

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

BILL #: CS/HB 1047 Cedar Hammock Fire Control District, Manatee County

SPONSOR(S): Local Administration & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee; Gregory

TIED BILLS: CS/HB 1049 **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:**

FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 117 Y's 0 N's **GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Approved

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

CS/HB 1047 passed the House on March 2, 2022, and subsequently passed the Senate on March 10, 2022.

Cedar Hammock Fire Control District (CHFCD) was created by special act in 1957. Trailer Estates Fire Control District (TEFCD) was created by special act in 1963. CHFCD is located in southwest Manatee County, spans an area of over 26 square miles, and serves a population ranging from 75,000 to 100,000 depending on the season. TEFCD serves Trailer Estates, a deed restricted community located in Bradenton.

On November 2, 2021, the electors in TEFCD voted to abolish and dissolve TEFCD and transfer the real and personal property of TEFCD to the Trailer Estates Park and Recreation District.

The bill amends the charter of CHFCD to incorporate the former area of TEFCD into the district. The bill calls for CHFCD to call and conduct a referendum on the question of whether CHFCD is authorized to provide fire control and emergency services; levy and collect taxes, assessments, and fees; and administer fire rescue programs and services within the district's expanded boundaries.

The Economic Impact Statement filed with the bill anticipates an increase in funding of CHFCD if the bill is approved by a referendum of the voters in the affected area.

The bill was approved by the Governor on May 16, 2022, ch. 2022-242, L.O.F., and will become effective upon the approval by the Governor of HB 1049 and approval by a majority of the qualified electors within the Cedar Hammock Fire Control District and those qualified electors within the district's expanded boundaries voting in a referendum held on or before November 8, 2022, except that sections 2 and 3 establishing the referendum became effective on May 16, 2022.

I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

Present Situation

Independent Special Fire Control Districts

An independent special fire control district is a type of independent special district¹ created by the Legislature for the purpose of providing fire suppression and related activities within the territorial jurisdiction of the district.² Chapter 191, F.S., the “Independent Special Fire Control District Act” (Act), provides standards, direction, and procedures for greater uniformity in the operation and governance of these districts, including financing authority, fiscally-responsible service delivery, and election of members to the governing boards for greater public accountability.³ The Act controls over more specific provisions in any special act or general law of local application creating an independent fire control district’s charter.⁴ The Act requires every independent fire control district be governed by a five-member board⁵ and provides for:

- General powers;⁶
- Special powers;⁷
- Authority and procedures for the assessment and collection of ad valorem taxes;⁸
- Authority and procedures for the imposition, levy, and collection of non-ad valorem assessments, charges, and fees;⁹ and
- Issuance of district bonds and evidences of debt.¹⁰

As a type of independent special district,¹¹ independent special fire control districts also are subject to ch. 189, F.S., the “Uniform Special District Accountability Act.”¹²

An independent special district only possesses the powers granted by the authorizing law.¹³ Therefore, any boundary expansion must be approved by the Legislature.¹⁴ A special district may not levy ad valorem taxes without approval by the affected voters in a referendum.¹⁵

¹ A “special district” is a local government unit of special purpose, as opposed to general purpose, operate[d] within a limited boundary and created by general law, special act, local ordinance, or by rule of the Governor and Cabinet. S. 189.012(6), F.S. An “independent special district” is any special district that is not a dependent special district, which is defined as a special district in which: the membership of the governing body is identical to the governing body of a single county or municipality, all members of the governing body are appointed by the governing body of a single county or municipality, members of the special district’s governing body are removable at will during their unexpired terms by the governing body of a single county or municipality, or the district’s budget is subject to the approval of the governing body of a single county or municipality. See s. 189.012(3), F.S.

² S. 191.003(5), F.S.

³ S. 191.002, F.S.

⁴ S. 191.004, F.S. Provisions in other laws pertaining to district boundaries or geographical sub-districts for electing members to the governing board are excepted from this section. *Id.*

⁵ S. 191.005(1)(a), F.S. A fire control district may continue to be governed by a three-member board if authorized by special act adopted in or after 1997.

⁶ S. 191.006, F.S. (such as the power to sue and be sued in the name of the district, the power to contract, and the power of eminent domain).

⁷ S. 191.008, F.S.

⁸ S. 191.006(14); 191.009(1), F.S.

⁹ Ss. 191.006(11), (15), 191.009(2)-(4), 191.011, F.S.

¹⁰ S. 191.012, F.S.

¹¹ S. 191.014(1), F.S., providing that new districts are created by the Legislature pursuant to s. 189.031, F.S.

¹² S. 189.031, F.S.

¹³ *Bd. of Comm’rs of Jupiter Inlet Dist. v. Thibadeau*, 956 So. 2d 529, 531 (Fla. 4th DCA 2007). See also *Halifax Hospital Medical Center v. State of Fla., et al.*, 278 So. 3d 545, 547 (Fla. 2019).

¹⁴ S. 191.014(2), F.S. (“The territorial boundaries of [an independent special fire control] district may be modified, extended, or enlarged with the approval or ratification of the Legislature.”).

¹⁵ Art. VII, s. 9(b), Fla. Const.

Cedar Hammock Fire Control District

Cedar Hammock Fire Control District (CHFCD) was created by special act in 1957.¹⁶ CHFCD is located in southwest Manatee County, spans an area of over 26 square miles, and serves a population ranging from 75,000 to 100,000 depending on the season.¹⁷ CHFCD is administered by a five-member board of fire commissioners elected by the voters of the district in nonpartisan elections to four-year terms.¹⁸

CHFCD is authorized to levy ad valorem taxes against the taxable real estate within the district at a rate not to exceed 3.75 mills.¹⁹ CHFCD imposed a millage rate of 1.3 mills for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2021.²⁰ CHFCD also has the authority to levy non-ad valorem assessments, the rate of such assessments being fixed annually by a resolution of the board.²¹ CHFCD imposes a range of non-ad valorem final fire assessment rates for residential properties, commercial/industrial properties, and acreage/agricultural properties. According to the schedule adopted by the district, non-ad valorem assessment rates range from \$15.62 per acre for a vacant platted residential lot to \$221.78 per mobile home.²² CHFCD may also impose and collect impact fees,²³ issue bonds, and utilize other revenue-raising capabilities authorized in chs. 189, 191, and 197, F.S.²⁴

Trailer Estates Fire Control District

Trailer Estates Fire Control District (TEFCD) was created by special act in 1963²⁵ and serves the community of Trailer Estates, a deed restricted community.²⁶ TEFCD is administered by a board of five commissioners.²⁷ The charter of TEFCD does not provide ad valorem taxing authority separate from the general statutory authority provided to all fire control districts.²⁸ TEFCD is authorized to levy special assessments against taxable real estate lying within its territorial boundaries.²⁹ TEFCD had an assessment rate of \$78.60 for fiscal year 2021-2022.³⁰ The Economic Impact Statement filed with the bill indicates that TEFCD and CHFCD entered into an interlocal agreement in which TEFCD pays CHFCD \$72,500 per year for assistance in providing services to the residents of TEFCD.

¹⁶ Ch. 57-1546, Laws of Fla. Ch. 2000-391, Laws of Fla., codified all special acts relating to Cedar Hammock Fire Control District and provided a single, comprehensive charter for the district. Ch. 2007-283, Laws of Fla., merged the Whitfield Fire Control District into the Cedar Hammock Fire Control District. Ch. 2015-197, Laws of Fla., revised the boundaries of Cedar Hammock Fire Control District, reduced the board of fire commissioners from seven members to five, continued the boards power to levy ad valorem tax, and changed the non-ad valorem assessments procedures and rates.

¹⁷ Cedar Hammock Fire Control District, *Our History*, available at <https://www.chfr.org/our-history/> (last visited on February 3, 2022).

¹⁸ Ch. 2015-197, s. 4(1), Laws of Fla.

¹⁹ Ch. 2015-197, s. 5, Laws of Fla.

²⁰ Cedar Hammock Fire Control District, *Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Audited Financial Report*, pg. 7, available at <https://www.chfr.org/audit-information/> (last visited February 3, 2022).

²¹ Ch. 2015-197, s. 6, Laws of Fla.

²² Cedar Hammock Fire Control District, *Resolution 2021-4 Final 2021-2022 Non-Ad Valorem Fire Assessment Rate Schedule*, available at <https://www.chfr.org/budgetary-information/> under Resolution 2021-04 Final Fire Assessment Rates 2021-2022 (last visited on February 3, 2022).

²³ Ch. 2015-197, s. 8, Laws of Fla.

²⁴ Ch. 2015-197, s. 9, Laws of Fla.

²⁵ Ch. 63-1587, Laws of Fla. Ch. 2005-350, Laws of Fla., codified all special acts relating to Trailer Estates Fire Control District and provided a single, comprehensive charter for the district.

²⁶ Trailer Estates Park & Recreation District, *About Us*, available at <https://www.trailerestates.com/about-us/> (last visited on February 3, 2022).

²⁷ Ch. 2005-350, s. 3, Laws of Fla.

²⁸ Ch. 2005-350, Laws of Fla. No taxing power is explicitly stated in the charter other than the intent of TEFCD to be an independent special taxing district and its power to levy special assessments against taxable real property lying within its territorial bounds. Ch. 2005-350, ss. 1 and 7(1), Laws of Fla. See also s. 191.009(1), F.S.

²⁹ Ch. 2005-350, s. 7(1), Laws of Fla.

³⁰ Trailer Estates Fire Control District, *Fiscal Year Budget October 1, 2021 to 9/30/2022*, available at <https://www.tefiredpt.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-2022Budget.pdf> (last visited on February 3, 2022).

On November 2, 2021, the electors in Trailer Estates voted to abolish and dissolve TEFCD and transfer the real and personal property of TEFCD to the Trailer Estates Park and Recreation District, effective September 30, 2022.³¹ Trailer Estates Park and Recreation District currently has no authority to provide fire protection and prevention services within the Trailer Estates community served by TEFCD.³² To include the area of TEFCD within a different fire control district requires a vote of the qualified electors within the area approving the imposition of the new district's ad valorem taxes.³³

Effect of the Bill

The bill amends ch. 2000-391, Laws of Florida,³⁴ to incorporate the area of TEFCD within CHFCD. The bill calls for the Manatee County Supervisor of Elections to call and conduct a referendum on the question of whether the CHFCD is authorized to provide fire control and emergency services; levy and collect taxes, assessments, and fees; and administer fire rescue programs and services within the district's expanded boundaries.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

The Economic Impact Statement filed with the bill anticipates an increase in funding of CHFCD if the bill is approved by a referendum of the voters in the affected area.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT FILED? Yes No

D. NOTICE PUBLISHED? Yes No

IF YES, WHEN? November 21, 2021.

WHERE? *The Bradenton Herald*, a daily newspaper published in Manatee County, Florida.

E. REFERENDUM(S) REQUIRED? Yes No

³¹ Manatee County, *School Board/Municipal Elections, November 2, 2021 Sample Ballot*, available at https://www.votemanatee.com/Portals/Manatee/Documents/2021%20Generic%20Sample%20Ballot%20Final.pdf?ver=9Dm1LEBI8_7EkZjbcGIUSQ%3d%3d (last visited on February 3, 2022). See also Manatee County, Supervisor of Elections, *2021 School Board and Municipal Elections*. 410 voters voted "Yes" (93.82%) and 27 voters voted "No" (6.18%). Results available at <https://enr.electionsfl.org/MAN/3077/Summary/> (last visited on February 3, 2022).

³² Ch. 2002-361, Laws of Fla.

³³ Art. VII, s. 9(b), Fla. Const.

³⁴ As the law has been amended by chs. 2007-283 and 2015-197, Laws of Fla.

IF YES, WHEN? On or before November 8, 2022.