

Tom Fox  
PO Box 2723  
Gainesville Florida 32602

2008 MAY 19 AM 11: 34

May 19, 2008

Fire Assessment Fee – Penalty

Dear City Commission,

As some of you know I own a building at 109 South Main Street. We recently received the Certificate of Operations from the city. We have Updated the building on all the latest codes including at least \$100,000 in Fire Safety Improvements. Included are brand new sprinkler system, three metal stairways replacing one wooden one, expensive Fire rated windows, fire rated hallways, on and on. My new sprinkler system has an attachment in front of the building that could be used to fight fires of my neighbors in an emergency. All of this online this April.

Yet according to Cathy at the fire dept. My property assessment fee will be the same as my neighbor who refused any of these upgrades when they did their \$300,000 renovation on their building. Where is the incentive for developers or owners to upgrade their buildings on fire assessment fees? Shouldn't I get 50% reduction because I spent the extra money for the numerous fire improvements? Not to mention the increased maintenance costs over the years? Cathy said that she agreed with me and to make you aware of these inequities in the new fee. Cathy agrees that fire improvements of this nature deserve financial reduction in fees. She also said that this fee was put together fast and that in future years it will hopefully modified to represent and more fair tax. I appreciate her sentiments but that is not going to help me when you pass this unfair tax.

According to my calculations the assessment is double what my property taxes were when I bought the building. These are extremely high taxes with little or no debate. Please don't just pass this fire fee without modifying it so that it does not punish the citizens that try to do the right thing in fire safety. With skyrocketing taxes, insurance, multiple fees and basic food costs, you must be aware of a business breaking point. It is imperative that the commission does the right thing. The fair thing. Modify the fire assessment fee now. Thank you.

Sincerely



c/m.v.

5/13/08

Dear Madame Mayor and City Commissioners,

Greetings. I am writing you today to express my outrage over our city's poor being taxed disproportionately for this "fire service assessment against property." A large amount of citizens in Gainesville are having to try to make ends meet on fixed incomes. I, myself, am disabled and must somehow find a way to "make it" each month on a total income of \$500.00. With this money, I have to pay \$62.00 to fill up my car's gas tank, pay my monthly doctor's bill, 3 prescriptions, my GRU bill (over \$160.99!), car insurance, property insurance, phone bill, and then somehow find some money to buy food and other essential items. As you can see, times are extremely tough for me. I, absolutely, can not afford to pay any additional money per month. I am under a ton of stress and anxiety as it is! I read, in the "Gainesville Sun" newspaper, that someone living in a \$500,000.00 house would actually get \$351.00 dollars back while a struggling person, like me, has to pay more! This makes absolutely no sense and is totally unfair and disproportionate. It hurts the poor, terribly. I have no idea how I am going to manage if I have to pay another hundred dollars in bills! (I'm crying right now, thinking about it.) I am asking you to do something so that the poor aren't hurt even more by our terrible economy. (over →)

I, honestly, can not afford this fee. In the past 10 years of me living in Gainesville, I have paid well over six thousand dollars (my income for a whole year!) in taxes, and have never used any of Gainesville's Services. In addition, I've worked countless hours educating our city's youth and working to make our community better. I feel I should tell you that after attending one city commission meeting, I am in so much pain that I can do nothing but stay in bed for the next two days. My disability is not always evident because I have to take prescription pain killers every 4 hours in order to even function close to normal.

So, I am writing to ask you to find some other way(s) to get the money that is needed for this "fire assessment." A few ideas that have crossed my mind are to ask the cities that want the services to pay for them, ② ask fire employees to take a pay cut if they make in the six digit salaries, ③ ask UF's President Mr. Macher for the money because he makes \$800,000.00 a year, ④ fundraisers, and lastly, ⑤ cut a few un-needed police officers (which aren't needed...) I beg you to find some other way(s), other than hurting those on a fixed incomes and the poor. We can not afford it! Thank you for your hardwork. It's greatly appreciated.

P.S. In addition to me living in St.ville and paying into taxes the last 10 years, I also lived here from 1985 through 1990 so I paid them, too, and never used any services (police, schools, health, recreation, etc. Nor did I ever have children that

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Muir

William Barker  
3905 NW 34th Place  
Gainesville, FL 32606

CITY OF GAINESVILLE  
CITY COMMISSION

2008 JUN 23 PM 3: 23

June 20, 2008

Commissioners  
City of Gainesville  
200 E. University Avenue  
Gainesville, FL 32601

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for the "Notice to Property Owner" dated June 25, 2008.

I cannot attend the meeting scheduled for July 16, but I would like my letter read during the meeting because I'm quite sure my sentiments would reflect almost unanimously among the citizenry.

It's easy to cite factors which could necessitate a special assessment -- economic conditions, inflation, budget reductions, non-taxable property, and "everybody does it", Tallahassee, Hollywood, Newberry, Hawthorne, and so on.

This assessment may be necessary, and some reasons are legitimate, but please don't use the ploy of "everybody is doing it". Do you need reasons why this is an asinine and childish argument?

Please, let's confine our expenditures to be proportional to our increased tax base.

Do you not know that people in Gainesville believe the commissioners will use any scheme to wring out additional taxes from the taxpayer. There are more, but I will cite two recent ones that come to mind where there is absolutely no justification.

- a. Landlord tax
- b. The exorbitant 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> call for false alarms (but no assessment for family dispute calls where the time consumed is much greater)

We will not be able to prove that you don't need this assessment, but if we don't have a hissy fit about this, you will invent more. You probably will anyway.

This letter sounds cynical, but I love Gainesville, and I appreciate the good things you do, but please don't get carried away by inflicting more and more taxes. Is this reminiscent of Gibbon's reasons for "The Fall of Rome", "more and more taxes"?

Sincerely yours,



William E. Barker

Copy to Gainesville Sun

cc: ccom  
CLERK  
C/MGR

**James S. & Kirby E. Zimmerman**  
611 SW 27th Court  
Gainesville, FL 32601  
June 20, 2008

2008 JUN 23 PM 3: 22

City of Gainesville  
200 E. University Ave.  
Gainesville, FL 32601

Attention: Mayor & City Commission

Subject: Special Assessment for Fire Services

This is a letter of objection to the proposed "special assessment", as provided for in your June 25 announcement of public hearings.

We are currently paying about \$3,800 in annual Real Estate taxes, for which we see virtually no services at all. We have several concerns and longer term suggestions regarding the inability of our senior City Management to live within their budgets:

1. 54% of properties in Gainesville are exempt from paying city taxes, from which they benefit. This is a disgrace for a city the size of Gainesville. It's time to change that mix by encouraging more businesses and tax payers.
2. The "additional" \$2+ million should come from better government management:
  - o **Improve productivity of the current employees.** We saw 5 (five) men and 3 vehicles looking at a GRU transformer the other day. We consistently see 3 or 4 city workers.....one that is working, the others watching. Who knows whether any of them had qualified supervisors or knowledgeable technicians?
  - o **Find savings through waste, fraud and abuse.** You claim to be trimming costs, but where have you found duplicate services, inefficient productivity and wasteful spending? You need to replace the ambient light sensors that control the street lights.....many are still burning after daylight. Has the city totally converted all it's light bulbs to the efficient, low wattage fluorescent bulbs yet, as GRU has suggested of all homeowners? Replace defective transformers, rather than sending crews to do patch-up repairs (the one close to S. Main St. and SW 29th PL. blows at least 3-4 times a year). Create a challenge, with financial incentives for employees to find ways to reduce costs, improve efficiency (ie: a formal program with suggestion boxes all over the city offices)!
  - o **Optimize your Transportation Vehicles.** We often see parked city vehicles, without occupants with their engines running. Waste of expensive fuel!! Buy some smaller bus equipment to take advantage of better efficiency during low ridership periods. Think of the energy (with diesel at almost \$5.00/gal) saved by sizing your trips to the number of the riders. With the incredible capabilities of computers these days, this kind of optimization should be a "cakewalk".

o City Beautification is not a top priority, during tough economic times. It's time to eliminate unnecessary expenditures, such as brick-like materials across crosswalks (that are wearing out at an unprecedented rate); circles that go nowhere in the middle of intersections; circles, in general, that provide no value to traffic control; and the extremely expensive trees, planted in the median strip of south Main St. These are just a few of very real examples.

o The \$2+ million is about 10% of your entire revenue. Certainly, you can find 10% that you don't have to dump on our (almost minority) taxpayers.

3. A Special Assessment.....unique by your definition.....why was fire services selected for this provision? Why not roads? Bus services? Library? Police? Trash collection? Anything else that may not be politically astute? Now that you have selected a needed service to the community for this "Special Assessment", what's to prevent you from adding more special assessment taxes in the future to the services we just mentioned?

4. Finally, we don't feel that we should pay for a service which our community hasn't needed in years. We have owned our Kirkwood home (between S. Main and SW 13th St.) for 15 years, have lived her for 10 years and we know of no fire service ever required in Kirkwood (you may correct me if I'm wrong, since I don't have access to the statistics) but I'm sure that Kirkwood must have the lowest incident rate in Gainesville. Why don't you consider assessing fees based on history of incidents and usage? Or charge for specific responses, just as ambulance services are charged? Or collect as a necessary charge from insurance carriers. Besides, we are also paying another \$1,700/year for our fire insurance. By the way, unique, here in Kirkwood, we have a street system, now owned by the city which is deteriorating, primarily because of the damages by GRU's trash contractor. GRU has failed us by not monitoring and correcting their performance. Also, unique to Kirkwood, we don't have city sewage, yet the community has been here since at least 1938 and has paid heavily over these years, for services not received.

These are some reasons we object and suggestions you may use, in lieu of just taxing the eligible (vs. exempt) taxpayers. You may respond, if you like: 371-7922.

Sincerely,



James S. Zimmerman



Kirby E. Zimmerman

cc CCUM  
C/AGE



CITY OF GAINESVILLE  
CITY COMMISSION

2008 JUL -8 PM 4:17

July 5, 2008

City Commission  
200 E. University Ave.  
Gainesville, FL 32601

Re: Fire service assessment for parcel # 15504-002-000, 15504-000-000 located at 1900 SW 13<sup>th</sup> St. Gainesville, FL 32608 and others listed below

This is to inform you that the following parcels located on SW 13<sup>th</sup> Street have objection to this special fire service assessment fees. We strongly believe that as it is we have higher property taxes in Alachua County and by applying this fire service fee of at least 5-8% of the property taxes makes it very difficult for small businesses like us to survive and especially in this bad economy, we are already suffering. Besides, we do not know how much our property taxes will go up. Combined effect is beyond imagination. We respectfully request the Commission to consider any other ways to compensate for the shortfall of budget for these services.

Parcel #	Property Name
15696-002	Comfort Inn
15611-2	Econolodge
15627	Days Inn
15545	Bambi Motel
15680	Florida Motel
15564	Sands Motel
15504-01	ABC Motel
15504-000/002	Americas Best Value Inn
	Lakeshore Tower

Authorized Signature
Sanjay Patel - <i>[Signature]</i>
Amrish Patel - <i>[Signature]</i>
Jay Patel - <i>[Signature]</i>
Hasmukh Patel - <i>[Signature]</i>
Amrat Patel - <i>[Signature]</i>
Bhupendra or Sonal Patel - <i>[Signature]</i>
Amil Vishnagar - <i>[Signature]</i>
Sanmukh Patel - <i>[Signature]</i>
Debra Butler - <i>[Signature]</i>

(LST) 15696-005-000  
(vacant lot) 15696-004-001

1900 S.W. 13th Street • Gainesville, FL 32608

CITY OF GAINESVILLE  
CITY COMMISSION

1320 NW 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave # 206

Gainesville, Fl 32603

352-337-9255

2008 JUN 10 PM 3: 46



July 7, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Tax Parcel 14838-020-340

The business I own and manage consists of a variety of apartments and single-family homes that I rent primarily to college students. In recent years, tremendous increases in the cost of insurance, maintenance, and property taxes have caused these rentals to yield less and less profit each year. Obviously, part of the reason that my business pays such heavy property taxes is that property tax revenue from only 46% of the properties in Gainesville must generate 100% of the needed tax revenue. This 46% figure comes from the letter sent to me regarding this special assessment ("Over 54% of City property values are off the tax role").

I fully understand and appreciate the need for excellent fire services within the community. Gainesville Fire Rescue has responded to several calls at our properties and has always done so promptly and professionally. I also understand that the provision of fire services is extremely expensive. I do not understand, however, why any parcel eligible for fire services should be exempt from paying for these services, particularly if a lack of funding for these services has created a need for a special assessment on those currently paying for these services.

I therefore strongly object to being charged this special assessment. If additional funding is needed, it is only fair that those property owners currently benefiting from, but not paying for fire protection services pay it. I will be attending the City Commission public hearing on Wednesday, July 16 to voice these objections to the city commission.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Gravois', written over a horizontal line.

Michael Gravois  
Managing Partner Jackson Square at The University, LLC

CC: CCOM Encl. 25 ltrs (parcels)  
C/MAN.





# F & G Land Company, INC

1320 NW 3rd Ave #206

Gainesville, FL 32603

(352) 375-8256 Fax (352) 375-0059

GAINESVILLE  
CITY COMMISSION

2008 JUL 10 PM 3:40

July 7, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Tax Parcel 13167-001-000

The business I own and manage consists of a variety of apartments and single-family homes that I rent primarily to college students. In recent years, tremendous increases in the cost of insurance, maintenance, and property taxes have caused these rentals to yield less and less profit each year. Obviously, part of the reason that my business pays such heavy property taxes is that property tax revenue from only 46% of the properties in Gainesville must generate 100% of the needed tax revenue. This 46% figure comes from the letter sent to me regarding this special assessment ("Over 54% of City property values are off the tax role").

I fully understand and appreciate the need for excellent fire services within the community. Gainesville Fire Rescue has responded to several calls at our properties and has always done so promptly and professionally. I also understand that the provision of fire services is extremely expensive. I do not understand, however, why any parcel eligible for fire services should be exempt from paying for these services, particularly if a lack of funding for these services has created a need for a special assessment on those currently paying for these services.

I therefore strongly object to being charged this special assessment. If additional funding is needed, it is only fair that those property owners currently benefiting from, but not paying for fire protection services pay it. I will be attending the City Commission public hearing on Wednesday, July 16 to voice these objections to the city commission.

Thanks,

Michael Gravois  
President F&G Land Company

CC: CCOM Encl. 14 Has  
C/MAW.

**Villas at 39<sup>th</sup> LLC**  
4707 NW 53 Ave, Suite A  
Gainesville, Florida 32653  
352-377-2240

CITY OF GAINESVILLE  
CITY COMMISSION  
2008 JUL 10 AM 11:26

July 8, 2008

Gainesville City Commission  
200 E. University Avenue  
Gainesville, Florida 32601

Re: Fire Services Non-Ad Valorem Assessments - Tax Parcel # 08247-000-000

Dear Commissioners:

Currently there are three structures (manufactured homes) in various stages of construction, none currently occupied on this parcel. In the past there were potentially 156 lots for rent for mobile homes. Now there are 100 land units (99 currently for sale and one sold) for the placement of manufactured housing to be owner-occupied.

It would seem reasonable to have a fire-services assessment to be on structures, not vacant land. Therefore I respectfully object to the proposed assessment.

Sincerely,

  
Howard K. Wallace, Jr.  
Managing Partner

CC: CCOM  
C/MAN.

**Young, Shaneka**

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**From:** Daniel Royston [Daniel@paramountplaza.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 16, 2008 11:07 AM  
**To:** citycomm  
**Subject:** re: proposed fire assessment petition

**Attachments:** July 16th.tif



July 16th.tif (69 KB)



July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008

City of Gainesville  
200 E. University Avenue  
Gainesville, Florida 32601  
Attention: Cathy Driggers

Dear Mrs. Driggers,

Allow me to take this opportunity to introduce myself, my name is Dan Berben, General Manager of the Paramount Plaza Hotel & Suites Gainesville. I have recently received a letter from the City of Gainesville, alerting me to a public hearing about a proposed assessment charge for Fire Services from the City of Gainesville. This huge proposed assessment fee, has caused great concern in the community businesses.

From the information that I have read, this assessment is based on commercial Square Feet of a facility & business. I have also been in contact with other Hotel owners and General Managers in the city limits, and many of us have very serious concerns and problems with the new proposed assessment. I would assume that a financial deficit with in the City is the cause for this proposed assessment, and as a business operator, I understand such a deficit.

With the recent downturn in the Country's economy, higher gas prices and costs, the Hotel industry has also suffered greatly in the past ten months. This, combined with increased utilities cost (electric, gas & water), increased cable, increased insurance rates for employees and the business etc! Running a profitable business, especially a Hotel, is a challenge in today's market.

In times of prosperities, usually Hotel travel and restaurants do very well. In times of economic trouble, especially with today's gas prices, Hotel travel, and restaurants take the greatest hit with the American consumer. This is why I must protest this assessment and petition it not to be enforced.

Thank you for the consideration in this matter, I can be reached at any time for questions or input (352) 256-0628.

Sincerely,  
Dan Berben  
General Manager  
Paramount Plaza Hotel & Suites  
Gainesville

## Young, Shaneka

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**From:** McVay, Toni L.  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 16, 2008 11:34 AM  
**To:** Lannon, Kurt M.; Young, Shaneka; Andrew, Devonia L.; Brown, Neomia B.; Byrne, Betsy L.  
**Cc:** Folkers, Paul E.; Waratuke, Elizabeth A.  
**Subject:** Correspondence to Commissioners Re: Fire Assessment

Hello, Paul Folkers called and said that the City Attorney's office requested that the Clerk's office provide a copy of all correspondence to commissioners (emails, us mail, etc.) as an exhibit for tonight's meeting. Toni

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](mailto:mcvayal@cityofgainesville.org)

Young, Shaneka

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**From:** Brown, Neomia B.  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 15, 2008 3:50 PM  
**To:** 'Evelyn Casey'  
**Cc:** citycomm; citymgr  
**Subject:** RE: fire assessment fee

Good Afternoon Ms. Casey,

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

Neomia Brown  
Executive Assistant to the City Commission

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**From:** Evelyn Casey [mailto:ecasey7@datasystems-fl.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 15, 2008 3:14 PM  
**To:** Hanrahan, Pegeen; Hawkins, Jr., Thomas; Mastrodicasa, Jeanna; Henry, Scherwin L.; Poe, Lauren B.; Donovan, John F. - Commissioner; Lowe, Craig; boccc@alachuacounty.us  
**Subject:** fire assessment fee

Dear City and County Commissioners:

I have an idea to present, in case it has not already been considered. My idea is based on the fact that I believe that a sales tax increase is a more equitable way to raise money for fire assessment needs. Property owners are not the only ones who benefit from fire protection services. All people who live here or visit here benefit from these services.

After talking to city and county attorneys, I learned that only the county can call for a Referendum to increase the sales tax and that this money can only be used for infrastructure ...in this case, for fire stations, fire trucks and equipment. If this were done, the amount needed from property taxes could be reduced to an amount to cover fire personnel salaries.

Knowing that the fire assessment issue has been under discussion for quite a while I apologize for not sending this to you sooner.

I am greatly appreciative for all your hard work in trying to resolve this and many other issues. I will appreciate your consideration of this idea.

Gratefully,  
Evelyn S. Casey  
2811 N.W. 12<sup>th</sup> Place  
Gainesville, Florida 32605  
352 373-2943

7/16/2008

## Young, Shaneka

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**From:** Cindy and Tim 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

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**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

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**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.

7/16/2008