

Auerbach, Les

From: Nathan Collier [ncollier@teamparadigm.com]
Sent: Tuesday, June 24, 2008 8:06 AM
To: Hanrahan, Pegeen
Cc: Phillip Emmer; Ken McGurn; Greg; Jdpfla@aol.com; 'Owner@looking-glass-aps.com'; Kyle Riva; Tom Mallini; Robert McArthur; Blackburn, Russ D.; Keith Colgan; 'Johnmarti@cmcapt.com'; 'Sonia@cmcapt.com'
Subject: Mayor! Not fair for apts to pay same Fire Fee as Single Family - Apts much less sq ft, much more compact, easier to serve and all new communities have sprinkler systems and built in fire alarms which single family lack...

Mayor!

Not fair for apts to pay same Fire Fee as Single Family -

- Apts have much, much less sq footage than single family homes
- Apts much more compact on a per unit basis, easier to serve and
- All new communities have sprinkler systems, virtually no single family do and
- Built in fire alarms/smoke detectors which many single family lack...
- Single Family already subsidized by Homestead exemption (tax break for more affluent home owner v. traditional less affluent renter)
- Flat Tax = Regressive Tax on renters, a lower economic demographic strata
- When first put in, City's Stormwater Management Fee on apts was less than 50% of rate on single family.
- Apartments much, much more environmentally friendly lifestyle, so why punish/discourage?
 - units to left and right, top and bottom form PERFECT insulation,
 - cost much less to heat/cool AND
 - generally half the sq ft per occupant

If the City truly wishes to walk it's talk re wanting to halt urban sprawl and encourage environmentally friendly lifestyles than its tax policy must reflect that commitment.

Auerbach, Les

From: Nathan Collier [ncollier@teamparadigm.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 29, 2008 7:11 AM
To: 'Ron Cunningham (E-mail)'
Cc: Nathan Collier; Blackburn, Russ D.; Hanrahan, Pegeen; 'Bruce Delaney'; Paula Delaney
Subject: Ron! Disagree w/ today's editorial re Fire Charge for Non-Profits; suggest Gvile Sun run New York Times 5/26/08 "Tax Exemptions of Charities Face New Challenges"

- > Tax Exemptions of Charities Face New Challenges By STEPHANIE STROM
- > Published: May 26, 2008
- > RED WING, Minn. — Authorities from the local tax assessor to members
- > of Congress are increasingly challenging the tax-exempt status of
- > nonprofit institutions — ranging from small group homes to wealthy
- > universities — questioning whether they deserve special treatment.
- >
- > One issue is the growing confusion over what constitutes a charity at
- > a time when nonprofit groups look more like businesses, charging fees
- > and selling products and services to raise money, and state and local
- > governments are under financial pressure because of lower tax
- > revenues.
- >
- > And there are others: Does a nonprofit hospital give enough charity
- > care to earn a tax exemption? Is a wealthy university providing enough
- > financial aid?
- >
- > In a ruling last December that sent tremors through the not-for-
- > profit world, the Minnesota Supreme Court said a small nonprofit day
- > care agency here had to pay property taxes because, in essence, it
- > gave nothing away.
- >
- > The agency, the Under the Rainbow Child Care Center, charges the same
- > price per child regardless of whether their parents are able to pay
- > the full amount themselves or they receive government support to cover
- > the cost.
- >
- > "We were shocked," said Michelle Finholdt, who founded the center in
- > 1994 and scraped together the money to buy a building in 2002.
- > "There are a lot of other organizations in our area that we're similar
- > to, and they are exempt from property taxes."
- >
- > The tax-exempt status of charities costs local governments \$8 billion
- > to \$13 billion annually, according to various rough estimates.
- >
- > And local assessors are not the only government officials scratching
- > their heads over which groups deserve privileged tax status.

> Congress has threatened to impose a requirement that wealthy
> universities make minimum payouts from their endowments and raised
> questions about whether nonprofit hospitals are really all that
> different from their for-profit — and tax-paying — competitors.
>
> And, concerned about the way some churches are spending money, the
> Senate Finance Committee has asked for detailed financial information
> from six evangelical ministries asking them to justify their tax
> exemptions.
>
> Others are questioning whether some tax-exempt nonprofits, primarily
> universities and hospitals, have accumulated so much wealth that they
> should no longer be considered charities. In Massachusetts, where
> Harvard's endowment has reached \$35 billion in assets, legislators are
> weighing whether to impose a 2.5 percent annual assessment on
> universities with endowments of more than \$1 billion.
>
> The idea behind tax exemptions is that the organizations provide a
> public service or substantially reduce the burdens of government.
> Standards from property-tax exemptions are set by the states, while
> the federal exemption means charities are not taxed on their income.
>
> Almost 88 percent of overall nonprofit revenues in 2005, the most
> recent year for which figures are available, came from fees for
> services, sales and sources other than charitable contributions,
> according to the National Center for Charitable Statistics.
> Nonprofit health care providers, day care centers and retirement
> homes, among others, are often difficult to distinguish from their
> tax-paying competitors.
>
> "We're all seeing the growth of revenue in this area we call earned
> income," said Audrey R. Alvarado, executive director of the National
> Council of Nonprofit Associations, adding that the Minnesota court
> decision "is saying, 'Wait a minute, charities are supposed to give
> things away for free.' "
>
> "It goes to the core of how nonprofits are classified and defined,"
> she said, "and I think it is an example of the confusion in the
> public, and even among folks in the sector itself, about what a
> nonprofit is."
>
> Evelyn Brody, a professor at Chicago-Kent College of Law and an expert
> on nonprofits and property taxes, said that, in studying the issue in
> 2002 and revisiting it last year, she had seen an explosion of cases
> across the country in which charities were challenged to say why they
> deserve their property tax exemptions.
>
> As universities charge high tuitions, and pay large salaries to
> administrators, they have become prime targets. For example, New

> London, Conn., assessed property taxes on a skating rink owned by
> Connecticut College. Local assessors tried to tax Smith College in
> Northampton, Mass., arguing that the women's college engaged in sex
> discrimination and thus was not charitable.
>
> Smaller organizations that provide services like day care or drug
> treatment are being challenged, too. The Oregon tax court denied
> property tax exemption to a residential substance-abuse treatment
> center because it catered to "addicted professionals" and, like Under
> the Rainbow, did not give away its services.
>
> The Minnesota Department of Revenue and county tax assessors say the
> uproar over the court ruling here has surprised them.
>
> "From the assessors' standpoint, the Under the Rainbow ruling didn't
> change anything for us," said Thomas J. May, the tax assessor for
> Hennepin County and a spokesman for the state's assessors.
>
> In determining which organizations qualify for exemption, assessors in
> Minnesota rely on the State Constitution, which explicitly exempts
> things like public burial grounds, seminaries and colleges and
> universities from taxation, and on six criteria set out in a
> 1975 State Supreme Court decision.
>
> Mr. May said that the determination process had become increasingly
> difficult, however, noting that the Mall of America, a major tourist
> attraction, was seeking tax exemptions as part of its plans to expand,
> arguing that it aids the state economy by drawing visitors.
>
> "From our perspective in the assessment field, it's harder to define
> what's a nonprofit these days because there are so many different
> types, and many of them are doing the same thing for-profit groups
> that aren't exempt are doing," he said.
>
> Some 95 percent of Under the Rainbow's \$550,582 budget in 2006 came
> from fees for services paid by families or by county and tribal
> governments. The court concluded that because the center charged all
> families the same amount, regardless of their ability to pay, and
> because its rates were not lower than those of its competitors, it was
> not an institution of "purely public charity" under the law and thus
> was subject to thousands of dollars in property taxes — \$16,000 in
> 2006 and in 2007.
>
> "The extent to which the recipients of the charity are required to pay
> for the assistance received tests for a value that is fundamental to
> the concept of charity — that is, whether the organization gives away
> anything," Chief Justice Russell A. Anderson wrote in the decision.
>
> Additionally, the court ruled that government payments were not

> evidence of charity — those payments were not a gift.
>
> These two elements of the ruling have profoundly alarmed nonprofit
> groups in Minnesota and elsewhere.
>
> "There are between 300 and 500 nonprofit groups in this state that
> could lose their property tax exemptions under that ruling," said Jon
> Pratt, executive director of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits,
> which represents about 2,000 of the state's roughly 3,400 charities.
>
> RSI Inc. in Duluth is among those at risk, said Jon Nelson, its
> executive director. The organization was founded 30 years ago by
> parents of mentally disabled children when the state closed the last
> of its homes for the disabled.
>
> More than 93 percent of its \$11 million budget this year will come
> from government, and 6 percent will come from clients. "For-profit
> businesses aren't going to take on these clients, and the state long
> ago recognized that as a nonprofit, we could provide better care at a
> lower cost than it could," Mr. Nelson said.
>
> "This court ruling is just ripe with unintended consequences," he
> said. "The state is cutting off its nose to spite its face." RSI owns
> real estate valued at \$5.5 million and would pay an estimated \$110,000
> in property taxes if it lost its exemption.
>
> "The nonprofit sector is being pressed to be more business-like and to
> find new ways to fill the gaps between what government will pay and
> what services cost, but then assessors want to treat us like
> businesses, which pay taxes," said Jan Malcolm, chief executive of the
> Courage Center in Minneapolis and a former state health commissioner.
>
> The Courage Center, which provides services and facilities for
> physically disabled people, estimates that a change in its tax
> exemption would cost it \$1.7 million — \$1.4 million in property taxes
> and \$300,000 in sales taxes, which are linked to payment of property
> taxes in Minnesota.
>
> That, Ms. Malcolm said, would force the center to cut programs and
> services.
>
> This month, the Minnesota Legislature passed a tax bill that
> establishes a one-year ban on reversing property tax exemptions held
> by existing nonprofits.
>
> The bill requires legislators to set criteria to define what is
> "purely public charity," a phrase included in many state statutes on
> charitable property tax exemption, in an era of nonprofit groups that
> charge for their services and receive only negligible amounts of

> donations.

>

> "We need to figure out what we mean by 'purely public charity'
> because, frankly, we can't afford as a state to lose nonprofits
> providing these kinds of services," said State Representative Paul
> Marquart, chairman of the property tax subcommittee. "But it isn't
> going to be easy."

>

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>

>

>

Nathan S. Collier
Founder, Collier Enterprises of Gainesville 8,600 apartment homes and growing....

"Attitudes are contagious. Are yours worth catching?"

P.O. Box 13166 • Gainesville, Florida 32604

Phone: 352-375-2152 • Fax: 352-336-5778

www.NSCBlog.com

Auerbach, Les

From: Martin [cindyandtim@cox.net]
Sent: Saturday, July 12, 2008 9:02 AM
To: Hawkins, Jr., Thomas
Cc: Larry Reimer; Hanrahan, Pegeen; Donovan, John F. - Commissioner; Mastrodicasa, Jeanna; Lowe, Craig; Poe, Lauren B.; Henry, Scherwin L.
Subject: FW: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Dear Commissioner Hawkins,

Larry Reimer shared your response with me, and I wanted to correct what I perceive to be a misstatement or misunderstanding on your part.

You state that in the current proposal, you are asking non-profits to pay for their own services. This is not true. You are asking non-profits to pay for their own services, *and* services provided to the University of Florida. Services to UF account for 68% of the costs attributed to the "Institutional" category. I understand that Florida statute and case precedent prohibits assessments for exempt properties from being shifted onto non-exempt properties. However, it flies in the face of all common sense interpretations of equity to expect other non-profits to pick up these costs just because you have lumped us all into an overly-inclusive category.

If the Council insists on pursuing this levying of a tax on non-profits (and this is a tax in everything but name), then the only equitable solution is to find other sources of revenue to cover UF's portion of the costs. Council needs to find the political courage to do the right thing here and not follow the path of least resistance.

Sincerely,

Tim Martin

Chair, Board of Business, United Church of Gainesville

From: Larry Reimer [mailto:larryr@ucgainesville.org]
Sent: Wednesday, July 09, 2008 3:42 PM

To: Cindy and Tim Martin
Subject: FW: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Larry Reimer
United Church of Gainesville
1624 NW 5 Ave.,
Gainesville, FL 32603
352-378-3500
www.ucgainesville.org

From: Hawkins, Jr., Thomas [mailto:hawkinswt@cityofgainesville.org]
Sent: Wednesday, July 09, 2008 3:31 PM
To: Larry Reimer
Cc: Andrew, Devonia L.
Subject: RE: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Larry,

Thank you for voicing your input. I do hope you attend on the sixteenth.

The proposed assessment rates are based on an evaluation of fire services by Gainesville Fire Rescue to properties in Gainesville. Therefore the cost of providing services is that in Gainesville, not nationally. Also, the data used to determine the costs comes from the 2006-2007 fiscal year. I do not believe that year shows an abnormal number of calls for any particular property category, including institutional. I have attached a copy of the consultant's memorandum summarizing her calculations and conclusions for your review.

My biggest concern with the fire assessment proposal, to this point, is that we are asking citizens and non-profits to pay for their own services but will continue to ask our taxpayers to subsidize service to government buildings. That does not move us towards a more equitable system of funding services.

Please feel free to call me here, or on my cell phone at 562-2888, if you would like to talk about the fire assessment. I value your opinion.

Thomas

Thomas Hawkins, Commissioner-At-Large
City of Gainesville, Office of the City Commission 200 East University Avenue Gainesville, Florida 32602-0490
Phone: (352) 334-5015
Fax: (352) 334-2036
commth@cityofgainesville.org

From: Larry Reimer [mailto:larryr@ucgainesville.org]
Sent: Wednesday, July 09, 2008 2:52 PM
To: citycomm
Cc: Cindy and Tim Martin
Subject: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Dear Commissioners,

If the commission must enact the fire protection fee on non-profits, it is excessive to enact a fee on churches three times that of industrial sites and 50% more than commercial buildings. I understand that this fee scale is based on a national assessment of fire response frequency. But it's not at all clear that this reflects the reality for churches in Gainesville. Neither does it reflect the in kind services religious organizations supply the community. We are called to do more and more as public funds dwindle in terms of housing the homeless through IHN, offering space in our buildings for community groups, and supporting the work of groups like St. Francis House and Gainesville Community Ministries.

I know the city is pressed for money, but so are the churches. I am willing to support a fair share, equal to the fee charged commercial buildings.

I hope someone on the commission will stand up to amend the proposed rate structure. Members of my church and I will be at the meeting on July 16 to argue for this change.

Thank you.

Larry Reimer
United Church of Gainesville
1624 NW 5 Ave.,
Gainesville, FL 32603
352-378-3500
www.ucgainesville.org

Auerbach, Les

From: Martin [cindyandtim@cox.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2008 1:22 PM
To: Lowe, Craig
Subject: Special Assessment for Fire Services

Dear Commissioner Lowe,

This letter is to voice my concerns about the proposed Special Assessment for Fire Services being considered by the Gainesville City Commission. I raise these issues as a member of a local church and as a concerned citizen.

My first concern is regarding the proposed fee structure for the assessment. It is puzzling that the highest assessment rate will be for institutional, non-profit owned property (\$0.18/sf vs. \$0.12/sf for commercial and \$0.06/sf for industrial). Even if the fee structure is based on historical fire rescue response patterns, it strikes me as regressive and counter-productive to most heavily impact churches and other nonprofits. Given the ongoing reductions in government services and assistance programs, churches and nonprofits, especially those located within the city limits, are increasingly being called on to provide assistance with utility bills and rent, meeting space, and even food and shelter. Regressive fees such as this one will certainly not help to stem the migration of churches from the urban core to the fringing suburbs.

My second concern regards proposals related to adjusting property tax millage rates as "compensation" for the Special Assessment. Depending on how such an adjustment is structured, it would be possible for owners of high-valued properties to see absolute decreases in their "realized" tax rate (Special Assessment + millage), while owners of lower value properties could see no benefit or even an increase in their realized tax rate. This action would be regressive and undesirable from a social justice perspective and a departure from sound government policy.

I encourage you to thoughtfully consider the effects of the proposed Special Assessment on some of our most vulnerable citizens, and on the churches and nonprofits that provide an important safety net for so many.

Sincerely,

Tim Martin

Chair, Board of Business

Auerbach, Les

From: Martin [cindyandtim@cox.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2008 1:21 PM
To: Donovan, John F. - Commissioner
Subject: Special Assessment for Fire Services

Dear Commissioner Donovan,

This letter is to voice my concerns about the proposed Special Assessment for Fire Services being considered by the Gainesville City Commission. I raise these issues as a member of a local church and as a concerned citizen.

My first concern is regarding the proposed fee structure for the assessment. It is puzzling that the highest assessment rate will be for institutional, non-profit owned property (\$0.18/sf vs. \$0.12/sf for commercial and \$0.06/sf for industrial). Even if the fee structure is based on historical fire rescue response patterns, it strikes me as regressive and counter-productive to most heavily impact churches and other nonprofits. Given the ongoing reductions in government services and assistance programs, churches and nonprofits, especially those located within the city limits, are increasingly being called on to provide assistance with utility bills and rent, meeting space, and even food and shelter. Regressive fees such as this one will certainly not help to stem the migration of churches from the urban core to the fringing suburbs.

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Sincerely,

Tim Martin

Chair, Board of Business

Auerbach, Les

From: Martin [cindyandtim@cox.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2008 1:21 PM
To: Poe, Lauren B.
Subject: Special Assessment for Fire Services

Dear Commissioner Poe,

This letter is to voice my concerns about the proposed Special Assessment for Fire Services being considered by the Gainesville City Commission. I raise these issues as a member of a local church and as a concerned citizen.

My first concern is regarding the proposed fee structure for the assessment. It is puzzling that the highest assessment rate will be for institutional, non-profit owned property (\$0.18/sf vs. \$0.12/sf for commercial and \$0.06/sf for industrial). Even if the fee structure is based on historical fire rescue response patterns, it strikes me as regressive and counter-productive to most heavily impact churches and other nonprofits. Given the ongoing reductions in government services and assistance programs, churches and nonprofits, especially those located within the city limits, are increasingly being called on to provide assistance with utility bills and rent, meeting space, and even food and shelter. Regressive fees such as this one will certainly not help to stem the migration of churches from the urban core to the fringing suburbs.

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Sincerely,

Tim Martin

Chair, Board of Business

Auerbach, Les

From: Martin [cindyandtim@cox.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2008 1:20 PM
To: Henry, Scherwin L.
Subject: Special Assessment for Fire Services

Dear Commissioner Henry,

This letter is to voice my concerns about the proposed Special Assessment for Fire Services being considered by the Gainesville City Commission. I raise these issues as a member of a local church and as a concerned citizen.

My first concern is regarding the proposed fee structure for the assessment. It is puzzling that the highest assessment rate will be for institutional, non-profit owned property (\$0.18/sf vs. \$0.12/sf for commercial and \$0.06/sf for industrial). Even if the fee structure is based on historical fire rescue response patterns, it strikes me as regressive and counter-productive to most heavily impact churches and other nonprofits. Given the ongoing reductions in government services and assistance programs, churches and nonprofits, especially those located within the city limits, are increasingly being called on to provide assistance with utility bills and rent, meeting space, and even food and shelter. Regressive fees such as this one will certainly not help to stem the migration of churches from the urban core to the fringing suburbs.

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Sincerely,

Tim Martin

Chair, Board of Business

Auerbach, Les

From: Martin [cindyandtim@cox.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2008 1:19 PM
To: Mastrodicasa, Jeanna
Subject: Special Assessment for Fire Services

Dear Commissioner Mastrodicasa,

This letter is to voice my concerns about the proposed Special Assessment for Fire Services being considered by the Gainesville City Commission. I raise these issues as a member of a local church and as a concerned citizen.

My first concern is regarding the proposed fee structure for the assessment. It is puzzling that the highest assessment rate will be for institutional, non-profit owned property (\$0.18/sf vs. \$0.12/sf for commercial and \$0.06/sf for industrial). Even if the fee structure is based on historical fire rescue response patterns, it strikes me as regressive and counter-productive to most heavily impact churches and other nonprofits. Given the ongoing reductions in government services and assistance programs, churches and nonprofits, especially those located within the city limits, are increasingly being called on to provide assistance with utility bills and rent, meeting space, and even food and shelter. Regressive fees such as this one will certainly not help to stem the migration of churches from the urban core to the fringing suburbs.

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Sincerely,

Tim Martin

Chair, Board of Business

Auerbach, Les

From: Martin [cindyandtim@cox.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2008 1:18 PM
To: Hawkins, Jr., Thomas
Subject: Special Assessment for Fire Services

Dear Commissioner Hawkins,

This letter is to voice my concerns about the proposed Special Assessment for Fire Services being considered by the Gainesville City Commission. I raise these issues as a member of a local church and as a concerned citizen.

My first concern is regarding the proposed fee structure for the assessment. It is puzzling that the highest assessment rate will be for institutional, non-profit owned property (\$0.18/sf vs. \$0.12/sf for commercial and \$0.06/sf for industrial). Even if the fee structure is based on historical fire rescue response patterns, it strikes me as regressive and counter-productive to most heavily impact churches and other nonprofits. Given the ongoing reductions in government services and assistance programs, churches and nonprofits, especially those located within the city limits, are increasingly being called on to provide assistance with utility bills and rent, meeting space, and even food and shelter. Regressive fees such as this one will certainly not help to stem the migration of churches from the urban core to the fringing suburbs.

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Sincerely,

Tim Martin

Chair, Board of Business

United Church of Gainesville

Auerbach, Les

From: Martin [cindyandtim@cox.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2008 1:17 PM
To: Hanrahan, Pegeen
Subject: Special Assessment for Fire Services

Dear Mayor Hanrahan,

This letter is to voice my concerns about the proposed Special Assessment for Fire Services being considered by the Gainesville City Commission. I raise these issues as a member of a local church and as a concerned citizen.

My first concern is regarding the proposed fee structure for the assessment. It is puzzling that the highest assessment rate will be for institutional, non-profit owned property (\$0.18/sf vs. \$0.12/sf for commercial and \$0.06/sf for industrial). Even if the fee structure is based on historical fire rescue response patterns, it strikes me as regressive and counter-productive to most heavily impact churches and other nonprofits. Given the ongoing reductions in government services and assistance programs, churches and nonprofits, especially those located within the city limits, are increasingly being called on to provide assistance with utility bills and rent, meeting space, and even food and shelter. Regressive fees such as this one will certainly not help to stem the migration of churches from the urban core to the fringing suburbs.

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Sincerely,

Tim Martin
Chair, Board of Business

Auerbach, Les

From: 'M' [clear@ufl.edu]
Sent: Friday, May 30, 2008 9:25 AM
To: Citycomm
Subject: churches pay for fire services

Dear City Commission:

I am responding to the story in the local section of the Gainesville Sun Wed. May 28 which says "City may make nonprofits pay to help fund fire services." I searched the city website for a little while to try to make a more knowledgeable response, but I was not able to find anything directly related to this proposal.

However, I am very knowledgeable about our church budget. I think it is a bad idea to assess churches for city services which they may actually use or not use. It would cut directly into funds which churches typically use very creatively for social outreach, in other words, city services. And since the church resources are very limited, they tend to be very careful that the services they provide are effective.

Our particular church, St. Michael's Episcopal, has a very large square footage and a very small congregation. Our total operating budget is approximately \$50,000 (the bulk of which goes to utilities and insurance), and our average Sunday attendance is 26. I hope at the very least, if you do decide to assess fees, that you provide a way for exceptions.

Yours truly,
Clare Stokes
Senior Warden
St. Michael's Episcopal Church
4315 NW 23rd Ave.
Gainesville FL 32606

Auerbach, Les

From: Karen Thurman, Florida Democratic Party Chair [grassroots@fladems.com]
Sent: Tuesday, June 24, 2008 4:17 PM
To: Mayor
Subject: Fire-Breathing Liberal, in stores today

Florida Democratic Party

Dear Florida Democrat,

It has been an extraordinary year for the Democratic Party as we had two phenomenal candidates ultimately competing to be our Presidential nominee. I have tremendous respect for Senator Hillary Clinton and her groundbreaking campaign, and I have no doubt she will play a central role in the future of our country.

I am also thrilled about the nomination of Senator Barack Obama as our Party's standard bearer, and I believe he will beat Senator John McCain in November (and in Florida), and he will profoundly transform our nation for the better.

For Florida Democrats, this has not been an easy primary season as we have fought to make our votes count and our voices heard. Although we may have previously stood on opposite sides of this historic primary contest, now we are united as Democrats and as Floridians determined to close the Bush era in Washington, D.C. and usher in a new progressive agenda in our nation where we finally deliver on the promise of universal health care, funding for a national catastrophic insurance fund, protecting a woman's right to choose, and bringing our troops home from Iraq.

In addition, Senator Barack Obama has a proven record of supporting the unbreakable relationship between the United States and Israel, and I know that President Obama will be an extraordinary friend and ally of Israel.

I have served as a Member of Congress from Florida for twelve years, and I have never been as optimistic as I am today about the prospects for our state and our nation. As you may know, during my years in Washington I have somehow found myself in the middle of some of the last decade's biggest political controversies. From defending Bill Clinton from impeachment to standing up to the Bush Brothers when the "butterfly" ballots wrongly flipped the 2000 presidential election - it has certainly been a wild ride.

I have now written a new book, entitled Fire-Breathing Liberal - How I learned to Survive (and Thrive) in the Contact Sport of Congress, in which I bring readers onto the floor of the House and into the streets and condos of South Florida, putting them at the center of some of the last decade's biggest controversies. It is a revealing look at the oversized political personalities that populate both Washington, D.C. and Florida.

"As this inspiring book makes clear, Robert Wexler fights skillfully and passionately for progressive causes, and we're closer to our goals because of him."
- Senator Edward Kennedy

In the book I give an honest and brutal assessment of the Iraq War and explain why I took on a five year campaign - including bringing a lawsuit all the way to the Supreme Court - in order to deliver a verifiable paper trail to the voters of Florida.

"Thank God for Robert Wexler -- the man who will always be my Congressman. This book proves he's the only guy in

politics who may have a brain and mouth bigger than mine!"

- Randi Rhodes

I have considered it my duty to loudly and aggressively take on the worst of the GOP, including George W. Bush, Newt Gingrich, John McCain, Tom DeLay, Ken Starr, and Dick Cheney. Rush Limbaugh refers to me as "disgusting" because as Fire-Breathing Liberal makes clear - I think that Democrats need to stop compromising and instead fight hard for the issues we care so much about.

I hope you will consider reading the book. Books are in stores today or you can order your copy right now online on Amazon.com or BarnesandNoble.com.

Click here for a schedule of the numerous book signings and discussions I will be holding throughout South Florida:

<http://www.fladems.com/firebreathingliberal>

I would love to see you in person and sign your book.

With warm regards,

Robert Wexler

This email was sent to mayor@ci.gainesville.fl.us.

To unsubscribe, go to:
<http://fladems.com/unsubscribe>

Paid for and authorized by the Florida Democratic Party, www.fladems.com.

Auerbach, Les

From: Ken Wilder [ken.wilder@cox.net]
Sent: Sunday, June 22, 2008 12:48 PM
To: Citycomm
Subject: Fire Tax

It is wrong to think you can start taxing non-profit organizations. I believe in separation of church and state, so you need to keep the state out of church. It is the faith-based community members that do such much for other non-profit organizations in Gainesville, that any such tax, or fee, or intrusion, causes a double-strain on those of us that support the community.

=====
This message was generated on the City of Gainesville Website.

User Name: Ken Wilder
User IP address: 24.250.242.72
Client software: Mozilla/5.0 (Windows; U; Windows NT 5.1; en-US; rv:1.8.1.14) Gecko/20080404 Firefox/2.0.0.14

Auerbach, Les

From: Larry Reimer [larryr@ucgainesville.org]
Sent: Thursday, July 10, 2008 1:17 PM
To: Hanrahan, Pegeen
Subject: RE: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Hi Pegeen,

Thanks so much for your response. I still think that just because fees can be leveled on churches that they should, and at the very least, given the nature of the services churches provide the community, that we should not be paying three times the level imposed on industry and another 50% above commercial. That's a confusing sentence.

Thanks for your great work as our Mayor. I think you're the greatest, but I hope you'll vote against assessing churches or at least against assessing churches more than commercial.

Larry Reimer
United Church of Gainesville
1624 NW 5 Ave.,
Gainesville, FL 32603
352-378-3500
www.ucgainesville.org

-----Original Message-----

From: Hanrahan, Pegeen [mailto:Hanrahan@cityofgainesville.org]
Sent: Thursday, July 10, 2008 11:31 AM
To: Larry Reimer; citycomm
Cc: cindyandtim@cox.net
Subject: Re: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Dear Rev. Reimer -

The fees are actually based on a detailed analysis of Gainesville data, not national data. As the press has reported I have asked for copies of the differing legal opinions on including non profits in the fee requirements. I know our city attorney well enough to understand that he doesn't make this recommendation lightly, but I hope to understand it better myself.

Pegeen

Pegeen Hanrahan
Mayor
P.O. Box 490-19
Gainesville, Florida 32601-0490
(352) 334-5015
(352) 665-5939 mobile

----- Original Message -----

From: Larry Reimer <larryr@ucgainesville.org>

To: citycomm

Cc: Cindy and Tim Martin <cindyandtim@cox.net>

Sent: Wed Jul 09 14:52:14 2008

Subject: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Dear Commissioners,

If the commission must enact the fire protection fee on non-profits, it is excessive to enact a fee on churches three times that of industrial sites and 50% more than commercial buildings. I understand that this fee scale is based on a national assessment of fire response frequency. But it's not at all clear that this reflects the reality for churches in Gainesville. Neither does it reflect the in kind services religious organizations supply the community. We are called to do more and more as public funds dwindle in terms of housing the homeless through IHN, offering space in our buildings for community groups, and supporting the work of groups like St. Francis House and Gainesville Community Ministries.

I know the city is pressed for money, but so are the churches. I am willing to support a fair share, equal to the fee charged commercial buildings.

I hope someone on the commission will stand up to amend the proposed rate structure. Members of my church and I will be at the meeting on July 16 to argue for this change.

Thank you.

Larry Reimer

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www.ucgainesville.org

Auerbach, Les

From: Larry Reimer [larryr@ucgainesville.org]
Sent: Thursday, July 10, 2008 10:56 AM
To: Hawkins, Jr., Thomas
Subject: RE: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Dear Thomas,

Thanks for such a thorough response. I deeply appreciate this. And I value your work on the commission. The fees I received from the city list industrial at \$.02 per sq. ft., commercial assessment at \$.04 per sq. ft. and institutional which includes us at \$.06. I still hope you will oppose the assessment itself on churches. If that is not possible, I hope that given the churches' commitment of service to the community, you will oppose assessing churches at the highest rate. We have been informed that our assessment will be \$1,300.

Thanks again for your good work.

Larry Reimer
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Gainesville, FL 32603
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www.ucgainesville.org

From: Hawkins, Jr., Thomas [mailto:hawkinswt@cityofgainesville.org]
Sent: Wednesday, July 09, 2008 3:31 PM
To: Larry Reimer
CC: Andrew, Devonia L.
Subject: RE: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Larry,

Thank you for voicing your input. I do hope you attend on the sixteenth.

The proposed assessment rates are based on an evaluation of fire services by Gainesville Fire Rescue to properties in Gainesville. Therefore the cost of providing services is that in Gainesville, not nationally. Also, the data used to determine the costs comes from the 2006-2007 fiscal year. I do not believe that year shows an abnormal number of calls for any particular property category, including institutional. I have attached a copy of the consultant's memorandum summarizing her calculations and conclusions for your review.

My biggest concern with the fire assessment proposal, to this point, is that we are asking citizens and non-profits to pay for their own services but will continue to ask our taxpayers to subsidize service to government buildings. That does not move us towards a more equitable system of funding services.

Please feel free to call me here, or on my cell phone at 562-2888, if you would like to talk about the fire assessment. I value your opinion.

Thomas

Thomas Hawkins, Commissioner-At-Large
City of Gainesville, Office of the City Commission 200 East University Avenue Gainesville, Florida 32602-0490
Phone: (352) 334-5015
Fax: (352) 334-2036
commth@cityofgainesville.org

From: Larry Reimer [mailto:larryr@ucgainesville.org]
Sent: Wednesday, July 09, 2008 2:52 PM
To: citycomm
Cc: Cindy and Tim Martin
Subject: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Dear Commissioners,

If the commission must enact the fire protection fee on non-profits, it is excessive to enact a fee on churches three times that of industrial sites and 50% more than commercial buildings. I understand that this fee scale is based on a national assessment of fire response frequency. But it's not at all clear that this reflects the reality for churches in Gainesville. Neither does it reflect the in kind services religious organizations supply the community. We are called to do more and more as public funds dwindle in terms of housing the homeless through IHN, offering space

in our buildings for community groups, and supporting the work of groups like St. Francis House and Gainesville Community Ministries.

I know the city is pressed for money, but so are the churches. I am willing to support a fair share, equal to the fee charged commercial buildings.

I hope someone on the commission will stand up to amend the proposed rate structure. Members of my church and I will be at the meeting on July 16 to argue for this change.

Thank you.

Larry Reimer
United Church of Gainesville
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352-378-3500
www.ucgainesville.org

Auerbach, Les

From: Larry Reimer [larryr@ucgainesville.org]
Sent: Thursday, July 10, 2008 10:55 AM
To: Poe, Lauren B.
Subject: RE: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Dear Lauren,

Thanks for such a thorough response. I deeply appreciate this. And I value your work on the commission. The fees I received from the city list industrial at \$.02 per sq. ft., commercial assessment at \$.04 per sq. ft. and institutional which includes us at \$.06. I still hope you will oppose the assessment itself on churches. If that is not possible, I hope that given the churches' commitment of service to the community, you will oppose assessing churches at the highest rate we have been informed that our assessment will be \$1,300.

Thanks again for your good work.

Larry Reimer
United Church of Gainesville
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From: Poe, Lauren B. [mailto:poel@cityofgainesville.org]
Sent: Wednesday, July 09, 2008 3:31 PM
To: Larry Reimer
Cc: Andrew, Devonia L.; Northcutt, William K.
Subject: RE: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Mr. Reimer,

I would like to thank you for contacting me regarding the proposed fire assessment. I assure you that I do not approach this issue lightly and I will strongly consider all input before making my final decision. I will weigh several

alternatives to keeping our fire department fully funded, including making drastic budget cuts, raising the millage rate on property owners, and assessing a fire fee for service (so long as it is minimal and includes a sunset clause). I take none of these options lightly, as they all will have serious consequences on all or part of our community.

As for the rate structure, the various rates were determined by utilizing an exhaustive scientific analysis of GFR responses over the course of one year. The study looked at all responses, and eliminated any that did not directly relate to fire services (i.e. no EMT or car accident responses were included). This was used to determine the overall cost of providing fire services to the city (\$7,3342,466). The study then looked at various types of properties and what portion of fire services each property classification utilized. This is how we arrived at the \$99 per residential unit, \$.18/sq. foot for institutional, etc. It is all based on the proportional share of calls GFR answered and dedicated fire services to over the entire year. Churches fall under the institutional category; therefore they would be assessed at a rate of \$.05/sq. foot if the assessment is passed at a 25% rate. I am not sure if I did an adequate job of explaining the methodology of the rate structure, so if you want additional information, I suggest you contact Chief Northcutt (northcutwk@ci.gainesville.fl.us), who is much better at articulating the science behind the process.

Thank you for all that you do for our community. As a former chair of the CACCD, I have seen first-hand the direct impact you and your members make on our city.

Best,

Lauren

From: Larry Reimer [mailto:larryr@ucgainesville.org]
Sent: Wednesday, July 09, 2008 2:52 PM
To: citycomm
Cc: Cindy and Tim Martin
Subject: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

Dear Commissioners,

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Community Ministries.

I know the city is pressed for money, but so are the churches. I am willing to support a fair share, equal to the fee charged commercial buildings.

I hope someone on the commission will stand up to amend the proposed rate structure. Members of my church and I will be at the meeting on July 16 to argue for this change.

Thank you.

Larry Reimer

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Auerbach, Les

From: Larry Reimer [larryr@ucgainesville.org]
Sent: Wednesday, July 09, 2008 2:52 PM
To: Citycomm
Cc: Martin
Subject: Fire Protection Fee - Why the highest for churches?

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Auerbach, Les

From: Larry Reimer [larryr@ucgainesville.org]
Sent: Tuesday, May 20, 2008 10:18 AM
To: Citycomm
Subject: And Furthermore - Fire Fee

Dear Commissioners:

It's me again! Charging \$.17 per square foot for the fire protection fee for non-profits, when the fees for industrial and commercial are significantly lower, and not charging the city or university properties for fire protection is rather incomprehensible to me. In a time when everyone is experiencing funding cuts, the churches are called upon to do more and more in terms of providing space and financing for people and groups in need. If a fire services fee is to be imposed, it should be equitable, and inclusive of city and the university, all of whom use fire services.

Plus, it should be done in conjunction with the county. I don't think Gainesville wants large churches to leave the city, as has been done recently by Trinity Methodist, Westside Baptist, North Central Baptist, United Pentecostal, and now First Baptist. This is another incentive to do so.

Thanks.

Larry Reimer
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