



Bodacious Market and Café unveils new look

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Navarre Fire digging out of hole

Chief: Small department facing ‘a significant financial deficit’

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Pensacola News Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Immediately upon assuming the job of chief of the Navarre Beach Fire and Rescue District, Jonathan Kanzigg began taking steps to pull his small department out of what he defines as “a significant financial deficit.”

At his urging and on the same night they hired him as their full-time chief,

the district’s governing board voted July 14 to approve an incremental rate increase of 6.22% that will raise annual rates for residents living on Navarre Beach by approximately \$27 per year and bring in about \$74,000 in additional revenue.

Prior to the July vote by the board, the annual fire assessment for residential buildings on Navarre Beach stood at approximately \$527 per property, with commercial structures charged 44 cents

per square foot.

No other North Florida fire district had charged a flat fee for residential properties.

Following the board vote, Kanzigg took the next important step of reaching out in an open letter to property owners on the island to let them know what the board had done and why it had raised Navarre Beach fire fees for the first time in 10 years.

“Unfortunately, I must share difficult

news. The district is facing a significant financial deficit and the board was only recently made aware of the severity of the situation,” he wrote. “The previous fire chief was not forthcoming about the department’s financial condition.”

Kanzigg also noted the rate increase “is designed to increase revenue year after year” and “does not eliminate the deficit” the district faces.

Kanzigg’s letter described the depth of the district’s financial straits and the measures he was implementing in both

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From left, Fire Chief Shannon Stone, Deputy Chief Rick Barberi and Dylan Wickes pose for a photo during a ceremony at the Midway Fire District in Gulf Breeze on Aug. 3. Wickes was presented a Life Saving Award for his heroic action on July 5 when he rescued his elderly neighbor as her house was on fire. PHOTOS BY GREGG PACHKOWSKI/PENSACOLA NEWS JOURNAL

Midway man honored for saving his neighbor’s life

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For Dylan Wickes, July 5 was a night like any other — until it wasn’t.

Wickes, who lives on Sanibel Lane in Midway, was doing a simple “Walmart run” just after 10 p.m. when he noticed his elderly neighbor’s house appeared to have candles lit.

“I was gone for like two minutes, and when I came back the whole house was in flames,” Wickes said.

Wickes said he ran to his home to get his 12-and-6-year-old daughters before returning back to Linda Bucy’s home. After grabbing a water hose and calling 911, he said one of Bucy’s oxygen tanks exploded.

“Windows shattered. It was like a movie,” he said.

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The burned-down house of Dylan Wickes’s neighbor on Sanibel Lane in Gulf Breeze. Wickes was presented a Life Saving Award by the Midway Fire District for his heroic action on July 5 when he rescued his elderly neighbor as her house was on fire.

Judge orders rewrite of property tax amendment

Jim Rosica and John Kennedy
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

A Tallahassee judge said the title and summary for the November ballot initiative to reduce homeowners’ property tax, originally proposed by Gov. Ron DeSantis, is “clearly and conclusively defective” and ordered it rewritten.

The proposed state constitutional amendment, however, will still be on the ballot; Circuit Judge David Frank made clear he wasn’t asked to remove it and had no legal authority to do so.

As Frank wrote in an Aug. 3 order on three consolidated lawsuits challenging the measure: “Specifically, (the) Constitution and (state law) require this Court to ... determine whether the language fairly informs the voter of the chief purpose of the amendment and does not mislead. They fail both prerequisites and must be rewritten.”

Attorney General James Uthmeier now must redraft Amendment 3’s title and summary language. It will need no less than 60% approval from voters statewide to be added to the Florida Constitution.

In his order, which was docketed shortly before 11 p.m., Frank said the title – “Save Our Homes From Excessive Property Taxes” – “is more akin to a political slogan. It is not fair or neutral. It advocates a policy position: to stop excessive property taxes.”

He goes on to cite a laundry list of problems with the summary, in part saying it “sets forth three political taglines – ‘Ensuring funding for core services,’ ‘Protecting small businesses,’ and ‘Ensuring fairness for Florida residents’ – giving reasons why voters should vote for the proposal.

“But the purpose of a ballot summary is to explain what an amendment would do, not to advocate for its adoption,” he added.

Uthmeier has “10 days (to) prepare and submit to the Department of State a revised ballot title or ballot summary that corrects the deficiencies identified by the Court” A request for comment is pending with his office.

What does the amendment do?

Among other things, Amendment 3 would increase the state’s homestead exemption from the current \$50,000

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