic.

Contact info: email to cjfd13679@gmail.com

Commissioners: Lee Clark, Tab Loftis, Wayne Butts, Doug Rettig, Sr., Mike Johnson
Thank you for your time.