



Felton Fire Protection District:

218 Fire Assessment

A Sustainable Future

Introduction

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Who Is Felton Fire?

- The Felton Fire Protection District is a non-enterprising Special District
 - Presently run completely by volunteers
- Formed in 1935 to provide fire services to the community of Felton
- In 1947 it was formed as a Special District after the Castello fire that burned down several buildings in downtown Felton
 - *“Felton voters overwhelmingly approved the formation of the Felton Fire district in the next election. Each property owner in the district would be assessed 43 cents per \$100 assessed value.”*
- The station itself was built in 1954 and has been run historically by 20-30 volunteers and limited paid staff



Operations of The Felton Fire District

- For The Last 91 years:
 - 1935 - 1990's
 - Paid Fire Chiefs and Volunteer Firefighters
 - 1990 - 2020
 - Paid Fire Chief, limited paid day Firefighters, volunteer Firefighters
 - 2020 - 2024
 - Paid Fire Chief, multiple paid Firefighters, volunteer Firefighters
 - 2024 - Present
 - Volunteer Fire Chief, Volunteer Firefighters, and no permanent paid employees



What Happened?

- Staffing and response plummeted due to an over reliance on a volunteer model that did not take into account the societal changes in volunteering
- The fire district continued to ask more of its volunteers, all the while the volunteers were not able to keep pace
 - At times, management within the district pushed for more response that lead to a condition of poor morale, lack of response, loss of attendance and even injuries attributed to fatigue
- Forcing the District to spend its surpluses and pull from reserves to pay for firefighters and equipment without the funding model to support that



District Crash

- In early 2024
 - The Felton Fire District volunteers failed to respond to over 10% of all calls made to 911
 - This is directly related to a lack of leadership and a volunteer model that was overburdened by call volume and infighting
- In June of 2024
 - Chief Blum assumed a 120 day contract to assist the Felton Fire District.
 - He found a complete lack of regard for proper response procedures and infighting among the firefighters
 - He Immediately enacted a brown-out of the station during off hours to maintain an emergency response for the community of Felton until a staffing model could be implemented to provide for coverage
- A contract for services was initiated but ultimately failed
- A mass firing of the remaining Felton Fire volunteers also ensued



District Rebuild

- On June 9th 2025 the district changed the staffing model from a in district volunteer response to a shift driven 24 hour a day staffing model.
- Since June 9th 2025 the fire district has been staffed non stop with a minimum of 2 firefighters and one captain. This staffing has provided uninterrupted service for the community and outlying areas
- We have gone from a low of 4 firefighters to 25 presently on the roster and another 11 in training
- We have increased our certification and training level to keep pace with call volume and modern tactics. All but two firefighters are presently EMT's and a large portion are also certified to the Firefighter 1 and II levels.



Where Are We Now?

- Volunteer Hours - a minimum of 2,232 hours per month to for provide minimum staffing
 - Presently our lowest responding volunteers are volunteering 72-120 hours a month
 - Our top responders are volunteering 120 hours or more in a week (5-24 hour shift days)
- Response Time
 - Our response time is quickly approaching that of a paid fire department
 - Our resource staffing is often times above what single engine paid stations can produce
 - We have gone from a response in 2022 of 29% of calls being answered within two minutes to over 89% in under 120 seconds in February of 2026
- Rescue - Breathing Support Unit
 - We presently house the only available air unit in the county and continue to provide services outside our district. This air unit responds monthly to assist other fire districts and departments at their fires.
- Chipper program
 - We will soon also house and manage the SCCCA chipper for use in fuels reduction projects within the fire district. Presently the district has committed to providing 6 hours of fuels reduction per month with mutual community support.



Sustainability

- The present model we are operating under is flawed.
- Due to budget constraints it requires an endless supply of volunteer leadership and volunteer firefighters who volunteer a total of 744 hours a month to provide coverage for one position.
- At a minimum I am presently asking our volunteers for a combined total of 2,232 hours of volunteer coverage each month just to provide the minimum response to the Felton community.

- History will repeat it self
 - We will burn out these volunteers
 - Our operating costs will continue to go up and we will shortly lack the funds to continue sustainable operations within the district.



Funding Budgeted Need

- There are two main ways to fund revenue for most special districts
- Ballot tax measure -
 - Requires $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote, less legal scrutiny, minimal annual reporting of funds, does not need to be justified by engineering.
- 218 Fire Assessment -
 - 50%+1 vote, can only be used for the identified items listed on the ballot, surplus funds must be returned or credited back to the payee or additional services provided. Formed under the California Constitution and has greatest legal scrutiny, mandated legal reporting annually for use of funds. Must be used with a legally defined and built engineered plan/report, must be justified.
 - Additionally will also be monitored by a Felton citizen oversight committee



Basic Numbers

- A breakdown of all 1,978 single-family residential parcels sorted by their draft ESFE rate.
- Quick summary:
 - 1,133 homes (57.3%) at 0.92 ESFE - \$641.64/year
 - 572 homes (28.9%) at 0.83 ESFE - \$583.89/year
 - 79 homes (4.0%) at 0.86 ESFE - \$605.37/year
 - 61 homes (3.1%) at 0.95 ESFE - \$665.28/year
 - Remaining ~ spread across remaining rates

- Key facts

About **90% of single-family homes fall under \$642/year**. The variation comes from the fire hazard zone and travel time factors that will be described in the Engineer's Report. *(Homes closer to the station in higher fire risk zones have a higher ESFE evaluations, and homes farther away and in lower risk zones have a lower ESFE evaluations.)*

You'll notice that no parcel above is assessed at the full \$697.43 base rate. That's because \$697.43 is the maximum authorized rate per SFE. Every parcel's actual assessment is adjusted down from that based on its specific factors.



Projected Operating Costs (Draft)

| | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 | 2031 | 2032 | 2033 | 2034 | 2035 | 2036 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Anticipated annual Fixed capital improvements | \$195,000 | \$295,000 | \$167,000 | \$190,000 | \$217,000 | \$89,000 | \$80,000 | \$40,000 | \$0 | \$175,000 | \$0 |
| Anticipated annual vehicle replacement | \$296,329 | \$303,737 | \$311,114 | \$319,144 | \$327,092 | \$335,651 | \$343,651 | \$352,242 | \$361,048 | \$370,075 | \$379,326 |
| PERS funding 1.1M @6% | \$146,547 | \$146,547 | \$146,547 | \$146,547 | \$146,547 | \$146,547 | \$146,547 | \$146,547 | \$146,547 | \$146,547 | \$146,547 |
| Funding E2311 900K @4% | \$109,300 | \$109,300 | \$109,300 | \$109,300 | \$109,300 | \$109,300 | \$109,300 | \$109,300 | \$109,300 | \$109,300 | \$109,300 |
| Allocated budget services and supplies | \$428,000 | \$438,700 | \$449,668 | \$460,910 | \$472,433 | \$484,244 | \$496,350 | \$508,759 | \$521,478 | \$534,515 | \$547,878 |
| Allocated budget salaries and benefits | \$1,449,870 | \$1,449,870 | \$1,449,870 | \$1,449,870 | \$1,449,870 | \$1,449,870 | \$1,449,870 | \$1,449,870 | \$1,449,870 | \$1,449,870 | \$1,449,870 |
| Total | \$2,625,046 | \$2,743,154 | \$2,633,499 | \$2,675,771 | \$2,722,242 | \$2,614,612 | \$2,625,718 | \$2,606,718 | \$2,588,243 | \$2,785,307 | \$2,632,921 |



Sustainable Future

- A 218 fire assessment that will cover the needed funding of replacement apparatus, staffing, needed station maintenance, training, and community outreach.
- **What does sustainability look like to felton fire**
 - Fire Chief
 - Fire Captains
 - Firefighter Driver Operators
 - Regular volunteer/Paid Call Firefighter staffing
 - Administrative assistants
 - A budget that allows for the replacement of aging equipment and fire engines
 - An enhanced level of service and commitment to the community
 - Both dedicated professionals and community volunteers, available at a moments notice



Change Regardless Of Choice: Option 1

- Option 1
 - A 218 fire assessment that is being proposed
 - It provides for a self governed independent district able to provide for the needs of the community with local control and input
 - Full time employees to guarantee the community an effective initial response to emergent events
 - Volunteer commitment and opportunity for enhanced operations and future growth
 - Replacement of ageing equipment that no longer meets safety or industry standards
 - Maintenance and improvement for our 72 year old firestation
 - The financial obligations to justify operating costs or return fees collected but not used



Change Regardless Of Choice: Option 2

- Option 2
 - A dissolution into CSA 48 -
 - A county managed, state run fire department
 - Representation would be at the county level and services would be provided by the state with minimal direct control and input from the community
 - This option would also impose a pre assessed tax base upon the district with some, but not all costs being higher than feltons present proposed tax assessment
 - An unknown staffing and delivery model outside of the control of the Felton community
 - Requires a heavy reliance on state resources
 - Any additional funds collected by CSA 48 would be distributed throughout the county fire department



Change Regardless Of Choice: Option 3

- Option 3
 - A return to an all volunteer model that has proven to not be sustainable or a responsible solution to the community
 - Even as a volunteer model the present district funding model is insufficient and will eventually lead to a point of insolvency of response, budget or both
 - Would require a minimum of 2,232 volunteer hours per month to be sustainable under a comparable service model proposed in the 218 fire assessment



Expected Service With A Successful 218 Fire Assessment

- Benchmark NFPA 1710 performance where attainable
- A dedicated local Fire Chief receptive to individual community concerns and problems
- Dedicated engine staffing for the quickest emergency response
- A sustainable and revolving budget for future operations
- Local control and organization
- Accountability at the community level



Expected Outcomes With An Unsuccessful 218

- Limited or lacking full time employees due to budget constraints
- Lengthened response time due to unsustainable volunteer commitment
- Sporadic emergency response due to in-service/out-of-service equipment
- Possible loss of equipment due to lack of replacement funding
- Reduction in ISO ratings
- Increased premiums with homeowners insurance
- LAFCo engagement by necessity due to an inability to perform services
- Loss of local control by necessitating reorganization with a successor agency
- Applied fees and charges by successor agency
- Unknown staffing and performance model



How Can You Support Felton Fire

- Make your decisions based on facts
- Seek out answers to questions you have
- Question information that is contrary to your understanding
- Encourage others to learn
- Ask questions of your Fire Chief and Board
- Vote based off your convictions and desires for this community



Documents & Resources

Documents - <https://feltonfire.com/public-documents/>

Resources - Felton Community 4 Emergency Response (FC4ER) community group provides a 3rd party review of district data and has conducted interviews and investigations with several key stakeholders - fc4er.org

