

Fire assessment vote heading to recount

June 26, 2021



After an initial miscount, a vote to increase funding to the Crescent City Fire Protection District through resident property taxes may have actually passed by an incredibly slim margin.

When the count finished Tuesday, unofficial results pointed to a failed benefit assessment by less than one vote — 49.99 to 50.01%. This was possible because of weighted ballots, which gave voters with greater property value more say. However, a mistake was discovered the following day when County Recorder Alissia Northrup and other election staff conducted an informal recount by hand.

A “yes” ballot had been accidentally placed in the “no” pile.

Northrup said the elections office did not “find” an extra ballot, rather it was simply a sorting error. The single “yes” ballot would flip the overall result to a passed benefit assessment.

After learning of the miscount, the CCFPD board of directors ordered an official recount, during an emergency meeting Thursday.

At the meeting, Director James Nelson warned a recount could mean the discovery of other errors or bad ballots, and the vote could not pass anyway. A recount was scheduled for later in the month.

If approved, the benefit assessment would generate more than \$420,000 per year for the fire department. The department currently collects \$42 per residence in the district, however, with a 2006 assessment ending this year, that number would have dropped to \$24. The proposed assessment would increase cost per residence to \$98, according to a CCFPD report.

Northrup said the margin of this vote is unprecedented.

“I’ve never had a race this close,” she said.