

Young, Shaneka

From: Poe, Lauren B.
Sent: Wednesday, July 02, 2008 5:32 PM
To: Andrew, Devonia L.; 'Arnold Liverman'
Cc: citycomm; citymgr
Subject: RE: [QUARANTINE BYPASSED] Fire Fee

Mr. Liverman,

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.

There is a public information meeting at Westwood Middle School on Monday, July 7 at 6:30 pm. Unfortunately, I will be out of town, but city staff will be available to answer any and all of your questions. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Best,
 Lauren

From: Andrew, Devonia L.
Sent: Wednesday, July 02, 2008 6:28 AM
To: 'Arnold Liverman'
Cc: citycomm; citymgr
Subject: RE: [QUARANTINE BYPASSED] Fire Fee

Good Morning,

Your e-mail correspondence has been received by the Mayor and members of the City Commission and it is being shared with the City Manager. Thank you for taking the time to voice your concerns.

Devonia L. Andrew
 Executive Assistant to the Mayor

From: Arnold Liverman [mailto:arnold7777@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 2:52 PM
To: Hanrahan, Pegeen
Cc: hawkindst@cityofgainesville.org; Mastrodicasa, Jeanna; Henry, Scherwin L.; Poe, Lauren B.; Lowe, Craig; Donovan, John F. - Commissioner
Subject: [QUARANTINE BYPASSED] Fire Fee

Dear Mayor and Commissioners:

I am writing to encourage you to reverse your decision regarding imposing the "fire fee" on churches and charitable organizations. What you are really talking about is a tax. A way for the city government to raise money to pay for the services they provide. I am really not sure how you plan to get away with taxing 501(c) 3 organizations.

Churches and charitable organizations (most of which operate on a minimal budget) already pay their fair share

7/16/2008

by assisting the less fortunate of our community. If not for the churches and charitable organizations, the assistance they provide would fall on the shoulders of the government.

This was not a very well thought out decision. I encourage you to save the taxpayers the boatload of money in legal fees and costs it will take to defend this mistake and reverse it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Marilyn Liverman

Young, Shaneka

From: Johnson, Dan [DJohnson@trinitygnv.org]
Sent: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 11:49 PM
To: Hanrahan, Pegeen; Hawkins, Jr., Thomas; Mastrodicasa, Jeanna; Henry, Scherwin L.; Poe, Lauren B.; Donovan, John F. - Commissioner; Lowe, Craig
Subject: Fire Fee/Tax

Dear City Leaders,

I am Dan Johnson, Senior Minister of Trinity United Methodist Church and I am writing to urge you not to move forward with the "fire fee/tax" that you are proposing. There are four important reasons not to do this:

1. History. We have a 200+ history of separation of church and state in this country. The church is not to encroach on the government and the government is not to encroach upon the church. The government has honored this by giving churches, synagogues and mosques tax exempt status. Historically the "fire fee" has been paid through taxes. Your dropping the nomenclature of taxes and calling it a fee does not change the reality that you are now taxing churches, synagogues and mosques in a way that you have never done before. It is a wrong precedent to take. It is a mistake.

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I understand that you have a financial shortfall problem. Appoint a blue ribbon committee to address this, shift monies, cut back, do whatever, but please do not break with our historically sacred relationship and take us down this path where the unintended consequences will be monumental.

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Thank you.

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From: Andrew, Devonia L.
Sent: Wednesday, July 02, 2008 6:34 AM
To: 'Johnson, Dan'
Cc: citycomm; citymgr
Subject: RE: [QUARANTINE BYPASSED] Fire Fee/Tax

Good Morning Minister Johnson,

Your e-mail correspondence has been received by the Mayor and members of the City Commission and it is being shared with the City Manager. Thank you for taking the time to voice your concerns.

Devonia L. Andrew
Executive Assistant to the Mayor

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

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To: Hanrahan, Pegeen; Hawkins, Jr., Thomas; Mastrodicasa, Jeanna; Henry, Scherwin L.; Poe, Lauren B.; Donovan, John F. - Commissioner; Lowe, Craig
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Thank you for your consideration.

Marilyn Liverman

7/16/2008

Young, Shaneka

From: stephen packard [stevepackard@hotmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 2:42 PM
To: Hanrahan, Pegeen
Subject: RE: fire fees

I'm still confused then. We received a notice for the fire fees. Will this be subtracted from our property tax bill? This is very complicated and confusing to me. I've been to meetings and yet I guess I wasn't hearing this. Thank you for working with me.
 Amelia Packard

> Subject: Re: fire fees
 > Date: Tue, 1 Jul 2008 13:44:01 -0400
 > From: Hanrahanp@cityofgainesville.org
 > To: brownnb@cityofgainesville.org; stevepackard@hotmail.com
 > CC: citycomm@cityofgainesville.org; citymgr@cityofgainesville.org
 >
 > Dear Amelia -
 >
 > There never was a plan to assess fees differentially, and I never would have communicated that there was. That is not legal, as I understand it. What I did say is that the fire fees are offsetting property taxes, which are differential based on assessed value, so someone like yourself who pays high property taxes does benefit from such a funding source swap. This is accurate and continues to be. Today you pay a lot more for fire services than other residences. If we're move to a fully funded dept under the fire service fee you will pay less and I will pay more. That process is slowed by our only assessing up to a 30 percent fee in year one. The remainder of the service will still be funded by property taxes.
 >
 >
 > I hope this helps.
 >
 > Pegeen
 >
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 > Pegeen Hanrahan
 > Mayor
 > P.O. Box 490-19
 > Gainesville, Florida 32601-0490
 > (352) 334-5015
 > (352) 665-5939 mobile
 >
 >
 > ----- Original Message -----
 > From: Brown, Neomia B.
 > To: 'stephen packard' <stevepackard@hotmail.com>
 > Cc: citycomm; citymgr
 > Sent: Tue Jul 01 11:30:01 2008
 > Subject: RE: fire fees
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 > Good Morning Ms. Packard,
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>
> Neomia Brown

> Executive Assistant to the City Commission

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> _____
>
> From: stephen packard [mailto:stevepackard@hotmail.com]
> Sent: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 10:53 AM
> To: Lowe, Craig
> Subject: fire fees

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>
> Personally I think the \$6,000 we pay for our proerty tax should already
> include our share of fire fees. Apparently the Mayor was wrong on
> adjustments due to levels of property taxes a household pays (as
> was suggested at the District meeting).
> On charging a fee to Religious organizations: I think they should pay
> their share. Having said that, I realize the argument those institutions
> will make. So, here is my compromise. Charge the fees on those
> buildings that are not the "sanctuary" ie Offices, kitchens, day care
> facilities, other school buildings, etc. That way the small actual church
> would have very little burden. Ofcourse this doesn't address one of my
> personal concerns: "churches" in single family homes. To this I suggest
> the same stipulations as if you have an office in your home. In a
> single family home that you use as a "church" and still have people living
> there: tax the living areas (kitchen, bedrooms, etc) and have them designate
> a specific area that is only used to practice your religion. We have inspectors
> that come to your home for business offices and the same could be done for
> religions that establish themselves in a single family neighborhood.
> Thank you,
> Amelia Packard

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> _____
>
> Making the world a better place one message at a time. Check out the i'm Talkathon.
<http://www.imtalkathon.com/?source=EML_WLH_Talkathon_BetterPlace>

The i'm Talkaton. Can 30-days of conversation change the world? [Find out now.](#)

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From: Hanrahan, Pegeen
Sent: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 1:44 PM
To: Brown, Neomia B.; 'stevepackard@hotmail.com'
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Pegeen Hanrahan
Mayor
P.O. Box 490-19
Gainesville, Florida 32601-0490
(352) 334-5015
(352) 665-5939 mobile

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On charging a fee to Religious organizations: I think they should pay their share. Having said that, I realize the argument those institutions will make. So, here is my compromise. Charge the fees on those buildings that are not the "sanctuary" ie Offices, kitchens, day care facilities, other school buildings, etc. That way the small actual church would have very little burden. Ofcourse this doesn't address one of my personal concerns: "churches" in single family homes. To this I suggest the same stipulations as if you have an office in your home. In a single family home that you use as a "church" and still have people living there: tax the living areas (kitchen, bedrooms, etc) and have them designate a specific area that is only used to practice your religion. We have inspectors that come to your home for business offices and the same could be done for religions that establish themselves in a single family neighborhood.

Thank you,
Amelia Packard

Making the world a better place one message at a time. Check out the i'm Talkathon.
<http://www.imtalkathon.com/?source=EML_WLH_Talkathon_BetterPlace>

Young, Shaneka

From: Brown, Neomia B.
Sent: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 11:30 AM
To: 'stephen packard'
Cc: citycomm; citymgr
Subject: RE: fire fees

Good Morning Ms. Packard,

Your e-mail correspondence has been received by Commissioner Lowe and it is being shared with the entire members of the City Commission as well as the City Manager. Thank you for voicing your concerns in this matter.

Neomia Brown
Executive Assistant to the City Commission

From: stephen packard [mailto:stevepackard@hotmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 10:53 AM
To: Lowe, Craig
Subject: fire fees

Personally I think the \$6,000 we pay for our proerty tax should already include our share of fire fees. Apparently the Mayor was wrong on adjustments due to levels of property taxes a household pays (as was suggested at the District meeting).

On charging a fee to Religious organizations: I think they should pay their share. Having said that, I realize the argument those institutions will make. So, here is my compromise. Charge the fees on those buildings that are not the "sanctuary" ie Offices, kitchens, day care facilities, other school buildings, etc. That way the small actual church would have very little burden. Ofcourse this doesn't address one of my personal concerns: "churches" in single family homes. To this I suggest the same stipulations as if you have an office in your home. In a single family home that you use as a "church" and still have people living there: tax the living areas (kitchen, bedrooms, etc) and have them designate a specific area that is only used to practice your religion. We have inspectors that come to your home for business offices and the same could be done for religions that establish themselves in a single family neighborhood.

Thank you,
Amelia Packard

Making the world a better place one message at a time. [Check out the i'm Talkathon.](#)

Young, Shaneka

From: stephen packard [stevepackard@hotmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 10:53 AM
To: Lowe, Craig
Subject: fire fees

Personally I think the \$6,000 we pay for our proerty tax should already include our share of fire fees. Apparently the Mayor was wrong on adjustments due to levels of property taxes a household pays (as was suggested at the District meeting).

On charging a fee to Religious organizations: I think they should pay their share. Having said that, I realize the argument those institutions will make. So, here is my compromise. Charge the fees on those buildings that are not the "sanctuary" ie Offices, kitchens, day care facilities, other school buildings, etc. That way the small actual church would have very little burden. Ofcourse this doesn't address one of my personal concerns: "churches" in single family homes. To this I suggest the same stipulations as if you have an office in your home. In a single family home that you use as a "church" and still have people living there: tax the living areas (kitchen, bedrooms, etc) and have them designate a specific area that is only used to practice your religion. We have inspectors that come to your home for business offices and the same could be done for religions that establish themselves in a single family neighborhood.

Thank you,
Amelia Packard

Making the world a better place one message at a time. [Check out the i'm Talkathon.](#)

7/16/2008

Young, Shaneka

From: McVay, Toni L.
Sent: Thursday, June 26, 2008 4:06 PM
To: Benton, Mark S.; Billings, Karen; Bird, Thomas G.; Boynton, Frances B.; Bredfeldt, Erik A.; Brown, Okeima S.; Byrne, Betsy L.; citycomm; DG_Broadcast_Engineering; DG_City Attorney; DG_City Manager; DG_CLERKS; Dorsey, Chantel R.; Driggers, Kathlene S.; Duffie, Deborah L.; Figueroa, Norma; Godshalk, Brent L.; Haskell, Karen L.; Henley, Janice J.; Hilliard, Ralph W.; Kyler-Law, Patricia A.; Lyons, Anthony R.; Manker, LaRose Y.; Martin, Kathi M.; Mercer, Marie C.; Mimms, Dean L.; Murnahan, Alice F.; Newsome, Emily L.; Osborne, Rhonda L.; Parmelee, Kate A.; Rollins, Roma R.; Rountree, Becky L.; Sanders, Rebecca C.; Seawright, Stephanie R.; Skell, Rosemary A.; Tolbert, Candasy; Williams, Constance N.; Williams, Jimmie; Woods, Robert L.
Subject: FIRE SERVICES SPECIAL ASSESSMENT - FINAL RATE RESOLUTION - July 16, 2008

Hello, just for clarification, this meeting replaces the meeting that was originally scheduled for Monday, June 30, 2008.

Young, Shaneka

From: McVay, Toni L.
Sent: Friday, June 20, 2008 11:48 AM
To: Benton, Mark S.; Billings, Karen; Bird, Thomas G.; Boynton, Frances B.; Bredfeldt, Erik A.; Brown, Okeima S.; Byrne, Betsy L.; citycomm; DG_Broadcast_Engineering; DG_City Attorney; DG_City Manager; DG_CLERKS; Dorsey, Chantel R.; Driggers, Kathlene S.; Duffie, Deborah L.; Figueroa, Norma; Godshalk, Brent L.; Haskell, Karen L.; Henley, Janice J.; Hilliard, Ralph W.; Kyler-Law, Patricia A.; Lyons, Anthony R.; Manker, LaRose Y.; Martin, Kathi M.; Mercer, Marie C.; Mimms, Dean L.; Murnahan, Alice F.; Newsome, Emily L.; Osborne, Rhonda L.; Parmelee, Kate A.; Rollins, Roma R.; Rountree, Becky L.; Sanders, Rebecca C.; Seawright, Stephanie R.; Skell, Rosemary A.; Tolbert, Candasy; Williams, Constance N.; Williams, Jimmie; Woods, Robert L.
Subject: 2 REVISED MEETING CALLS FOR July 16, 2008 & July 21, 2008 - Attached
Attachments: July 16 & 21_REVISED CALLS.pdf



July 16 &
_REVISED CALLS.pdf

Toni McVay
Executive Assistant to the City Commission
City Hall
200 East University Avenue
Gainesville, FL 32601
(352) 393-8667
(352) 334-2036
mcvayal@cityofgainesville.org

REVISED CALL * 6/20/2008



CITY OF GAINESVILLE

DAY, DATE: Wednesday, July 16, 2008

TIME: 6:00 PM

REQUEST FOR MEETING

LOCATION: City Hall Auditorium

SPECIAL MEETING
 City Commission Action: 06/09/2008
 or Commissioner _____
 and Commissioner _____


EMERGENCY MEETING (Special Conditions Apply)
 City Commission Action: ___/___/08
 Mayor: _____
 or Commissioner _____
 and Commissioner _____
 and Commissioner _____

WORKSHOP/INFORMAL MEETING
 City Commission Action: ___/___/08
 Mayor: _____
 or Commissioner _____
 and Commissioner _____

INSPECTION TRIP
 City Commission Action: ___/___/08
 Mayor: _____
 or Commissioner _____
 and Commissioner _____
 or Charter: _____

I/we hereby request the City Commission Meeting titled above for the following topic/s: * 2ND Topic approved by Mayor Hanrahan 6/20/2008.

1. Fire Services Special Assessment - Final Rate Resolution
2. * Second Reading of the Urban Services Report Ordinance for the SW 20th Avenue Annexation Referendum

Signed: 
 Title: Clerk of the Commission

NOTE:

Agenda language will be provided the Clerk's Office
 BY: _____ at _____:____ AM PM
 (Date) (Time)

Back-up material will be provided the Clerk's Office
 BY: _____ at _____:____ AM PM
 (Date) (Time)

FOR CLERK'S OFFICE USE ONLY

COMMISSIONER	NOTIFIED VIA:	NOTIFIED BY:	DATE	TIME
Mayor Pegeen Hanrahan				
Commissioner Thomas Hawkins				
Commissioner Lauren Poe				
Commissioner Scherwin Henry				
Commissioner Jack Donovan				
Commissioner Craig Lowe				
Commissioner Jeanna Mastrodicasa				

SECOND REVISION TO CALL ****** 6/20/08



CITY OF GAINESVILLE

DAY, DATE: Monday, July 21, 2008

TIME: 6:00 PM

REQUEST FOR MEETING

LOCATION: City Hall Auditorium

SPECIAL MEETING
 City Commission Action: 03/24/2008
 or Commissioner _____
 and Commissioner _____

EMERGENCY MEETING (Special Conditions Apply)
 City Commission Action: ___/___/08
 Mayor: _____
 or Commissioner _____
 and Commissioner _____
 and Commissioner _____

WORKSHOP/INFORMAL MEETING
 City Commission Action: ___/___/08
 Mayor: _____
 or Commissioner _____
 and Commissioner _____

INSPECTION TRIP
 City Commission Action: ___/___/08
 Mayor: _____
 or Commissioner _____
 and Commissioner _____
 or Charter: _____

I/we hereby request the City Commission Meeting titled above
 for the following topic/s: *approved by Mayor Hanrahan @ 6/18/08 Agenda Review
 **approved by Mayor Hanrahan 6/20/2008

1. 2008-2009 Gainesville Regional Utilities Budget
2. *Adoption of General Government Tentative Budget and Millage Rate (2008-2009)
3. **First Reading of the SW 20th Avenue Annexation Referendum Ordinance

Signed: ICU
 Title: Clerk of the Commission

NOTE:

Agenda language will be provided the Clerk's Office
 BY: _____ at _____:____ AM PM
 (Date) (Time)

Back-up material will be provided the Clerk's Office
 BY: _____ at _____:____ AM PM
 (Date) (Time)

FOR CLERK'S OFFICE USE ONLY

COMMISSIONER	NOTIFIED VIA:	NOTIFIED BY:	DATE	TIME
Mayor Pegeen Hanrahan				
Commissioner Thomas Hawkins				
Commissioner Lauren Poe				
Commissioner Scherwin Henry				
Commissioner Jack Donovan				
Commissioner Craig Lowe				
Commissioner Jeanna Mastrodicasa				

Young, Shaneka

From: Andrew, Devonia L.
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2008 12:24 PM
To: 'stephen packard'
Cc: citycomm; citymgr
Subject: RE: fee

Good Afternoon Ms. Packard,

Your e-mail correspondence has been received by the Mayor and it is being shared with the other members of the City Commission and the City Manager. Thank you for your time in this matter.

Devonia L. Andrew
Executive Assistant to the Mayor

From: stephen packard [mailto:stevepackard@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2008 8:23 AM
To: Hanrahan, Pegeen
Subject: fee

At the district meeting the Commissioners held, I asked about the fire fee. You thought at the time it would be graduated. I asked specifically because of the amount of property taxes I pay compared to my neighbors. Since we are in the same neighborhood, you felt that you would be paying more than me for the fee. While I knew that even if I paid the full \$30. it would not be close to the difference we pay in propety tax, I found the graduated amount to be an interesting proposition. Now, I've been informed that I will indeed be paying the full \$30. So, I was wondering if you would like to switch with me on the property tax or at least average out our two? 😊 I just have trouble with how property taxes are no longer equitable and thus legal in their application.
Amelia Packard

The i'm Talkathon starts 6/24/08. For now, give amongst yourselves. [Learn More](#)

Young, Shaneka

From: stephen packard [stevepackard@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2008 8:23 AM
To: Hanrahan, Pegeen
Subject: fee

At the district meeting the Commissioners held, I asked about the fire fee. You thought at the time it would be graduated. I asked specifically because of the amount of property taxes I pay compared to my neighbors. Since we are in the same neighborhood, you felt that you would be paying more than me for the fee. While I knew that even if I paid the full \$30. it would not be close to the difference we pay in propety tax, I found the graduated amount to be an interesting proposition. Now, I've been informed that I will indeed be paying the full \$30. So, I was wondering if you would like to switch with me on the property tax or at least average out our two? 😊 I just have trouble with how property taxes are no longer equitable and thus legal in their application.
Amelia Packard

The i'm Talkathon starts 6/24/08. For now, give amongst yourselves. [Learn More](#)

Young, Shaneka

From: Andrew, Devonia L.
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2008 7:07 AM
To: 'nava53@bellsouth.net'
Cc: citycomm; citymgr
Subject: RE: fire dep. assesment

Good Morning,

Your e-mail correspondence has been received by the Mayor and members of the City Commission and it is being shared with the City Manager. Thank you for taking the time to voice your concerns.

Devonia L. Andrew
Executive Assistant to the Mayor

From: nava53@bellsouth.net [mailto:nava53@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Friday, June 27, 2008 5:32 PM
To: Hanrahan, Pegeen; Hawkins, Jr., Thomas; Mastrodicasa, Jeanna; henryl@cityofgainesville.org; Poe, Lauren B.; Donovan, John F. - Commissioner; Lowe, Craig
Subject: fire dep. assesment

Hello, Since I won't be able to attend the public hearing regarding the proposed tax assesment to fund the fire dep., I want to voice my strong objection. I understand why they need the funds, but I think it is an over taxation on very stretched pockets. I am a small business owner as well as a wife of a music teacher for alachua county. Along with everyone else around me I see my business struggling to exist, my husband's job threatened after 11 years of giving to the community, (teaching in a very underfunded conditioned) and my son's I.B highschool asking us to fund privatley teachers critical positions, which have been cut. on top of that I paid the fire Dep. \$50 when they imposed an inspection on all the businesses, so they can raise funds. Since I am a part of a condo. association, I pay my dues monthly. These include about \$5000 annually in fire inspections monitoring and registrations expensess. (yet there are no discounts reflected in the assesments considering that) This is an issue for the city attorney to look at right away! So, as you can imagine all this comes to one family who is paying thousands of dollars in property taxes. If the money is not going to fire services, education, for sure not roads., or the underfunded police dep. THEN WHERE DOES IT GO? are you looking to cut in places like your VERY inefficent city offices, parks, city maintnance exessive personnel? I feel very ashamed to live in a city that is not puting education, fire and police services and the importance of small businesses to the community as a priority. There must be other creative ways to get funds rather than just to pass the bill to very overstretched pockets. I am opposed to the proposed assesment. Thank you for your time, Nava Ottenberg

7/16/2008

Young, Shaneka

From: nava53@bellsouth.net**Sent:** Friday, June 27, 2008 5:32 PM**To:** Hanrahan, Pegeen; Hawkins, Jr., Thomas; Mastrodicasa, Jeanna; henryl@cityofgainesville.org; Poe, Lauren B.; Donovan, John F. - Commissioner; Lowe, Craig**Subject:** fire dep. assesment

Hello, Since I won't be able to attend the public hearing regarding the proposed tax assesment to fund the fire dep., I want to voice my strong objection. I understand why they need the funds, but I think it is an over taxation on very stretched pockets. I am a small business owner as well as a wife of a music teacher for alachua county. Along with everyone else around me I see my business struggling to exist, my husband's job threatened after 11 years of giving to the community, (teaching in a very underfunded conditioned) and my son's I.B highschool asking us to fund privatley teachers critical positions, which have been cut. on top of that I paid the fire Dep. \$50 when they imposed an inspection on all the businesses, so they can raise funds. Since I am a part of a condo. association, I pay my dues monthly. These include about \$5000 annually in fire inspections monitoring and registrations expensess. (yet there are no discounts reflected in the assesments considering that) This is an issue for the city attorney to look at right away! So, as you can imagine all this comes to one family who is paying thousands of dollars in property taxes. If the money is not going to fire services, education, for sure not roads..., or the underfunded police dep. THEN WHERE DOES IT GO? are you looking to cut in places like your VERY inefficent city ofices, parks, city maintnance exessive personnel? I feel very ashamed to live in a city that is not puting education, fire and police services and the importance of small businesses to the community as a priority. There must be other creative ways to get funds rather than just to pass the bill to very overstretched pockets. I am opposed to the proposed assesment. Thank you for your time, Nava Ottenberg

Young, Shaneka

From: Harris, Helen J.
Sent: Friday, June 27, 2008 4:50 PM
To: citycomm
Cc: Folkers, Paul E.; Blackburn, Russ D.
Subject: FW: Draft Response for Fire Assessment Concerns Regarding Apartments

Commissioners,

Please see below email from Assistant City Manager Paul Folkers.

Helen

From: Folkers, Paul E.
Sent: Friday, June 27, 2008 4:48 PM
To: Harris, Helen J.
Subject: Draft Response for Fire Assessment Concerns Regarding Apartments

Members of the Commission,

Please see the attached draft response to fire assessment concerns raised regarding apartments.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on the proposed special assessment for fire services. The decision on whether to impose a fire assessment is not an easy one. The Commission is receiving valuable input from residents that will be taken into consideration before a final decision is made. The Commission would not be considering a fire assessment if the City was not facing serious budget challenges that could lead to significant service reductions. Although, Florida voters approved constitutional amendment 1 in January, 60% of the voters in Gainesville voted against the amendment. The City also made significant reductions in its current year budget due to last year's State mandated property tax rollbacks.

Even if a fire assessment is imposed at the proposed rates, the vast majority of homeowners will pay less in combined property taxes and fire assessments than they paid in property taxes for the current fiscal year. The Commission is facing very difficult decisions in crafting the City's budget for next fiscal year to maintain the services many of our residents rely upon. A special assessment for fire services is an option that the Commission is considering to provide dedicated funding to support a core City service.

A fire assessment is established as a benefit to property. The rates charged to apartment units would be the same as those charged to single family residences based on the fire service response provided to residential dwelling units. An apartment that is reported to be on fire receives at least as much fire service resources as a single family home on initial dispatch because of the proximity of each unit to the adjacent unit and the heightened risk and hazard this creates. The assessment rate for residential units is based on demand for resources and not square footage. The regressive nature of the fire assessment has been identified which is one of the reasons the Commission has proposed a low rate.

Gainesville Fire Rescue encourages the use and installation or building fire suppression systems like sprinkler systems and will continue to do so. The City does require that many of these systems be installed in new apartment developments. The City has been informed by its consultant, Government Services Group (GSG), that the fire assessment methodology to provide a credit for fire suppression systems does not yet exist. GSG is currently working on a methodology to provide just such a credit. If a fire assessment is imposed, the City would look to make refinements to the fire assessment in the future and would be very interested in incorporating a credit for fire suppression systems as this method is validated, implemented and tested.

7/16/2008

The fire assessment has been proposed at a lower rate to minimize the impact on property owners and to focus on the funding needed to maintain the City's fire services and spare them from budget reductions. Lastly, the City has been and is continuing to communicate with the University of Florida seeking compensation for City fire services. The City is not able to impose a fire assessment on the University of Florida since it is government property; however, it seems fair and appropriate that the University compensate the City for fire services especially when the City is considering a fire assessment that would be imposed on non-profit entities and since the University is a major beneficiary of the City's fire services.

Thank you again for sharing your concerns.

Young, Shaneka

From: Harris, Helen J.
Sent: Friday, June 27, 2008 4:49 PM
To: citycomm
Cc: Folkers, Paul E.; Blackburn, Russ D.
Subject: Draft Response for Fire Assessment Concerns Regarding Places of Religious Assembly

Good afternoon Commissioners,

Please see below email from Assistant City Manager, Paul Folkers.

From: Folkers, Paul E.
Sent: Friday, June 27, 2008 4:46 PM
To: Harris, Helen J.
Subject: Draft Response for Fire Assessment Concerns Regarding Places of Religious Assembly

Members of the City Commission,

Please see the attached draft response for concerns raised about the fire assessment being imposed on places of religious assembly.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on the proposed special assessment for fire services. The decision on whether to impose a fire assessment is not an easy one. The Commission is receiving valuable input from residents that will be taken into consideration before a final decision is made. The Commission would not be considering a fire assessment if the City was not facing serious budget challenges that could lead to significant service reductions. Although, Florida voters approved constitutional amendment 1 in January, 60% of the voters in Gainesville voted against the amendment. The City also made significant reductions in its current year budget due to last year's State mandated property tax rollbacks. Even if a fire assessment is imposed at the proposed rates, the vast majority of homeowners will pay less in combined property taxes and fire assessments than they paid in property taxes for the current fiscal year.

The Commission is facing very difficult decisions in crafting the City's budget for next fiscal year to maintain the services many of our residents rely upon. A special assessment for fire services is an option that the Commission is considering to provide dedicated funding to support a core City service. The issue of whether a fire assessment must include non-profit organizations has been discussed during Commission meetings. The City has received legal advice indicating that a fire assessment needs to be collected from all improved properties receiving benefit from the City's fire services except government-owned property since the City has no legal authority to impose a fire assessment on government properties.

A special assessment for fire services is not a tax. Taxes are collected regardless of whether the person being taxed directly benefits from a specific service. A fire assessment has a specific legal test it must meet. The service must provide a benefit to property and be fairly and reasonably apportioned among the properties receiving the benefit. As part of that test, a court will consider whether a local jurisdiction is assessing properties based on the benefit to the property or collecting new revenue from the same properties subject to property taxes. A legal concern is that if the City collects a fire assessment from the same group of properties that are paying taxes while exempting properties that are receiving a benefit but not paying taxes that the assessment may be seen as a tax veiled as a special assessment. If the Florida Statutes did not specifically address the immunity of governmental properties these properties would also be assessed.

Places of religious assembly receive the benefit provided by the City's fire services through protection of their

7/16/2008

buildings and the lower insurance rates available based on City provided fire service. Places of religious assembly would also not be charged twice. Members of places of religious assembly who own homes in the City would pay the fire assessment for the benefits provided to their home. Places of religious assembly would be assessed separately for benefits provided to their property. This is somewhat similar to the storm water fee currently paid by owners of all property, including places of religious assembly, discharging into the City's stormwater system.

The fire assessment has been proposed at a lower rate to minimize the impact on property owners and to focus on the funding needed to maintain the City's fire services and spare them from budget reductions. Lastly, the City has been and is continuing to communicate with the University of Florida seeking compensation for City fire services. The City is not able to impose a fire assessment on the University of Florida since it is government property; however, it seems fair and appropriate that the University compensate the City for fire services especially when the City is considering a fire assessment that would be imposed on non-profit entities and since the University is a major beneficiary of the City's fire services.

Thank you again for sharing your concerns.

Young, Shaneka

From: jimgrisham1@cox.net
Sent: Friday, June 27, 2008 3:04 PM
To: Hawkins, Jr., Thomas
Subject: RE: Proposed Application of the Special Fire Assessment to Churches and Other Non-Profits

Commissioner Hawkins,

I appreciate your personal reply.

Not many elected officials make the level of effort you have made to communicate with their constituents.

It was nice to hear from you.

Jim Grisham

----- "Hawkins wrote:

> Mr. Grisham,

>

> Thank you for taking the time to share your opinions. I do not take
> the levy of the proposed fire assessment lightly. The City Commission
> is also considering substantial budget reductions, including removing
> positions in the police and fire departments, and may even adopt a
> millage rate which is higher than our expected rollback rate. I do
> not take these propositions lightly either. I assure you that each of
> us will weigh our, and our citizen's, values in making these
> decisions. I appreciate your input.

>

> 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

>

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> From: jimgrisham1 [mailto:jimgrisham1@cox.net]

> Sent: Tuesday, June 24, 2008 12:28 AM

> To: Hanrahan, Pegeen; Hawkins, Jr., Thomas; Mastrodicasa, Jeanna;

> Henry, Scherwin L.; Poe, Lauren B.; Donovan, John F. - Commissioner;

> Lowe, Craig; citymgr

> Subject: Proposed Application of the Special Fire Assessment to

> Churches and Other Non-Profits

>

>

>

> Dear Mayor Hanrahan, Commissioners Hawkins, Henry, Mastrodij, Poe,
> Donovan, Lowe & Manager Blackburn:

>

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>

>

>

> I am writing as both a concerned citizen and a Christian who is a
> member of Trinity United Methodist church.

>

>
>
> Dr. Dan Johnson, the senior pastor of Trinity United Methodist church,
> has written a letter to the Gainesville Sun
>
> and appeared on WCJB to voice his opposition of the proposed
> application of the fire assessment to Gainesville
>
> churches and other non-profits.
>
>
>
> I support Dr. Johnson and other Gainesville pastors fully in their
> opposition to the application of the proposed special fire assessment
> to Gainesville's churches and non-profits.
>
>
> The state of Florida and its subdivisions have a long history of not
> imposing taxes and fees on churches. This is not the time to break
> with this tradition.
>
> As Ron Cunningham noted in his Gainesville Sun editorial of May 29 -
> "Churches and other nonprofits feed the hungry, unite broken families,
> shelter abused women and children and perform a host of other services
> that would otherwise have to be
> financed with public tax dollars . . . Gainesville doesn't have to
> assess nonprofits - themselves providers of indispensable community
> services - to keep its fire department adequately funded.
>
> I hope that you will amend the proposed fire assessment fee
> legislation to fully exempt Gainesville's churches and non-profit
> organizations.
>
> Thank you for reading my comments.
>
>
> Jim Grisham
> 4003 NW 60th Avenue
> Gainesville, FL 32653
>
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