

SECTION 10. HARDSHIP ASSISTANCE.

(A) It is hereby ascertained, determined, and declared that it is in the best interest of the citizens of the City to assist Low Income Persons who are Owners of homesteaded Residential Property with the financial burden created by the imposition of a Fire Protection Assessment.

(B) Accordingly, there is hereby created an economic hardship program to assist Residential Property owners who meet the definition of Low Income Persons as established herein. An owner of Residential Property who meets low income level and asset guidelines specified by the City shall be eligible to receive payment of the Fire Protection Assessment by the City. Applicants for this hardship assistance shall provide written documentation satisfactory to the City Manager in order to qualify for such assistance. Any amounts provided for hardship assistance shall be paid by the City from funds other than those generated by the Fire Protection Assessment.

(C) Prior to December 1 of each year, the applicant shall file with the City Manager an application under oath demonstrating entitlement to hardship assistance as provided herein. Such application shall include the following:

- (1) The name and address of all Owners of the Residential Property;
- (2) The address and legal description for the Residential Property;
- (3) Proof of Total Household Income from all sources and other documentation required to demonstrate qualification as a Low Income Person; and
- (4) Such other information relating to the application as may be reasonably requested.

(D) The City Manager, with the assistance of other members of the administrative staff of the City, shall, within fifteen (15) days after the filing of such application, review the application and such other supporting data that may be filed therewith and make such further investigation as may be reasonably required in order to determine if the applicant is qualified for hardship assistance pursuant to this Section. If deemed qualified for the hardship assistance as outlined in this Section 10, the City shall pay the Fire Protection Assessment imposed on the qualified homesteaded property.

(E) The City Manager shall furnish his or her written decision to such applicant by United States mail, postage prepaid, addressed to the applicant at the address stated on the application on or before the expiration of twenty (20) days following the filing of the application determining if the applicant is or is not qualified for hardship assistance pursuant to this Section.

(F) Any shortfall in the expected Fire Protection Assessment proceeds due to any hardship assistance provided herein shall be supplemented by any legally available funds, or combination of such funds, and shall not be paid for by proceeds or funds derived from the Fire Protection Assessments. In the event a court of competent jurisdiction determines any assistance provided by the Board is improper or otherwise adversely affects the validity of the Fire Protection Assessment imposed for any Fiscal Year, the sole and exclusive remedy shall be the imposition of a Fire Protection Assessment upon each affected Tax Parcel in the amount of the Fire Protection Assessment that would have been otherwise imposed save for such assistance afforded to such Tax Parcel by the Board.

SECTION 11. AUTHORIZATION OF PUBLIC HEARING. There is hereby established a public hearing to be held at 6:00 p.m. on September 9, 2024, in the Chiefland City Commission Chambers, 214 East Park Street, Chiefland, FL, at which time the City Commission will receive and consider any comments on the Fire Services Assessments from the public and affected property owners and consider reimposing Fire Services Assessments and collecting such assessments on the same bill as ad valorem taxes.

SECTION 12. NOTICE BY PUBLICATION. The City Manager shall publish a notice of the public hearing authorized by Section 11 hereof in the manner and time provided in