

Firefighting capabilities a concern at Fallen Leaf

By Kathryn Reed

Firefighting capabilities at Fallen Leaf Lake are not great, but they might get a little better soon.

On the Dec. 7 community services district board's agenda is a resolution supporting the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors' proposal to fund a new pump for the fire boat.

The current pumping capacity is so minimal that it is causing some residents of the South Shore enclave to pay extremely high homeowner insurance rates, while others don't qualify for coverage in case there were a fire.



Fallen Leaf Lake is trying to become better equipped to fight a fire. Photo/LTN file

The Insurance Service Office, better known as ISO, gives areas a rating, which then plays a role into the cost of insurance.

"Many on the west side of the lake are paying exorbitant property insurance or can't get it," board President Tom Bacchetti told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Fallen Leaf Lake is also looking at obtaining a used pumper

truck from CalFire that would replace one of its four older apparatuses.

While the area has never been flush with a large operating budget, the county took away \$60,000 in 2009. That was the Aid to Fire program. To make up the difference the board raised the special tax from \$395 per parcel to \$595 a year. Still, there is a systemic deficit.

Bacchetti said the community doesn't want to raise that fee, so likely when it's up for a three-year renewal next summer the fee will be the same.

"There's always a shortfall. We have reserves," Bacchetti said. "There are things that should be done that are not getting done."

The dismal financial situation has also gotten the attention of the Local Area Formation Commission, which has some oversight of the community service district.

In the staff report from this fall's LAFCO meeting it says, "The fire chief indicated that the district had made deep across-the-board cuts in its equipment and other unspecified line items. For example, the district has stopped purchasing turnouts and [personal protective equipment] and has not made any repairs to its radios, hoses and apparatuses to bring them up to compliance with [National Fire Protection Association] standards."

Ironically, the Fallen Leaf Lake Community Services District was formed in 1982 to provide better fire suppression to the area. It was another five years before the district incorporated parks and recreation into its purview.

While the mostly volunteer department doesn't get that many fire calls, the threat is there. There were six structure fires between 2003 and 2012. However, there were 49 non-structure fires in that 10-year period. And had firefighters

not stopped the 2007 Angora Fire on the ridge, it would have swept through the Fallen Leaf Lake community.

South Lake Tahoe Fire Department has a longstanding agreement to provide aid when necessary. The city also handles Fallen Leaf Lake's dispatch needs.

Knowing Fallen Leaf Lake is having issues, South Tahoe Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News* he plans to reach out to Chief Gary Gerren to see if the city could do more.

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Notes:

- The board meets Dec. 7 at noon at the El Dorado Hills Community Center.
- New officers will be named to the board. Bacchetti will remain on the board, but is stepping down as president.