

From: John Holic
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2017 8:15 PM
To: Alan Bullock <ABullock@Venicegov.com>
Cc: Linda Senne <LSenne@Venicegov.com>; Shawn Carvey <SCarvey@Venicegov.com>; Edward Lavallee <ELavallee@Venicegov.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Re: ANSWER re: Fire Fee

Alan,
Thank you, I have copied city council as they were all given the false figures.
John

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From: Alan Bullock
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2017 4:54:00 PM
To: John Holic
Cc: Linda Senne; Shawn Carvey; Edward Lavallee
Subject: RE: ANSWER re: Fire Fee

Mayor,

The current IAFF collective bargaining agreement provides for some pay adjustments on 9/30/17. Taking those into account, I believe the average base salary for a City of Venice Firemedic/EMT will be \$57,098, ranging from \$37,262 at the low end to \$72,727 at the high end. This does not include Lieutenants, Battalion Chiefs or other Fire personnel. Please advise if you need any further detail.

Regards,

Alan Bullock
Director of Administrative Services
941-486-2626, ext. 7377
941-882-7377 (direct line)

Serving the City of Venice with PRIDE:
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From: John Holic
Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 2:26 PM
To: Alan Bullock <ABullock@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Fwd: ANSWER re: Fire Fee

FYI

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From: sue Lang <suelang99@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 20, 2017 4:30:44 PM

To: City Council

Subject: Fw: ANSWER re: Fire Fee

Average Salary for Firefighter in Naples, Florida

StartingSalary AverageSalary High Salary

42,000 49,000-56,000 63,000

Naples has a similar population to Venice, but is a somewhat wealthier community...

Sent from [Outlook](#)

From: sue Lang <suelang99@hotmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, August 20, 2017 4:08 PM

To: Fred Fraize; City Council

Subject: Re: ANSWER re: Fire Fee

It should also be noted that Venice's population of 23,000 goes down by almost half six months a year and only 10 percent give or take of the calls are fires. Venice's funding deficit for Fire and EMT (and other things) is also proof of how growth does not pay for itself. We have had several thousand market rate units built in the past decade and we need to raise our millage or have a fire fee??? We should also be budgeting our Penny Sales Tax funds for things like re-building a fire station...

Firefighter/Paramedic

197 salaries reported

\$46,100 per year

[Firefighter/Paramedic jobs in Florida](#)

Firefighter

100 salaries reported

\$41,303 per year



[Firefighter jobs in Florida](#)

Emergency Medical Technician

106 salaries reported

\$30,190 per year

Sent from [Outlook](#)

From: Fred Fraize <FFraize@Venicegov.com>

Sent: Sunday, August 20, 2017 2:32 PM

To: 'Sue Lang'

Subject: ANSWER

Sue, you had a question related to the fire department.

Salaries for 2018 = \$3,281,245

We have 45.5 people in the department.

So the average salary is \$72,115.27.

Hope this helps

Travel Safe

Fred

From: mary godlewski [<mailto:godwinny@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2017 10:07 AM
To: Joe Welch <JWelch@Venicegov.com>
Cc: Lori Stelzer <LStelzer@Venicegov.com>; Linda Senne <LSenne@Venicegov.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Re: Fire Assessment

Thank you so much for your response. No wonder I did not understand, it is complicated.

From: Joe Welch <JWelch@Venicegov.com>
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2017 1:23 PM
To: godwinny@hotmail.com
Cc: Lori Stelzer; Linda Senne; City Council
Subject: FW: Fire Assessment

Ms. Godlewski-

In response to your inquiry below:

There is no Tier 2 charge if the mobile home is not on the real property tax roll. Furthermore, there will only be a Tier 1 charge to the mobile homeowner if the land parcel is on the roll in the owner's name (owned by the mobile homeowner). If the land is owned by the park owner, there will be a Tier 1 charge to the park owner for each parcel. If the land is all one parcel, there will only be one Tier 1 charge to the park owner.

Joe.

From: Lori Stelzer
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2017 9:12 AM
To: Linda Senne <LSenne@Venicegov.com>; Joe Welch <JWelch@Venicegov.com>
Subject: FW: Fire Assessment

Linda/Joe,
Don't know if you want to answer this one for her. Thanks.

Lori Stelzer, MMC
City Clerk
City of Venice
401 W. Venice Avenue
Venice, FL 34285
941-882-7390
941-480-3031 (FAX)

From: mary godlewski [<mailto:godwinny@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2017 8:59 AM

To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Fire Assessment

Hello,

I do not understand how the proposed fire assessment fee will be charged to mobile home owners who have their homes registered as a vehicle. Many mobile homes are not on the property tax roles.

Thank you for taking a second look at this assessment.

Mary Godlewski

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

From: Linda Saletel [mailto:lsaletel@verizon.net]

Sent: Friday, August 25, 2017 10:10 AM

To: John Holic <JHolic@Venicegov.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: 25 % credit for condominium owners fire assessment fee

Mayor Holic and Council Members:

On March 24, 2017, our home owner's association at a Island Court paid to have an appraisal done of our building replacement value. Our town home unit replacement value was \$227,000. Sarasota County has our taxable assessment at \$369,100. We are being charged a fire fee based on figures that are 38% more than our residence replacement value. Also note that we are a land condominium with 1,580 square feet of land that is separated from our structure as listed on our Sarasota tax bill. The 25 % credit your consultants are offering is a consolation prize. It does not address the inequity of what you are proposing to charge us. In general land values are rising and structure values incur depreciation. Therefore, single family homes will always receive preferential treatment over condominium owners.

Your consultants should be embarrassed to collect their fee from our taxpayer money. They should have performed various test calculations to see how the various classes of properties were affected by their tier system fee structure. The Sarasota County Property tax assessments are online and available to anyone who wants to access them. The consultants should have done this or they could have called the county tax assessor who had to take time from his taxpayer funded job to come to city hall to defend the county against Santec's erroneous statement that our county is the only county that doesn't separate land value from structure for condominiums.

Our town homes are new so they were built to new fire safety standards. We have a fire extinguisher, a smoke detector system, a sprinkler system, and a fire alarm in our home. We had to pay for these fire safety features and they are inspected yearly according to city regulations at a cost that is calculated by square footage. Now the city is telling us that we have to pay more than single family homes that may not even have any smoke detectors or fire suppression systems.

The fire department is going to protect the square footage of a house in case of fire. How expensively appointed a home is does not affect the square footage of a home. Square footage is the fairest calculation for fire services that might be rendered.

All parcels that have structures should contribute to the fire assessment whether or not they pay taxes. Again square footage could guide the fee.

The majority of the service calls for the fire department is related to vehicle incidents on our roads. A better way to have approached your funding problem was to proportion costs to the consumers of the service. Now that's where a real competent consulting firm would have been useful.

We are familiar with a beach town in Delaware. Through parking fees this city shares the service cost burden with users of the services. Local residents should not be the only ones to pay for services that others use.

The city was looking for a quick, easy solution regardless of fairness. Paying several hundred thousand dollars for Sarasota County to administer this invalid system also seems excessive.

At this point you should start over with a new consulting firm and provide them with oversight to develop an equitable system.

Frank and Linda Saletel
Venice Residents

From: John Holic
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2017 11:43 AM
To: scott goodwin <sdgoodwin1955@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: RE: Special Fire Assessment

Dear Mr. Goodwin,
On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.
Sincerely,
John Holic
Mayor, City of Venice

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

From: scott goodwin [mailto:sdgoodwin1955@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2017 11:12 AM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Special Fire Assessment

I am a property owner in Venice. My home is a second home that I plan to retire to. I received the announcement of the Special Assessment in the mail and was very surprised as to the impact to my bottom line that this assessment was going to have and the fact that after the first year it could be increased without recourse to residents and that it was a permanent increase. I watched the public mtg via video that occurred on 8/21 and I echo many of the sentiments raised by attendees against this assessment.

I then watched the video of the mtg on 8/22 where a vote was to be taken endorsing taking monies from the general fund to put towards the low income housing project. I was dismayed that there were people sitting on the council that were about to vote on an issue without truly understanding it especially in light of the fire assessment.

I request that the special assessment be disapproved, that existing funding out of the 301 fund be allocated to the fire department, and that the Council seek alternate means to fund the low income housing project.

Respectfully,

Scott goodwin

Sent from my iPad

From: John Holic
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2017 11:47 AM
To: ronald courtney <ronclaire5@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Cc: Edward Lavalley <ELavalley@Venicegov.com>
Subject: RE: Federal Housing

Dear Mr. Courtney,
On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.
Sincerely,
John Holic
Mayor, City of Venice

From: ronald courtney [<mailto:ronclaire5@gmail.com>]
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2017 9:28 AM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Federal Housing

Mayor/Council Members

Today city council is confronted with the issue of fulling a promise to adequately fund low income housing through possible tax increases. The question is as old as representative government. As elected officials how much political cost is one willing to risk while taking on the role of leadership in confronting a controversial moral issue. While understanding the flow in the Herald Tribune Article was difficult it seem to indicate that without an additional \$275,000 of city funds there would be a lose of nearly three quarters of a million dollars in federal funding. In addition if progress is not done in a timely fashion than the shortfall would actually increase. This in light that the additional funding had been increased due to previous delays in commitment from city government. A lack of movement might actually lead to a lengthy postponement or even a permanent end of the expansion. President Kennedy declared that ' "If a free society cannot help those that are poor than it cannot save those that are rich." ' I strongly urge city council to avoid a major delay in its obligation to provide quality public housing especially when there is clear documented evidence for the need.

City Leaders and it's financial staff should strongly look at the application of the reserve fund in the full financing of its obligation. It should look than to its general revenue to replace the amount. This reserve fund can be restored with an appropriate increase in building permit fees that is clearly dedicated for that purpose. Therefore those that have the ability to afford homes through the capitalistic system would be fulling to their civic, moral and humanitarian responsibility to those who have the most need. " President Theodore Roosevelt once stated, "A vote is like a weapon: it's usefulness depends upon the user's character."

An additional thought on the fire department

Every so often in the midst of chaos, you come across an amazing instance of civic responsibility. Maybe the last shred of faith people have is in their firemen. Kurt Vonnegut.

We should as a city not only remember their commitment to us but our committment to them

Ronald Courtney
435 Otter Creek Drive
941 484-2062

From: John Holic

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 3:39 PM

To: Dinko Mutak <dinko@mutak.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: RE: Dissapointed

Dear Mr. Mutak,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments. I would like to talk with you when you have time and let you know where my thoughts are on this. If you have time and would like to have coffee or slivovica and talk about the fire fee, please call and we can find a mutually agreeable time to get together.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

From: Dinko Mutak [<mailto:dinko@mutak.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 1:57 PM

To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Dissapointed

Council Member Kit McKeon is quoted as "disappointed" and "No way a tax bill would increase that much...etc." Please do your own math: Resident lives in a \$60,000 House (Not I), some of my neighbors) and gets a homestead exemption.... now has to pay Tier1 of \$180 AND assessment rate on FULL \$60,000.

Sorry to be a pest, please do not try to get in through a "small door" of 10% open ended assessment in perpetuity..... I am going on record, I will gladly pay anything (reasonable) under the taxes as long as it's voted on every year.

Yours truly

Dinko Mutak

1052 Lillian St

VENICE

From: John Holic

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 3:45 PM

To: Billy Stein <billyjosmailslot@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: RE: Letter emailed for Doris McCurdy

Dear Ms. McCurdy,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

From: Billy Stein [<mailto:billyjosmailslot@gmail.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, August 22, 2017 12:45 PM

To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Letter emailed for Doris McCurdy

August 22, 2017

Dear City of Venice City County Chamber,

As an 89 year old retired person, living part time in Venice, I feel the amount of tax increase for the Fire Department Special Assessment fund is completely out of line. I believe the Council should vote to only use a sales tax increase instead of an additional property tax, so that tourists may help pay for this. Tourists will be benefitting from the fire departments added services, also.

Sincerely,

Doris McCurdy

642 N. Green Circle

Venice, FL 34285

From: John Holic
Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 6:17 PM
To: David Habecker <dhabecker15@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Cc: Edward Lavallee <ELavallee@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Re: Fire Fee

Dear Mr. Habecker,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments. You may have valid points, but they cannot be implemented without a mailing similar to the one that went out in July and without various fairness tests. I suggest you listen for Any council action to form a stakeholder group and volunteer for it if it forms.

There is a special meeting called (today) for fire fee discussion. 9 a.m. on August 28 at city hall.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

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From: David Habecker <dhabecker15@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 4:25:25 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Fire Fee

August 23, 2017

To Venice City Council,

Thank you Mr. Holic for your response.

Fantastic! You got to the issue and had some decent discussion. To be sure, I watched the video of the remainder of the meeting. Several things stood out.

1. The Condo Issue: Your consultant was blindsided by the revelation that we had condos and that the land cost was part of the improvement cost. Wow!
2. The Condo Thing: So of course the council was unaware of Condo Issue.
3. I believe Mr. McKeon mentioned the disparity of land values and building depreciation. Good. (The consultant was unaware?)
4. Your consultant stated that whatever Resolution you approve, it has to meet a Fair and Balanced test. #1,#2, #3 above, plus my spreadsheet, ruin the test.
5. Several attempts were made to tweak the numbers to somehow come to a bottom line that is palatable.

6. No mention was made of the other elephant in the room; Bay Indies. Are they part of the city? Do you realize that approximately 2,000 units are uncounted and untaxed,-or am I unaware of something yet to be revealed? Also ruins Fair and Balanced test.

If the original Methodology and formula are based on faulty information, (by the consultant's own admission), no tweaking of percentages or budget will fix the problem.

I hate people who find fault without offering a solution, so try this on for size:

Flat Fee: The simple availability of Fire Protection service which is available equally to protect the full value of property assets without discrimination to all parcels of all types within the City by virtue of the continued state of readiness to provide Fire Protection service that is maintained by the City. (Reads like your Tier 1)

A Flat Fee of \$12 for each \$5,000 of assessed valuation would get you to a little over 8 million dollars and also free up 7.8 million in general fund. A \$6 Flat Fee gets 4 million for the math challenged.

Sounds like a mil levy increase, and yes, that's what it is, but so is the proposal you now have to some degree. Your consultants should be able to make it work.

Attached find a revised spreadsheet showing what my applied Flat Fee looks like.

I think the Fire Dept. needs to be funded, and would suggest the \$4 Flat Fee.

Thanks for your time,

David Habecker

VENICE FIRE PROTECTION SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS ANALYSIS OF FEE #2 by D Habecker

PROPERTY	LAND \$	BLDG \$	XTRA \$	JUST \$	ASSESS \$	EXMPT \$	TAXABLE \$	2017 TAX	FIRE FEE	INCR.
								3.6 City	Year Two	
Holic, John	389,200	316,600	26,500	732,000	574,535	50,000	524,535	\$1,845	\$794	43%

636 APA...											
McKeon 626 Gren...	419,300	79,800	22,500	521,600	338,833	50,000	288,833	\$1,014	\$342	34%	
Cautero 126 Bur...	137,400	254,500	22,600	414,500	300,827	50,000	250,827	\$880	\$669	76%	
Daniels ????											
Fraize 709 Mist..	91,200	174,900	5,800	271,900	227,871	50,000	177,871	\$623	\$514	82%	
Gates 448 Spa...	417,200	277,900	0	695,100	379,483	50,000	329,483	\$1,158	\$717	62%	
Anderson 520 Ver...	225,100	52,700	25,000	302,800	243,393	50,000	193,393	\$675	\$283	42%	
Typ. MH 275 Inn...	39,700	61,400	0	101,100	85,233	50,000	35,233	\$126	\$303	141%	
Bay Indies	59,694,000	1,538,400	177,900	61.41 M	61.41M	0	61.41M	\$ 204,221	\$3,144	1.50%	
There are Supposedly 1,600 MH in Bay Indies that would share the \$3,144 Fee, or \$1.95 each. Or they pay no increase. ?????? (I count over 2,000 units. 2,000 x \$187.84 Parcel Fee = \$375,680)											
Habecker	0	140,000	0	140,000	140,000	0	140,000	\$504	\$458	90%	

All of the information on this sheet is from public records. Any errors in transposing is unintentional.

From: John Holic

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 6:38 PM

To: Bob Gudas <bobg616@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Re: A Financial Look at the Proposed Fire Assessment Program

Dear Mr. Gudas,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments. Council has been working on controlling the pension for the 7 years I have served. I will be happy to discuss this with you if you would like to call me at 486-2626.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

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From: Bob Gudas <bobg616@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 5:25 PM

Subject: A Financial Look at the Proposed Fire Assessment Program

To: City Council <citycouncil@venicegov.com>

Dear Mayor Holic and Members of the City Council.

I'm writing this email to show my opposition to the proposed fire assessment program. The Mayor and the Council need to do a better job of explaining why Venice Fire Department costs are rapidly spiraling out of control and your plan for fixing them before you place more burden on the property owners.

Let's look at historical Fire Department costs over the last 10 years. The following table comes from City of Venice Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFR) for all years listed back to 2008. I've gathered this information from page 24 of The Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balances. For 2017 and 2018, I've included budgeted information from the approved and proposed city budgets and have excluded capital costs for the purpose of consistency in this comparison.

Expenses 2008-2018 (excluding capital) are as follows:

Note 2017-2018 are budgeted amounts.

YearTotal FD Expense	
2008	\$5,198,129
2009	5,334,053
2010	5,761,550
2011	5,979,211
2012	5,478,285
2013	5,586,395

2014	6,383,527
2015	5,928,340
2016	7,710,186
2017	7,581,646
2018	8,570,000

As you can see, from 2008 through 2015, Fire Department expenses pretty much followed a pattern of fluctuating between \$5.2m and \$6.0m with a few minor exceptions. In 2016, expenses exploded by \$1.8m per year and are proposed to skyrocket to \$8.5m by 2018. That represents a 45% increase in just 3 years. Please bear in mind that this excludes capital costs.

It appears the cause of escalating department costs is Salaries and Wage Expense. Although the approved manning levels have appeared constant at 44, Salaries and Wages expense has risen as follows:

Salaries and Wages 2014-2018 are as follows:

Note 2017-2018 are budgeted amounts

YearTotal Salaries and Wages

2014	\$5,884,718
2015	5,531,990
2016	7,390,982
2017	7,106,391
2018	7,464,264

Expenses for 2018 represent a 35% increase over 2015. The real elephant in the room here is the high pension costs. In 2018, you are budgeting Fire Department wages at \$3.17m and pension costs at \$2.93m. Pension costs are 92.5% of salaries. As a point of comparison, pension costs are budgeted at only 7.5% of salaries in your finance department. This means 34% of every firefighting dollar is going to fund the pension of 44 employees. It's no wonder you can't afford new equipment. It's also no wonder you want to rid the city budget of this unconscionable burden and offload it onto the taxpayers.

The 2016 Audited Financial Statements shows the Municipal Firefighter's Pension to be only 52% funded with an unfunded net pension liability of approximately \$19m. This is using a 7% rate of return. Anything less than 7% makes this unfunded balance rise dramatically.

Your fire assessment program will put the taxpayers directly on the hook for this unfunded liability and make them responsible to fund any future market losses. I find this unfair since these are past service costs that are being forced upon current and future taxpayers.

In summary,

2015	2018	Percent Increase
Total Fire Dept Expense	\$5.9	\$8.645%

Total Salaries & Wages\$5.5\$7.535%
Wages only\$2.8\$3.214%
Retirement Contributions\$1.5\$2.992%

I think you should make a full public disclosure of the unfunded firemen's pension and its implications concerning the proposed fire assessment program and let the voters decide whether they want to fund these spiraling pension obligations into the indefinite future. Anything less would be disingenuous.

Thanks,

Bob Gudas
142 Tosca Villa Blvd
Nokomis, FL 34275
941-412-1325

From: John Holic

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 9:25 PM

To: Val Palange <vhpal3@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Re: City Council Proposal - Comments for Consideration

Dear Val Palange,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

From: Val Palange <vhpal3@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 6:48:19 PM

To: City Council

Subject: City Council Proposal - Comments for Consideration

Dears,

I would like to provide feedback as I was able to watch may parts of the Council meeting video. Let me first start by saying that I previously had provided comments on the proposed fire fee and got your response that you received and took it into consideration and I am thankful for that. I know the responsibility/tasks you have are many and at the same time you must balance the needs of the residents, especially those that are pragmatic, reasonable, and good intentioned.

With all that said I am very concerned about the discussing of taking money from the 301 fund, that could/should be used on capital needs (e.g.: fire department repairs, station, etc) and instead spending it on low income housing for the city. With all the recent fire fee frenzy I think you could have better balanced options and use of funds than what was discussed. Specifically, it seems like you want residents to incur the extra financial burden for a fire fee, when at the same time spare \$550K over 2 years to low income/subsidized housing. This is just too much burden and lack of prioritization and overall a more pragmatic approach is prudent.

Respectfully,

Val Palange

From: John Holic

Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2017 9:47 AM

To: pa@sc-pa.com

Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>; Edward Lavalley <ELavalley@Venicegov.com>; Lori Stelzer <LStelzer@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Attn: Bill Furst, CFA

Dear Bill,

Please accept my apology for relaying faulty information to the public on August 16, 2017. I understand that it caused additional work on the part of your staff and that many calls were received by your department.

Please know that the information that I relayed to the public was given me by our consultant for the fire fee that the city is working on and the information was thought to be reliable and accurate. Again, my apology for any trouble this has caused you.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

From: Yahoo [mailto:roland100@myfairpoint.net]
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2017 11:40 AM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Fire Protection Assessment

Venice City Council members

I would like to first introduce myself. My name is Roland Charbonneau. I am a seasonal resident of Venice along with my wife for the last 7 years. I am a retired career/paid fire fighter with 37 years in the fire service. I also served and retired with 26 years in the Vermont National Guard. Upon retirement in 2009 we purchased a modest home on Pineland Avenue. For the last 7 years we have been repairing and updating this home.

Approximately one month ago we received a letter from the City of Venice concerning a new fire protection assessment proposal for the property tax payers of the City of Venice. Based upon my calculations this assessment would be about a 10 percent increase in our property taxes. As I mentioned I am a retired fire fighter and can certainly sympathize with the financial requirements of our fire department but at this time I would be unable to determine whether I am in favor or opposed to this assessment until I could review line by line budget request from the fire department.

My biggest concern presently is that seasonal residents(property owners) of the City of Venice are not being given fair and equal representation to voice our concerns about the fire protection assessment due to the scheduled public meetings which have been held when our seasonal property owners are not present. The fire protection assessment fee would represent a sizeable increase in property taxes so any discussion leading up to adoption of this needs to be conducted when most of our seasonal property owners are in Venice. (January to March)

As you are aware most of our seasonal property owners live in Venice less than 6 months per year and we are taxed for services that permanent residents use year round. We also pay for trash, recycling, yard waste removal, water and sewage fees for the entire year and again in most cases are only in Venice for less than one half of the year.

I would highly recommend that the proposed fire protection assessment be postponed until next year so the a committee can take the necessary time required to determine the financial impact of this assessment on **all** our Venice tax payers and allow our seasonal tax payer the opportunity to have a voice in the decision process. I would expect that January through March would be the best time for any meetings.

I would also like to thank Venice City Manager Ed Lavallee and Mr. Joseph Welch for taking the time to discuss and give me an update on the progress of the fire protection assessment.

Please forward to Mr. Lavallee

Roland Charbonneau

From: John Holic
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2017 10:06 AM
To: Barry Briggs <briggsbd@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Cc: Edward Lavalley <ELavalley@Venicegov.com>
Subject: RE: Fire protection issue

Dear Mr. Briggs,
On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.
Sincerely,
John Holic
Mayor, City of Venice

From: Barry Briggs [<mailto:briggsbd@gmail.com>]
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2017 9:56 AM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Fire protection issue

I just finished watching the video of the last city council meeting where the issue of capital expenditures for low income housing vs. a fire station or fire engine were discussed.

I would like to compliment everyone on the professional level of this discussion.

A minor point on the video. It would be helpful to move the "Venice City Council" overlay at the bottom left of the screen to the top left of the screen, opposite the date. In its present position it usually obscures the name of the person talking when the camera is on them.

Now to the meat of the issue. It appears from the discussion that the previous low income housing was torn down. I assume this was because of unsafe conditions (probably because of poor maintenance). The fire station seems to be in a similar state of poor maintenance, and needs to be replaced. These are both capital items that have lifetimes that are usually known if proper maintenance is performed. Is there any way that proper maintenance be performed? In the case of the fire station, it seems to me that the city would be responsible, but in the case of the low income housing, who is responsible?

I think the fire station directly benefits the major taxpayers of Venice, and should be the first priority of the expenditure of capital funds. While the building of low income housing is a desirable goal, I think is secondary to the fire station. I object to an additional tax on property to support a fire station or engine capital investment, especially when it seems to have no end in taxation.

Thank you for your time,

Barry Briggs (a taxpayer)

From: John Holic
Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 12:28 PM
To: billm622@comcast.net; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Re: Low income housing?

Dear Unsigned,
On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.
Sincerely,
John Holic
Mayor, City of Venice

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From: billm622@comcast.net <billm622@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 11:49:15 AM
To: City Council
Subject: Low income housing?

Why are you considering a burdensome Tax Increase for the Fire Department while considering new spending on Low Income Housing? Shouldn't the Voters be consulted? They have a long memory, at least I do. I always thought this was a fairly Conservative City.

Please make alternate arrangements, they seem to be available.

To Whom ~~it~~ may Concern:

We disagree with the
Proposal to have a special
Assessment for Fire Protection.

We feel taxes are very high
for homeowners already and
a tax to all (via sales tax)
would be more equitable.

Thank you for opportunity
to "weigh in" on this.

Nelson + Patricia Douglas
Venice Address:

305 Short Rd

(+ Address - Pomfret CT

From: jtluce46@gmail.com [mailto:jtluce46@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 11:05 AM

To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Venice Walk II

After watching parts of the Council meeting of 8/22/2017 I want to express my concern over using money from the Capital Fund to fund low income housing. One would have thought that after the public outcry over the Fire Assessment that you would have learned to be better stewards of the taxpayers money. Clearly, Mayor Holic, Gates and Daniels figured this to be a shoe in and when Ms Anderson raised concerns things got a little heated. Thank you Ms Anderson for addressing this issue and for making Mr. Caution aware of the fact that these funds are not specifically earmarked for low income house but rather can be used for any capital expenditure. As an observer I could not help but see the anger in Mayor Holic's face and voice when he was challenged. It was also obvious the City Manager was trying to avoid giving a direct and specific answer to whether these funds could be used to support the VFD capital needs.

Despite what Mayor Holic thinks an \$18 million low income apartment complex is not going to provide much if any economic benefit to the City. Yes there will be some jobs, but they are temporary and amount to no more than would be created constructing a few homes. This Council under it's current leadership is far too pro-growth while at the same time asking current residents to foot the bill for supporting services. There seems to be an attitude of spend and spend some more and if funds are not available borrow them since interest rates are low. If low income housing makes economic sense let the private sector do it with HUD assistance.

After the fire assessment fiasco it is time for the Council to take note that we, the taxpayers, are watching you and will expect much better fiscal responsibility going forward than we have received in the past.

Regards,
John Luce

From: Diane Erosa [<mailto:dianeerosa@gmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 10:24 AM

To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Fire Assessment Proposal

To the Mayor and Council

This is a follow up email to this issue.

I watch the taped meeting yesterday.

I agree 100% with every resident that spoke during the open floor meeting.

You need to find another way to come up with the missing funds.

Example, put in paid parking at the beach and on Venice Ave, Miami Ave and the rest of the surrounding streets to bring in money and in the parking lots.

This should not be voted on until all the residents are back in town.

You need to look over the budget and decide what is necessary and needed out of that budget and move money to the Fire Dept.

Low income housing in budget should be moved over to Fire Dept.

I have lived in Venice for almost 5 yrs, I have seen the taxes continue to increase and now you want a assessment on top.

I vote no

Thank you
Diane Erosa
San Lino Circle
Venice

From: John Holic

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 10:28 AM

To: Jane Carter <airportmanagement@yahoo.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: RE: council meeting

Dear Unsigned,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

From: Jane Carter [<mailto:airportmanagement@yahoo.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 10:25 AM

To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Cc: John Holic <JHolic@Venicegov.com>

Subject: council meeting

I would like to request representation from the council. I would ask that money from the 301 fund not be used to support low income housing. This is not a priority at this point in time. The priority items we should be dealing with is over development, infrastructure to support the over development and the need to support the fire department. We are not an island. There is substantial availability for low income housing in North Port and Sarasota. Why can't the money from 301 fund be used to support the fire department if in fact it needs to be used at all at this time?

From: Christopher Ferrante [mailto:chrisferrante34285@yahoo.com]

Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 10:15 AM

To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Tax and Spend

It has come to my attention that the city may have as much as \$550,000.00 available in the "301 Fund" in the budget that is earmarked for low income housing, but could be shifted to the Fire Department for repairs on the Fire Stations. I wouldn't be surprised to learn there are thousands stashed in other budgets that could be better spent in lieu of the potentially illegal "Fire Assessment".

Ask yourselves, if we can't afford the cost of building maintenance and repairs at a firehouse, can the city afford to defend against a law suit by the citizens over this proposed assessment. There is case law that suggests such a suit can be won by the citizens and there are Plaintiff's lawyers out there who work on Contingency. Lose a suit and the city has to pay back every penny it collected, after you spend it, doubling the loss. Do we really want that risk if there are alternatives? The Council is supposed to bring wisdom into the city management process, to check and balance the bureaucrats whose goal is to grow budgets and their departments.

I have worked in both County and Federal government jobs, and over an eight year period, I never witnessed anything but ineffective, inefficient management. If you try, you can always find savings, if you try! I made a comment at the Council meeting about unnecessary dispatch.

Here's an example: A neighbor of mine called Venice PD about a drunken homeless guy sleeping on his lawn. He said he told them he just wanted the cops to chase him off, and didn't want to confront the man himself. He lives on Pedro Street, one block from the fire station. There was no reason the police could not have responded first, and called rescue if needed. He reported that the PD, a fire truck and rescue squad responded. That's where your money is going down the drain. Stop that waste and abuse, and you can control your budget. And maybe, just maybe, when the firefighters are sitting around firehouse waiting for necessary dispatch, they can do a little maintenance for themselves! Many firefighters I have know have had handyman businesses they run in their off time, anyway.

How about a moratorium on city spending until the Fire issue is resolved? How about demanding starting bids at least 10% below market rate on any future RFP that is issued? From the little I have learned since living here, it seems that you are determined to turn Venice into another Longboat Key, where even successful middle class retirees cannot afford to live. This is a little village, stop spending like big city bureaucrats.

From: Jane MacLennan [mailto:jempmaclelennan@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 10:47 AM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Fwd: Proposed Fire Protection Assessment for Venice Owners

Please note my response re your use of funds, and onerous burden you propose to place on tax payers who are also in low cost housing and low income bracket. This demonstrates a lack of fiscal responsibility and compassion for those of us who are already financially challenged.

Sincerely
Jane & John MacLennan

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Jane MacLennan <jempmaclelennan@gmail.com>
Date: August 23, 2017 at 10:11:37 AM EDT
To: Deborah Anderson <DAnderson@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Re: Proposed Fire Protection Assessment for Venice Owners

Thank you Debra for expressing some of the concern we feel with the proposed hike in taxes through a loophole council has found to avoid the restrictions placed on raising taxes in the community. With the flat rate base, you are actually placing a disproportionate burden on people who are already in "low income housing".

The 30% hike on people in low priced housing is unreasonable and irresponsible.

Did this hike get approved by council?

Sincerely

Jane & John MacLennan

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 23, 2017, at 8:28 AM, Deborah Anderson <DAnderson@Venicegov.com> wrote:

If you look at yesterday's council meeting video at time stamp 7 hours 28 minutes, you will see council discuss taking money from our 301 fund that could be used on the capital needs of the fire department (trucks, repairs, new station) and instead spending it on low income housing in the city. I questioned requiring our residents to incur extra financial burden for a fire fee at the same time that we have a spare \$275,000 (or \$550,000 over 2 years) to spend on low income/subsidized housing. If this concerns you, please look at the video and let the other members of city council know what you think. thank you Deborah Anderson

From: Jane MacLennan <jempmaclellan@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 8, 2017 10:30:19 AM
To: City Council; John MacLennan; Jane MacLennan gmail
Subject: Proposed Fire Protection Assessment for Venice Owners

For the attention of all Council Members and the City Clerk:

We are John and Jane MacLennan, owners of unit 209 at Cardinal, 612 Bird Bay Dr. S., Florida, 34285 roll #0406161027.

We would like to express that your proposed assessment is not only financially unreasonable but irresponsible for the following reasons.

Our proposed assessment over two years is almost a 30% increase in our condo taxes and allows for uncontrolled potential increases post 2019. This does not include any increases for other services.

Secondly there is already a fire component in the current taxes which is not being subtracted out before you add the fire assessment but being reallocated to other unspecified services. So in fact the council is double dipping for fire costs already included in the current tax base.

We would like to say that we are very much against this assessment because it violates your mandate for reasonable and responsible controlled tax increases for the Venice property owners. Your proposal is totally unacceptable.

An additional annual fire assessment of \$371 for under 1000 square feet assessed at only \$98000 seems quite excessive given we have the original fire component costs in our tax payment for 2016 of \$1363.26.

Please act responsibly on August 21. Please note our objection to this proposal. It is also unreasonable to take advantage of owners who are absent during the summer months and therefore unable to attend this meeting in person.

Thank you

Jane & John MacLennan
Sent from my iPhone

From: Heather Cummings [mailto:hcummings@rufolo.com]
Sent: Monday, August 21, 2017 4:30 PM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: PROPOSED FIRE FEE
Importance: High

Mayor Holic and Members of the City Council,

I join my fellow Condominium President's in supporting the good work of our Venice Fire Department and in opposition to the proposed fire fee.

Our Association will join Charles Alfano, President of the Venice Condo and Home Owners Association to oppose this fee. Our owners are clearly upset and after attending the City public forum, they came away convinced that the formula for condo fee's is incorrect and costly. They left the meeting feeling that crisis management on the part of the Council has resulted in the fire department not being properly equipped.

I urge the Council to reconsider this fee especially given the fact that voters just voted to approve a \$16 million public safety bond and an \$18 million road bond in November 2016.

Sincerely
Joe Rufolo, President Gulf Shores Condo Association
255 The Esplanade N.
Venice, FL. 34385

From: Christopher Ferrante [mailto:chrisferrante34285@yahoo.com]

Sent: Monday, August 21, 2017 4:36 PM

To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Today's Council Meeting

I was at the meeting today, thank you for the opportunity to speak. Please see the attached letter with my comments.

Christopher A. Ferrante
PO Box 294
Venice, Florida 34284-0294
(941) 400-8971
chrisferrante34285@yahoo.com

August 21, 2017

City Council of Venice
Mayor John Holic
Vice Mayor Richard Cautero
Mr. Bob Daniels
Mr. Fred Fraize
Ms. Jeanette Gates

Venice City Hall
401 West Venice Avenue
Venice, Florida 34285

Re; Proposed Fire Assessment, August 21, 2017 Council Meeting.

Dear Council Members:

As you know, I had an opportunity to speak before the Council this morning. I thank you for that, and I stayed to listen as long as my schedule permitted. After some reflection, I have composed a few thoughts for you all to consider:

- First, it was apparent that some members get it, and some don't. As a Council, you have a credibility issue to confront. It seems that many of the citizens just don't believe you. It was apparent that your past actions have not been well received by citizens who, up until this point, were complacent. This straw may have broken the camel's back
- The citizens perceive that the council wastes money. You are threatening us with this assessment, call it what you want, it is a tax increase. At the same time, we see you put up crosswalk signs where there are already stop signs, new lights in parks, new pavers, and new palm trees. The citizens perceive that if you get this assessment, and the Fire Department is no longer paid for

from general funds, that you will squander the surplus that will be created in General Funds. I tend to agree

- The average citizen in Venice is, I believe, 68 years old. We've heard it all before, and seen it all before. Government never threatens a loss of street sweepers, or janitors when they want more money, it is always police and firefighters. At the last minute, as it was today, the wolf is at the door! I think the city has "cried wolf" once too many times. People have a hard time believing this time. Cut your losses, perhaps float a bond to cover the unfunded pension obligations, lick your wounds and move on
- The people realize that bureaucrats measure their own worth by the size of their department's budget. Bigger budget, more important job. An efficient, effective department manager is one who manages costs to stay within his budget
- Listening to the debate afterwards, I have to agree with comments from some members indicating that you will spend every penny you are given, and for that reason have not sufficiently explained to the public how waste, fraud and mismanagement can be avoided in the future
- I was left with the impression that Council has not sufficiently explored other options to fund the fire department. This is the first town that I have lived in, that has avoided the imposition of Impact Fees on new development. Where I last lived in Arizona, I had to pay \$54,000.00 in Fire and Police Impact Fees for an industrial development. Didn't like it, but it was a cost of doing business in that town. Furthermore, if a developer planned a site so large as to require a new fire sub-station, or elementary school, the county required them to donate the land for the new county facility as part of their planned development. You might explore that with the newly annexed areas
- Another area that apparently has not been considered is the collection of a fee for service. You call a paramedic, you get a bill. You have a fire, you get a bill. I'm sure it must be legal, because numerous communities bill you for response to false alarms for burglary and fire. Of course, you have to eliminate unnecessary dispatch to justify that. Maybe you should explore that.

I listened as intently as possible this morning. It seems to me that three members get it, the rest don't. Between now and September 15th, you have an opportunity to do

the right thing, and take an action that is truly beneficial to the citizens, for the long term. I strongly urge you to renegotiate fire service with the county, explore Impact Fees, and limit spending on things like consulting fees. It was pretty apparent this morning that you did not get your money's worth from Stantec. Looks like their work was pretty shallow boiler plate, quick computations, not an exhaustive study. Frankly, I would have been embarrassed to admit the screw up on the condo assessment formulas. Repeating and citing prior case law in their reports is child's play. Cut and Paste! There was little concise, satisfactorily explained material in what I saw today.

All this being said, I don't envy you for your predicament, but you have created some of your problems yourself, as a result of prior city management decisions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'CF' or similar initials, written over a circular stamp or mark.

Christopher A. Ferrante

From: John Holic

Sent: Monday, August 21, 2017 4:47 PM

To: Heather Cummings <hcummings@rufolo.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Re: PROPOSED FIRE FEE

Dear Mr. Rufolo,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

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From: Heather Cummings <hcummings@rufolo.com>

Sent: Monday, August 21, 2017 4:27 PM

Subject: PROPOSED FIRE FEE

To: City Council <citycouncil@venicegov.com>

Mayor Holic and Members of the City Council,

I join my fellow Condominium President's in supporting the good work of our Venice Fire Department and in opposition to the proposed fire fee.

Our Association will join Charles Alfano, President of the Venice Condo and Home Owners Association to oppose this fee. Our owners are clearly upset and after attending the City public forum, they came away convinced that the formula for condo fee's is incorrect and costly. They left the meeting feeling that crisis management on the part of the Council has resulted in the fire department not being properly equipped.

I urge the Council to reconsider this fee especially given the fact that voters just voted to approve a \$16 million public safety bond and an \$18 million road bond in November 2016.

Sincerely

Joe Rufolo, President Gulf Shores Condo Association

255 The Esplanade N.

Venice, FL. 34385

From: Billy Stein [mailto:billyjosmailslot@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 22, 2017 12:50 PM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: James & Billy Jo Stein's letter to City Council

August 22, 2017

Dear City Council Chamber:

I am writing this letter in response with your request for the Fire Protection Special Assessment, as I could not be in attendance on August 21, 2017. Though I realize that it takes funds to adequately operate our fire departments, I believe that it should be able to be done within the collection of funds in the General Fund that have had a 1cent Sales Tax added and the ad valoem tax.

We are retired. My property taxes on my **1973 mobile home** are already over \$1,600 per year! This is more than my large home in Indiana was costing for a year and we had a wonderful fire department. It is ridiculous to expect me to pay an additional \$216.73 per year.

The City of Venice Council Chamber needs to get a grip on their spending. Live within your budget. Our Social Security incomes are not increasing to be able to keep funding your extravagant spending. We old people are not going to be able to keep being your Cash Cow forever.

If you have any feeling for the people you are serving you will drop this idea.

Sincerely,

James and Billy Jo Stein

640 N. Green Circle

Venice, FL 34285

From: kshepard@fuse.net [<mailto:kshepard@fuse.net>]

Sent: Monday, August 21, 2017 8:38 PM

To: Lorraine Anderson <LAnderson@Venicegov.com>

Cc: Pam Schierberg <pschierberg@yahoo.com>; Ron Fazzalano <ronfazz@verizon.net>

Subject: Public Hearing comments on Fire Assessment proposal

Dear Ms. Anderson

PIO, City of Venice FL

Please route these comments to the appropriate persons relative to the proposed 3.1 mill (net) property tax assessment to support 50% of the Venice city fire department budget.

These comments are feedback to the letter sent to us for our residence at 1523 Waterford Drive , Venice FL 34292. The letter we received with "Frequently asked questions" and supporting linked information, indicates that we

can expect to pay \$269 (estimated) for 2018 for this assessment, and as much as \$520 if the maximum assessment possible is levied. That would amount to an immediate 8% increase in our property tax paid, if levied at the lower amount, and almost 16% if levied at the higher amount. In our view, either amount is excessive, and is unjustified by the information and links provided. See more detailed feedback.

1. The material the City of Venice sent to property owners dated July 20, 2017, and related online links, fail to explain why the Fire Department needs 50% more funding. A "Venice Gondolier" editorial opinion of 8/5/17 referred to in a link on the City home page on this subject, claims there have been 18 opportunities for the public to learn why this assessment is needed. Neither the aforementioned letter, nor any other publication we have seen has explained adequately what the NEED FOR INCREASED EXPENSE side of this issue is all about. Unfortunately, it leaves the property owner voter, taxpayer to his or her imagination. Our town is in a "growth mode." More coverage for the Fire department is needed. So, does that mean impact fees from developers, and taxes from new owners are inadequate? Not sure. There have been more prairie fires due to draught. Is the City of Venice Fire department in need of additional resources to keep up? Not sure.

EMS runs are growing with the aging population and drug abuse -- where are the needs explained? Do they all together add up to a 50% hike in the Fire department budget in 2018 -- all in one year ? The property owner voters have not been informed.

Until these questions are answered, and annual dollar expenses for each need documented, it is our view to oppose any such issue, and to vote against officers running for election who have not adequately explained their votes for this assessment on City Council.

2. In 2016, there was a well explained, well supported property tax bond issue for a new Police and Emergency Headquarters. That issue was much better defended as to the need for the expenditure, than the 50% increase in the Fire department budget. We voted YES for the new POLICE Headquarters. In addition, that issue relied on traditional property tax financing of capital needs. Why doesn't the Fire department issue use such financing? Why do existing property owners face the need to finance the growth of expenditures in the Fire department? Are new property developers and owners paying their fair share of these costs ? Where has that been explained? The "Frequently Asked Question

Sheet" provided July 20 and updated August 10, 2017 indicates the Fire department will have to compete in the One Cent Sales Tax Fund for capital needs if the assessment is not made. We view that as a good thing, and would suggest that the best job the City can do to EXPLAIN those needs in that funding process should be made. Previously, when voters have been polled about needs for that Fund, the Fire department needs didn't appear. An inability to adequately compete for public funds is not a good reason to raise taxes on all existing property owners.

3. There is reasoning provided in the materials that the Fire department needs a dedicated revenue source, and that other local government jurisdictions have done this. Is that need greater than the need to enable property owners who already pay their fair share of the burden to lose property tax deduction, AND pay a large increase in an assessment, simultaneously? This proposal represents the largest increase in fees or taxes by the City of Venice in the 13 years we have owned property in Venice, and as stated, right on the heels of the 2016 increase. All of us would prefer to have another dedicated revenue source, especially in these tight fiscal times. Bond interest is still only yielding less than 2%/ It seems the City Council members have lost touch with what it means to be on the paying side of such an issue with the voters who already live in Venice, given that most of us are on fixed incomes that may not keep up with inflation.

Kevin and Constance Shepard
1523 Waterford Drive
Venice FL 34292

From: John Holic

Sent: Tuesday, August 22, 2017 11:02 PM

To: David Habecker <dhabecker15@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Re: Fire Assessment

Dear Mr. Habecker,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments. I will not engage in an argument with a citizen and resident of Venice. You saw what you wanted to see and heard what you wanted to hear which may not be all of what was actually happening. An example, I have notes from every person who spoke that day and if you would have listened to the entire meeting, you would have been aware that we did discuss those topics presented by the residents after we heard from all. You would have seen that the meeting lasted until after 3 p.m. and that changes were proposed. You would have also noted that year two in your example is not what council has proposed for year two, rather it is what Florida Statutes require - what is the maximum charge this fee may charge in the next year, or any year in the future for that matter.

We continue to get information and there are changes that may still be proposed. I am sorry things did not progress on your time line, council is not a group of professional politicians, but rather a group of individuals trying to do what they perceive is best for the City of Venice. We have one place to talk and exchange ideas, City Council meetings. I wish I could just call up other council members or go out to Lunch with them and discuss certain issues, but I can't, that is not allowed by the Sunshine Law.

I look forward to the meeting on September 7 so that all of council is able to express their final thoughts on the subject; at least the final thoughts for another year.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: David Habecker <dhabecker15@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 22, 2017 3:24 PM

Subject: Fire Assessment

To: City Council <citycouncil@venicegov.com>

August 22, 2017

To Venice City Council

If you recall, I attended the Public Hearing on August 21, 2017 and was the first to speak. I presented relevant testimony accompanied by a spreadsheet showing the huge discrepancies in

the application of the new Fire Assessment. To say I left that meeting disturbed would be correct, as it was exasperating to sit and watch nothing being accomplished.

First of all, the Mayor stated that the Council didn't know what the final decision would be, and would not be interacting with the speakers; no questions would be answered or comment made. I have attended many public hearings sitting on both sides, and have found that interaction between the council and speaker is essential. Otherwise you give the impression you are only there to cycle the speakers through as quickly as possible in order to fulfill the law. I saw little note taking and little interest on the Council's part.

Next was the discussion; although it wasn't a discussion of the Fee and how it might be inequitable to certain properties and owners. No; what we were subjected to was a reminiscence of days gone by, past problems and successes, how one hates the budget, improvements needed to the firehouse, how much we need and appreciate the fire department, and any other subject but the one on the table.

You seem to have no grasp of what people are angry about; the people's testimony brought no understanding, explanation, or comfort. They left frustrated and sure that your minds had already been made up, and that the huge tax increase some of them were facing was a done deal.

If that weren't blunt enough, let's try this; your consultants are incompetent as demonstrated by the fact that none of the people's concerns have been addressed. They did a job based on certain parameters and will work to get people to understand what they did, not realizing or caring about the mess they've created. And the council, not knowing better, just nods.

So; I will try to make the point a different way. Attached you will find a spreadsheet showing what each member (except one) of the Council will be paying as a Fire Assessment Fee in the year 2019 as per the notices we received, and how much of an increase it will be over the current city tax. I also included one of my properties, and although my property is valued much less than yours, I will be paying more tax than three and a higher percentage of increase than all.

If you have already corrected the problems, (the Bay Indies one being huge), I'd like to know as it would show a significant decrease in my tax. If you haven't, please do not pass this Resolution. A law can't be called fair and equitable if it's not.

Sincerely,

David Habecker PO Box 2045, Venice, FL 34284

VENICE FIRE PROTECTION SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS ANALYSIS OF FEE #2 by D Habecker

PROPERTY	LAND \$	BLDG \$	XTRA \$	JUST \$	ASSESS \$	EXMPT \$	TAXABLE \$	2017 TAX 3.6 City	FIRE FEE Year Two	INCREASE
Holic, John 636 APA...	389,200	316,600	26,500	732,000	574,535	50,000	524,535	\$1,845	\$794	
McKeon 626 Gren...	419,300	79,800	22,500	521,600	338,833	50,000	288,833	\$1,014	\$342	
Cautero 126 Bur...	137,400	254,500	22,600	414,500	300,827	50,000	250,827	\$880	\$669	
Daniels ???										
Fraize 709 Mist..	91,200	174,900	5,800	271,900	227,871	50,000	177,871	\$623	\$514	
Gates 448 Spa...	417,200	277,900	0	695,100	379,483	50,000	329,483	\$1,158	\$717	
Anderson 520 Ver...	225,100	52,700	25,000	302,800	243,393	50,000	193,393	\$675	\$283	
Typ. MH 275 Inn...	39,700	61,400	0	101,100	85,233	50,000	35,233	\$126	\$303	1
Bay Indies	59,694,000	1,538,400	177,900	61.41 M	61.41M		061.41M	\$ 204,221	\$3,144	1.
There are Supposedly 1,600 MH in Bay Indies that would share the \$3,144 Fee, or \$1.95 each. Otherwise they pay no increase. ??????? (I count over 2,000 units. 2,000 x \$187.84 Parcel Fee = \$375,680)										
Habecker	0	140,000	0	140,000	140,000	0	140,000	\$504	\$458	

All of the information on this sheet is from public records. Any errors in transposing is unintentional.

Copies of 8/7/17 presentation attached.

VENICE FIRE PROTECTION SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS ANALYSIS OF IMPACT PER TYPE by D Habecker										
TYPE OF PROP	LAND \$	BLDG \$	ASSESS. \$	EXEMPT \$	TAXABLE \$	3.6 mil	2018 FPSA	2019FPSA	Total tax	% INCRS.
						Venice City			Venice City	
Mobile HM	40,000	46,600	49,900	25,000	25,000	90	137	275	365	305
off island						3.1 = 78			352	291
Mobile HM	95,000	102,000	137,000	50,000	87,000	313	190	380	694	121
CC Est.										
Older RES	162,000	82,000	244,000	-	244,000	878	171	342	1,220	40
off island										
Older RES	307,000	100,000	206,000	50,000	156,000	562	190	380	942	68
on island										
Newer RES	62,000	178,000	222,000	50,000	172,000	619	262	525	1,144	66
off island										
Newer RES	308,000	413,500	752,000	-	752,000	2,707	488	978	3,685	36
on island										
LG RES	214,000	334,000	451,000	50,000	401,000	1,444	411	823	2,267	57
off island										
Older LG RES	1,231,000	737,300	1,264,000	50,000	1,214,000	4,370	707	1,603	5,974	37
on island						3.1 = 3763			5,366	23
Island RES	345,000	263,000		-	620,000	2,232	344	694	2,926	31
Island CONDO	-	643,000	643,000		643,000	2,315	710	1,420	3,735	61
Similar Price										
CONDO	0	100,000	100,000		100,000	360	190	380	740	105
	0	300,000	300,000		300,000	1,080	383	766	1,846	70
Office Condo	0	140,000	140,000		140,000	504	229	457	961	90
						3.1 = 434			891	77
Epiphany Cath.		5.043M			-	-		9,800		N/A
Bay Indies	55M	1.565 M	56.728M			204,221		3,200	207,421	1.5
	Any errors are unintended.									

Fire Protection Special Assessment Analysis for 8/21/17 Hearing

My name is David Habecker. I own properties within the city and have received Special Assessment notifications for each of them.

First: On the city's website is a Gondolier editorial discrediting those who now object to this Resolution, by portraying them as asleep at the wheel or late to the dance. We the people elect representatives to run our government, fully expecting honest competency without our constant attention. Sometimes we are disappointed, and need to speak out.

Since receiving my notices, I have tried to make up for my citizen sloth by reviewing the 417 page city budget, portions of the county budget, the Final Draft Report, Resolution, numerous property tax assessments, and all of the letters you have received. (Speak of fire and fury.)

Some letters expressed concerns of mismanagement, incompetence, past legal problems, distrust, high salaries and compensation of firefighters; most all protested the amount of the assessment and/or the necessity. Even though I haven't seen much of a case for needing an additional 8.4 million dollars, I am unqualified to question that determination; not having adequate knowledge or history. However, I am qualified to question the methodology used, and subsequent fairness of the Assessment.

After calculating my new city assessment, I was surprised that in year two I would be paying 90% more than my current city tax, and wondered how that could be when a 68% across the board increase in the ad valorem tax would raise the same \$8.4 million. Then I wondered how other properties were affected?

So I put together a spreadsheet showing the effect of the new assessment on various types and values of residential property. The results are troubling.

At first blush, the proposed two tier plan sounds fair and reasonable; each parcel pays a fixed amount plus a percentage of the improvement with no exemptions; but my analysis shows tax increases in a fully funded year two, ranging from 1.5%, to over 300%.

Remember; a 68% increase in the mil levy raises the same amount as the year two maximum assessment; so if your tax increase in year two is more than 68%, you lose. If it's less, you win, relatively speaking.

Who sees the largest increase?

- Lower valued property because of the per parcel fee.
- Churches, (assuming they are incl.) as they are otherwise exempt from ad valorem tax.
- Condos less than \$320,000 with no exemptions because the entire value is seen as an improvement.

Who sees the least increase?

- Residences 'on-island' where the land cost is a much larger percentage of value.
- Higher valued properties where the fixed parcel fee has less of an impact.
- Some Mobile home parks where there is only one land parcel, like Bay Indies, and the units are not counted as improvements. They get the 1.5% increase.

The couple living in a \$90,000 Mobile home very near Bay Indies, but on its own site and with a \$25,000 exemption will see their Venice tax increased from \$90 to \$364 in year two, or 305%. Can they afford it? We don't know. If their sole income is an \$800 a month Social Security check, maybe not.

Can the nice man who lives in the big house down on the corner have an easier time paying a 37% increase from \$4,400 to near \$6,000? We don't know, but I'd guess yes.

I can assume other type properties will see a similar situation, and reducing the mil levy to 3.1 doesn't solve the basic problem.

We now know this proposed assessment will most surely have a significant impact on some very vulnerable people, and only a callous few could see it as equitable. If you didn't know of this situation before today, shame on your consultants. If you did, you should already be working on plan B.

August 22, 2017

To Venice City Council

If you recall, I attended the Public Hearing on August 21, 2017 and was the first to speak. I presented relevant testimony accompanied by a spreadsheet showing the huge discrepancies in the application of the new Fire Assessment. To say I left that meeting disturbed would be correct, as it was exasperating to sit and watch nothing being accomplished.

First of all, the Mayor stated that the Council didn't know what the final decision would be, and would not be interacting with the speakers; no questions would be answered or comment made. I have attended many public hearings sitting on both sides, and have found that interaction between the council and speaker is essential. Otherwise you give the impression you are only there to cycle the speakers through as quickly as possible in order to fulfill the law. I saw little note taking and little interest on the Council's part.

Next was the discussion; although it wasn't a discussion of the Fee and how it might be inequitable to certain properties and owners. No; what we were subjected to was a reminiscence of days gone by, past problems and successes, how one hates the budget, improvements needed to the firehouse, how much we need and appreciate the fire department, and any other subject but the one on the table.

You seem to have no grasp of what people are angry about; the people's testimony brought no understanding, explanation, or comfort. They left frustrated and sure that your minds had already been made up, and that the huge tax increase some of them were facing was a done deal.

If that weren't blunt enough, let's try this; your consultants are incompetent as demonstrated by the fact that none of the people's concerns have been addressed. They did a job based on certain parameters and will work to get people to understand what they did, not realizing or caring about the mess they've created. And the council, not knowing better, just nods.

So; I will try to make the point a different way. Attached you will find a spreadsheet showing what each member (except one) of the Council will be paying as a Fire Assessment Fee in the year 2019 as per the notices we received, and how much of an increase it will be over the current city tax. I also included one of my properties, and although my property is valued much less than yours, I will be paying more tax than three and a higher percentage of increase than all. If you have already corrected the problems, (the Bay Indies one being huge), I'd like to know as it would show a significant decrease in my tax. If you haven't, please do not pass this Resolution. A law can't be called fair and equitable if it's not.

Sincerely,

David Habecker PO Box 2045, Venice, FL 34284

Copies of 8/7/17 presentation attached.

cc: Jori Stelzer

Date: August 21, 2017

To: City of Venice Mayor John Holic and Council Members

From: Carol J. Barbieri

Re: Statement Regarding Proposed 50% Fire Fee Subsidy Decision

Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Carol Barbieri. I reside at 230 Padova Way in the Venetian Golf & River Club. The statement I am making today is not on behalf of any civic organization. I am representing myself as a property owner in the City of Venice.

You have a difficult decision to make on September 7th: whether to approve the proposed 50% subsidy of the Fire Department's current expense budget by adding a non ad-valorem fee to Venice property owners' tax bills for the next fiscal year. At a 50% subsidy, our taxes will absolutely increase, even with a reduction in millage from 3.6 to 3.1.

Let me be clear: I place great value on our Fire Department and I firmly believe that the men and women who serve in it deserve first rate equipment to insure their safety. I also believe that Venetian property owners should have been financially responsible for offsetting some portion of the cost of maintaining our own fire department, for years, as other nearby cities have been doing.

Prior Venice City Council members were unable to garner the public's support for this issue. You now have the opportunity to reverse the public's resistance by approaching the real purpose of this fee in a logical and transparent way:

- Acknowledge that it is a non ad-valorem fee. Property owners may NOT deduct the fee amount on their income tax return.
- Explain that the fee is specifically non ad-valorem in order to include non-profits and similar organizations which own property, in paying this fee, as well as residential property owners.
- Recognize that the recent letter from the City of Venice, dated July 20th, states that the city may increase the Fire Fee from the proposed 50% to 100% subsidy in future fiscal years without notice. That statement has had a profoundly negative impact on Venice property owners who assume that the 50% rate will be increased to 100%, without advanced notice and that many of us will, in the near future, be unable to afford to live in Venice.

CLERK 21AUG'17 PM 5:54

- Assure Venice property owners and constituents that the funds collected from any and all Fire Department Fees will be used only and always for subsidizing Fire Dept expenses and not quietly diverted to cover some other expense.

- Do you think Venice property owners would have passed the General Obligation bonds last November for road resurfacing and a public safety facility and knowing that doing so would undoubtedly increase our taxes, if the Fire Fee details would have been public knowledge at that time?

In summary, please consider the long range impact of your action on everyone who will be affected if you approve an initial Fire Fee subsidy rate of 50%.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

From: Edward Lavallee

Sent: Wednesday, August 16, 2017 10:19 AM

To: John Moeckel <jcminfl@yahoo.com>

Cc: Judy Gamel <JGamel@Venicegov.com>; Linda Senne <LSenne@Venicegov.com>; Lorraine Anderson <LAnderson@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Police fee

John

Thank you for copying me on the communication to the City Council on the subject of fire and police "fees." For clarification, the City has been discussing three specific fees:

- * Fire fee assessment- to largely subsidize the cost of fire protection services. This is the proposed new revenue source that has been debated in public forums for the past six months, and relates to current property owners

- * Fire Impact Fee: this is a specific and distinct revenue in that it relates to support of one aspect of fire protection services- funding for capital related to expansion of services, but is derived from a different source. Impact fees are systematically charged to new home construction projects and due when CO's (certificate of Occupancy) are issued. The significant difference between the impact fee and the fire fee assessment is that the impact fee does not apply to current property owners but only to new construction. The fire fee assessment is designed to apply to existing property owners

- * A police impact fee is similar to the fire impact fee, in that it also applies to new construction and therefore not applicable to existing property owners. Like the fire impact fees, the fee is due upon issuance of a CO for new construction

Please feel free to contact me to further discuss 'tis. Thanks

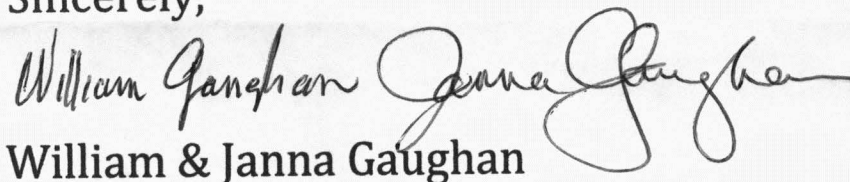
Edward F. Lavallee

To: City Council, Venice, FL
From: William & Janna Gaughan
Subject: Special Assessment
Date: August 15, 2017

As property owners here in Venice, 1205 Tarpon Center Drive, Unit D-3, we must lodge the strongest objection to this special assessment for fire protection services in the city of Venice. We strongly urge you to put the fire protection services into the city budget where it will be scrutinized, analyzed, and thoroughly sanitized by our elected officials who are responsible for spending our tax dollars prudently with consequences for failure.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,


William & Janna Gaughan

1205 Tarpon Center Dr #D-3

Venice, FL 34285

From: John Holic

Sent: Monday, August 21, 2017 4:18 AM

To: bigal524 <bigal524@aol.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Re: Fire Station

Dear Ms. Castellano,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

From: bigal524 <bigal524@aol.com>

Sent: Sunday, August 20, 2017 11:57:00 PM

To: City Council

Subject: Fire Station

Dear Council Members,

We have been property owners and residents of Venice for past 22 years. We received a notice for the proposal of a tax increase for a new Fire Station.

We firmly believe that a new Fire Station would be highly beneficial, not only to the many residents, but also to our brave Firefighters. Continuing to ensure

the safety of all, we are strongly in favor of this proposal for a new Fire Station.

Sincerely with respect,

Phil and Kathleen

Castellano

404 Everglades Drive

Venice

From: sue Lang [mailto:suelang99@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, August 21, 2017 9:30 AM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Fw: ANSWER re: Fire Fee

Overall, including traffic fatalities and other causes, **135 police officers** died in the line of duty in 2016, NLEOMF says. Dec 30, 2016

[NFPA: On-duty firefighter deaths at 69 in 2016 | Fire Chief](https://www.firechief.com/2017/06/08/nfpa-on-duty-firefighter-deaths-at-69-in-2016/)
<https://www.firechief.com/2017/06/08/nfpa-on-duty-firefighter-deaths-at-69-in-2016/>

1.

Jun 8, 2017 - in Fallen **firefighters**, Fire Chief, **Line of duty death**, News, NFPA June 8, ... the past six years that the total **number** of **deaths** has been below 70.

So, how is it that Firefighters have higher salaries and benefits than Police Officers?? Both jobs require an equal amount of skills and training...

Sent from [Outlook](#)

From: sue Lang [mailto:suelang99@hotmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, August 20, 2017 4:31 PM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Fw: ANSWER re: Fire Fee

Average Salary for Firefighter in Naples,Florida
StartingSalary AverageSalary High Salary
42,000 49,000-56,000 63,000

Naples has a similar population to Venice, but is a somewhat wealthier community...

Sent from [Outlook](#)

From: sue Lang <suelang99@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 20, 2017 4:08 PM
To: Fred Fraize; City Council
Subject: Re: ANSWER re: Fire Fee

It should also be noted that Venice's population of 23,000 goes down by almost half six months a year and only 10 percent give or take of the calls are fires. Venice's funding deficit for Fire and EMT (and other things) is also proof of how growth does not pay for itself. We have had several thousand market rate units built in the past decade and we need to raise our millage or have a fire fee??? We should also be budgeting our Penny Sales Tax funds for things like re-building a fire station...

[Firefighter/Paramedic](#)

\$46,100 per year

197 salaries reported

[Firefighter/Paramedic jobs in Florida](#)

[Firefighter](#)

100 salaries reported

\$41,303 per year

[Firefighter jobs in Florida](#)



**Emergency Medical
Technician**

106 salaries reported

\$30,190 per year

Sent from [Outlook](#)

From: Fred Fraize <FFraize@Venicegov.com>

Sent: Sunday, August 20, 2017 2:32 PM

To: 'Sue Lang'

Subject: ANSWER

Sue, you had a question related to the fire department.

Salaries for 2018 = \$3,281,245

We have 45.5 people in the department.

So the average salary is \$72,115.27.

Hope this helps

Travel Safe

Fred

From: John Holic

Sent: Sunday, August 20, 2017 9:39 AM

To: Karen <karen1891house@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Re: Fire assessment

Dear Ms. Leinard,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

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From: Karen <karen1891house@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, August 20, 2017 9:18 AM

Subject: Fire assessment

To: City Council <citycouncil@venicegov.com>

As a retired home owner in Villa Le Grand, I am very concerned about such an increase in the taxes due to the fire assessment.

You are making it very difficult for those of us who are on a fixed income to make ends meet.

Our association is struggling like many small associations and has extra assessments adding to our financial burden.

Please take a second look at what you propose . New home owners will not be so affected as they will know up front what their taxes are and rather they can afford to live in this beautiful place.

Karen Leinard

603 Christina Ct

Venice,FL 34285

Sent from my iPad

From: John Holic
Sent: Sunday, August 20, 2017 5:53 AM
To: Bill's Email <billbouman@comcast.net>
Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Re: Letter to City Council about the proposed 'assessment'

Dear Mr. Bouman,
Thank you for the clarification, I have copied City Council per your request.
Sincerely,
John Holic
Mayor, City of Venice

From: Bill's Email <billbouman@comcast.net>
Sent: Saturday, August 19, 2017 5:23 PM
To: John Holic
Subject: Re: Letter to City Council about the proposed 'assessment'

Not unsigned.... Bill Bouman. 210 Santa Maria #249 Venice_ Please pass on to entire council.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 19, 2017, at 3:54 PM, John Holic <JHolic@Venicegov.com> wrote:

Dear Unsigned,
Thank you for your comments.
Sincerely,
John Holic
Mayor, City of Venice

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From: Bill's Email <billbouman@comcast.net>
Sent: Saturday, August 19, 2017 2:30:29 PM
To: Joe Terranova
Cc: John Holic
Subject: Re: Letter to City Council about the proposed 'assessment'

Thank you for Forwarding this to me Joe. It contains a wealth of information. For a long time, it seemed to me that this entire issue is an end run play to maintain a City controlled fire department. In my view, the county has the skills and resources to provide our fire and medical/ambulance EMT services much more efficiently.
And if the city has to pay an upfront fee to the county to cover the unfunded pension obligations, or failure to replace equipment when the city should have, do a one time

assessment to raise the money and turn the entire Fire Dept. responsibility going forward over to the county.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 19, 2017, at 11:36 AM, Joe Terranova <jatnova@gmail.com> wrote:

You may have already seen this letter. It is very well written and contains great detail and facts in my opinion.

Ciao

Joe Terranova
President, Island Court Venice Condominium Association

From: John Holic

Sent: Saturday, August 19, 2017 1:34 PM

To: Jerry Stieber <jerry_stieber@outlook.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Cc: Edward Lavallee <ELavallee@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Re: Fire Protection Special Assessment

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Stieber,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

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From: Jerry Stieber <jerry_stieber@outlook.com>

Sent: Saturday, August 19, 2017 10:59 AM

Subject: Fire Protection Special Assessment

To: City Council <citycouncil@venicegov.com>

Dear Venice City Council Members:

Please accept this letter as a request for reconsideration of the proposed special assessment on properties located in Venice.

We are the owners of 806 Bird Bay Way. (Parcel # 0406021135) We feel that the proposed increase in property taxes would be a hardship for ourselves and our neighbors on fixed income. Although we need and want the services for Fire Protection, we believe this large assessment at once would be extremely difficult for ourselves and many citizens of Venice.

We respectfully suggest consideration of the following:

1) Give up the local service and go with Sarasota County, whose Fire Dept. equipment and facilities have been updated throughout the years.

We realize this move will increase the taxes on Venice properties, but we believe it will be a smaller amount, spread over several years.

2) Consider regional service with Venice, Nokomis, Englewood, etc.

3) Apply for State and Federal grants to upgrade the Venice Fire Department, and do a more gradual increase in property taxes over a longer period of time.

As a point of reference, what is the 2017 Fire Protection Assessment in the current budget?

Regards,

Gerard and Maria Stieber

From: John Holic
Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 5:23 PM
To: marilynktaylor@aol.com; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Re: Proposed Fire Assessment

Dear Ms. Taylor,
On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.
Sincerely,
John Holic
Mayor, City of Venice

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From: marilynktaylor@aol.com
Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 4:41 PM
Subject: Proposed Fire Assessment
To: City Council <citycouncil@venicegov.com>

Gentlemen:

I urge you to vote against the fire assessment as proposed in your letter of July 20, 2017.

I monitored on-line the informational session on August 16th, and felt many valid points against this proposition were raised by the attendees. May I add yet one more point. It was stated in the letter that such a fire assessment would be "less vulnerable to fluctuations in the economy." I am a low income senior citizen on a fixed income, and, as a potential payee of such, I am very much affected by these economic fluctuations. This additional assessment would prove burdensome, if not impossible, for me.

Thank you for your consideration of my opinion.

Sincerely,
Marilyn Taylor
788 Bird Bay Way
Venice, Florida 34285

From: John Holic
Sent: Tuesday, August 15, 2017 3:39 PM
To: Lori Stelzer <LStelzer@Venicegov.com>
Subject: FW: Concerns

From: Sunny Seabrook [<mailto:sunny2zmax@gmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, August 15, 2017 3:23 PM
To: John Holic <JHolic@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Concerns

Dear John,

I just love writing that!

Please try and squelch some of my concerns attached.

As always,

Thank you for your attention to matters...

Sunny Seabrook

Budgeting

#9 Operating Management

Financial Burden of city taxpayers must be minimal?

Then what the heck are we asking for additional taxation to repair a roof of the city Fire Department or perhaps relocate it because it's too old and costly to repair?? I often wonder why both the fire dept and ambulance must charge to 911 calls. I realize that in an auto accident the fire dept is necessary for possible fire prevention, but why, when there are two paramedics on both vehicles are they summoned for a medical situation which does not require a fire prevention?

The new way finding and color coded evacuation collar signs may indeed be informative or look attractive and the \$75,000 4 month trial trolley to practically no where might be a cute addition; and were city REPLACEMENT vehicles essential; and possibly the \$300,000 Wellfield soccer lighting was needed; and the recent REPLACEMENT fencing at the city tennis courts although appreciated, was totally not a necessity---why on earth does the city not BUDGET?

In a city of less than 30,000 total residents why do we need a Mayor, Vice Mayor City Manager, Assistant City Manager, Attorney and 5 council members? Not excluding the more than 100 folks on the advisory boards?

I singularly manage and maintain a 90 year old home on the island without ANY assistance from the city, a pool boy, or a lawn company and drive a 2004 vehicle! I pay OVER \$13,000 annually for taxes and insurance and within the past six weeks have had to replace TWO new AC units to the tune of \$11,500 and in two weeks will be replacing TWO knees. None of these were expected or anticipated; however, I BUDGETED for unforeseen circumstances. Why on earth does my city not do the same?

Cut out some of our unnecessary paid city officials?

Lower the refuse pickup to ONCE a week instead of two?

Stop spending taxpayers monies with city workers NEW trucks and vehicles left running with ac on high?

Add the task of ways to SAVE MONEY to one of the many advisory boards?

I VOLUNTEER

Just a few suggestions to insure Operating Management # 9 indeed begins to make taxpayers minimally responsible for the cities financial burdens!

Respectfully,

Sunny Seabrook Taxpayer and Voter

2005 The Higley house is given to the City of Venice. The city pays to move the house to a city owned on the southeast corner The city also pays for engineering and construction of the foundation.

From: John Holic

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 3:50 PM

To: Robert Eklund <eklundphd@hotmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Cc: criglerc@msn.com; chines@scgov.net; amaio@scgov.net; Edward Lavallee <ELavallee@Venicegov.com>; Linda Senne <LSenne@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Re: Proposed FIRE ASSESSMENT FEE 2017

Dear Mr. Eklund,

Thank you for your offer of help, perhaps we can chat after this budget cycle.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Robert Eklund <eklundphd@hotmail.com>

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 1:48 PM

Subject: Re: Proposed FIRE ASSESSMENT FEE 2017

To: John Holic <jholic@venicegov.com>, City Council <citycouncil@venicegov.com>

Cc: <criglerc@msn.com>, <chines@scgov.net>, <amaio@scgov.net>, Edward Lavallee <elavallee@venicegov.com>

Mayor Holic,

John, thank you for your prompt and robust reply to my email regarding the Fire Assessment Fee.

I was unaware that negotiations had reached a stalemate between our City/County governments regarding fire protection services. However, it appears Chuck Hines believes there is light at the end of the tunnel if you and the Venice City Council members are willing to work with Sarasota County government - I applaud his overture and remarks.

I've been a resident of Sarasota County since 1982 (LBK, Lakewood Ranch, Osprey, and Venice). It's a great place to live and work, albeit I'm retired now.

My education, training, and work experience has been economics with emphasis on long-term investments and amortization/depreciation of capital assets (electric utility industry). Let me know if there anything I can do pro bono to assist a City/County negotiation.

Warm regards,

Robert G. (Bob) Eklund, PhD

612 Tyson Terrace

Venice, FL 34292

Ph. (859) 327-7882
Fx. (502) 716-6156

From: John Holic <JHolic@Venicegov.com>
Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 7:10:01 AM
To: Robert Eklund; City Council
Cc: criglerc@msn.com; chines@scgov.net; amaio@scgov.net; Edward Lavallee
Subject: RE: Proposed FIRE ASSESSMENT FEE 2017

Dear Mr. Eklund and Ms. Crigler,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments. The City of Venice negotiated with Sarasota County for two years trying to see if our local fire department could be merged with the county fire department. Negotiations finally fell apart when the City could not get verified figures as to the cost of the merger as part of the proposal was for a \$4 million payment by the city to the county in order to merge.

After at least six requests were made for justification for the \$4 million charge; it was discovered by me that the county was charging the city for some fire apparatus that was no longer in use by the city and not wanted by the county. When that charge was finally disclosed, talks broke off and the city began looking at a fire fee as an alternative.

That all occurred prior to June of 2016 and I know of no other talks between the city and county on the subject. I can tell you that when the county took over the City of Sarasota Fire Department some 20 years ago, they did so without any charges to the City of Sarasota. That was a point of contention in the negotiations, why does the City of Venice have to pay to merge and the City of Sarasota did not have to pay. Once the payment demand amount was found to be erroneous and contained excess equipment, we felt we no longer had an option and began the new course.

I hope this answers your question.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

*****Council Members, please do not reply all*****

From: Robert Eklund [Robert Eklund [<mailto:eklundphd@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 8:52 AM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Cc: criglerc@msn.com
Subject: Proposed FIRE ASSESSMENT FEE 2017

Mayor Holic & City Council:

RE: Sarasota County Fire Protection

We can only imagine the amount of feedback you've received regarding your proposed FIRE ASSESSMENT FEE, including our initial knee-jerk reaction, which was a resounding NO!

In the interim, we've learned that Sarasota County has offered to provide fire protection services for the City of Venice and we're wondering why you haven't drafted and published a proposal to accept the offer?

There is no home town pride to be found in sustaining a deficit when there is a financially sound solution to the problem. If our home were burning, we wouldn't concern ourselves with the identity of the fire department name on the side of the trucks or the uniforms of the firemen be it City of Venice or Sarasota County.

VOTE NO for the fire assessment fee and turn over the responsibility for fire protection service to the Sarasota County Fire Department.

Sincerely,

Cecelia G. Crigler
Robert G. Eklund
612 Tyson Terrace
Venice FL 34292

From: John Holic

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 3:33 PM

To: Gerri Hallgren <riverview006@comcast.net>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Re: Special Fire Assessment

Dear Gerri Hallgren,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

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From: Gerri Hallgren <riverview006@comcast.net>

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 3:13:28 PM

To: City Council

Subject: Special Fire Assessment

I am writing to object to the Fire Services being moved from the current budget to a Special Fire Assessment.

The taxpayers have had little warning and apparently no voice in the decision.

Please consider alternatives to this assessment.

Thank you.

Gerri Hallgren

546 Sawgrass Bridge Rd.

Venice

Sent from my iPhone

From: HOWARD HOBBS [mailto:hcmhobbs@verizon.net]
Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 1:52 PM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>
Subject: Proposed Fire Protection Assessment

August 18, 2017

Dear Venice City Council:

We are writing to express our strongest objections to the proposed Fire Protection Assessment Fee. "Fee" or "tax"? It's all the same to our checkbooks.

We question both the size and necessity of the "fee." This "fee" amounts to an unbelievable increase in City of Venice levy. The proposed "fee" will nearly double, by a 95 percent increase, the City of Venice levies assessed on real property owners for FY 2019. This is unprecedented and unacceptable.

The Venice City Council's disconcerting proposal has left us new Venice homeowners wondering why we were buying in Venice. The fee/tax proposal leads us to believe that only some extreme fiscal malfeasance could have led to such a large tax need. What did or didn't the council do to cause this need?

We have attempted to review and understand the city council's proposed 1,000-page budget. We see vague shortages in some areas, such as "inter-governmental funds," but see nothing that justifies a doubling of our tax burden by FY 2019. We have been visiting Venice for 17 years and found the City of Venice to be a responsible, well-run government, one of the reasons we decided to buy here. Now the council appears to have run amok. Surely the city council can continue to balance Venice's fiscal needs without such a drastic measure.

We are left feeling a breach of faith by the Venice City Council fiscal management. It is now acting like a government body that is representing its own self interests and is disregarding its responsibilities to the citizens and residents. We question how the Venice City Council could even think of imposing such an oppressive burden upon the people it represents. Why would anyone vote to entrust so much more funding to a body whose fiscal management has led to requiring such sudden, large additional funding from the property taxpayers?

The council now has the chance to try to explain why the city needs the new tax and has chosen Aug. 21 for a hearing. Clearly the date was chosen intentionally as a time that would bring the fewest property owners into Venice for the hearing. The snowbirds are long gone, and even those who could attend the meeting are more likely to be on vacation in August.

We feel that The Council is taking advantage of a normally trusting-of-its-government residents to slip this by. Many residents will not even know of this fee until it shows up on the Sarasota County tax bill. Only the bare minimum of the level and type of legal notice has been provided by the council for such a major contentious issue. This only exacerbates the foulness and does nothing to assuage our fears that there is a clandestine agenda to impose this on taxpayers. The council's July 20, 2017, letter is the first we heard of this fee proposal. We were not even

notified of the July hearing. No critical or even urgent necessity explanation was provided. We know you guys are better than this. Whats going on?
Does Venice really want to become known as the crazy "tax and spend" capital of Southwest Florida? Please consider a more rational and conservative approach to this matter.

To the current proposal, we vote No, No No!

Thank you.

Howard & Susan Hobbs
821 Waterside Drive, No. 202
Venice, FL 34285
Parcel # 0406013008

From: John Holic

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 1:40 PM

To: Sharon <sharon.a.bend@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Re: Fire Assessment

Dear Sharon,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments,

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

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From: Sharon <sharon.a.bend@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 1:09:47 PM

To: City Council

Subject: Fire Assessment

I am sending this email to you as a concerned resident & property owner of the City of Venice, as well as Villa Le Grand.

This added tax is too much for too long of an extended time. Your promise for retirement funds, is not reasonable.

We have people on Social Security and **not pensions or retirement funds** and **THEY CON NOT AFFORD THESE EXTRA TAXES.**

This city is not just for the wealthy....people with low incomes must be able to live here too.

Vote NO on this Tax Increase.

--

Sharon

A Concerned Citizen

From: John Holic

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 12:06 PM

To: Thomas Brener <thomasbbrener@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Cc: Edward Lavallee <ELavallee@Venicegov.com>; David Persson <dpersson@swflgovlaw.com>

Subject: Re: Cooper City Fire Fee Decision

Dear Mr. Brener,

Thank you for your comments and I can assure you I never had a doubt that you had back up information.

Sincerely and respectfully,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

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From: Thomas Brener <thomasbbrener@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 11:02:44 AM

To: John Holic; City Council

Subject: Cooper City Fire Fee Decision

Dear Mayor Holic: I mentioned the Cooper City decision in a recent email, but never sent you anything about it. Here's some information:

Has a Florida City ever lost in court due to relying on a flawed methodology when enacting a fire fee? Cooper City, FL. 2016. (Parenthesis mine).

As reported in the Sun Sentinel July 5, 2016-

"Three residents appear to have won their class action lawsuit against the city, in which they sought a \$2.5 million refund for fire assessment fees..."

"Garcia-Wood then ruled in favor of the plaintiffs on the second count, which alleges the city relied on flawed methodology from a fire study report, compiled in 1999 by Burton & Associates, to apportion the fire assessment fee."

(Stantec is the City of Venice's consultant who prepared the methodology for Venice's Fire Fee. Burton & Associates is part of Stantec)

Source <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/fl-cooper-city-lawsuit-update--a-broward-county-circuit-court-judge-has-ruled-in-20160705-story.html>

(Interestingly, four city commissioners, who were NOT in office at the time of the adoption of the fire fee, wrote in support of the plaintiffs as unofficial amicus curie):

"Numerous residents filed written challenges, objected strenuously to the fire assessment(s) at open public commission meetings, and have done so every year since the objection(s) attached

hereto. When one conveys a false impression by disclosure of some facts and the concealment of others, such concealment is in effect a false representation that what is disclosed is the whole truth.... The fact is Judge Garcia-Wood, the City has made false written representations to this court and to you, in addition to the electorate, and has lied to you in writing and in virtually every pleading filed in this case regarding the required objections per the applicable Ordinance or the lack thereof. This is also the subject matter of a near future Florida Bar complaint against the city attorney(s) that I intend to file forthwith."

Source - <http://www.johnbsims.com/judgeletter.pdf>

(The city was forced to reimburse the fees collected from the improper methodology. The city used taxpayer dollars for the reimbursement and was required to pay legal fees. Lawyers on both sides pocketed a generous portion of the settlement)

THOMAS BRENER
VENICE FL

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Thomas Brener 8/18/17

From: John Holic

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 12:04 PM

To: Dena <denatravel@earthlink.net>; City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Cc: Linda Senne <LSenne@Venicegov.com>; Edward Lavalley <ELavalley@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Re: Public Hearing - Fire Protection Special Assessments

Dear Mr. Becker,

I will try to give you short answer to most of your questions. I apologize in advance for not having the time to go into greater detail, but we have several meeting to prepare for next week.

- scrutinize the budget... The budget is completely reviewed and scrutinized by the Finance Director and City Manager. After they are done it is presented to Council and we do a line by line analysis. I do not believe this was done by previous councils, but I could be wrong.

- fire department vehicles as a "company vehicle" . If you are referring to an engine being taken to Public or one of the other stores, this is done so that the engine stays in service. If there is a call, the firefighters are ready to respond. In addition, going to and by some of the businesses in town allows the firefighters to assess problems that might be encountered if there is a call for an emergency. An example was when the owner of the strip mall where Goodwill is located painted parking spaces right next to the building eliminating the fire lane. Firefighters were able to get code enforcement to change the parking back to a fire lane.

- I can't answer the part time / volunteer question, but can say that all new firefighters and about half of the existing firefighters are no longer on the city defined benefit plan. They are on the State of Florida plan which is much more reasonable for the city. Instead of retirement taking a contribution of almost 100% of salary, it is now less than 25% of salary (sorry, figures from memory and could be off)

- meals are purchased by firefighters and they use their own funds. As previously explained, they use that time to see what is happening in the business district that might hamper fire fighting.

- I agree with the last part of your statement.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

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From: Dena <denatravel@earthlink.net>

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 10:48 AM

Subject: Re: Public Hearing - Fire Protection Special Assessments

To: John Holic <jholic@venicegov.com>, City Council <citycouncil@venicegov.com>

Thank you for your prompt response.

I know you all are inundated with commentary but after attending the Town Hall meeting, I feel compelled to express additional concerns.

- Are there processes which scrutinize the budget that is submitted by the Fire Department?
(Processes or entities outside the Fire Department)

- Is it necessary that staff use fire department vehicles as a “company vehicle”? This requires additional expenses for the vehicles, wear-and-tear, gas, insurance.....

- 80% of their budget is designated for salary, wage and benefits. The Fire Chief immediately dismissed the notion of Volunteer Fire Fighters; stating “it’s not like it is up north where they have lifetime volunteers”. How do they attract and keep lifetime fire fighters “up north”? He explained the only time they get volunteers here is when it is someone who is looking to get hired. Well, who wouldn’t want to get hired with such a comprehensive benefits package? I have a neighbor who is 48 years old and a retired fire fighter with full benefits. And of course, has started his own business. I was employed with a Fortune 500 corporation founded in 1922, one of the Top 5 Forbes rated Best Employers List, Fortune magazines Top 100 Best Companies to work for, and **someday** when I am 70 I will hopefully still be alive to realize those benefits from working there. In the past 4 years that Fortune 500 corporation has ended pensions for new hires. Why? Because of funding. Current employees have a 401k that they can contribute to in order to set aside portions of their salary for retirement that has a small percentage of corporate match but they will receive no pension. Has this factor been explored or analyzed? I also worked for a non profit 501c3 and had to maintain a budget for my department. Each year, I would make cuts by changing practices, altering trainings, adjusting methodology, etc. I did this because **I was using somebody else’s money!** I didn’t have to use CPR or any other EMT actions but what I did saved lives. It was my duty to ensure the use of donations that supported our organization was deliberate and calculated. And, we had no benefits, only a salary.

- Are meals donated by various organizations or do they just run to the grocery store and buy whatever food they want for their meal preparation?

I have no experience or knowledge in the day-to-day operations of a fire station. But it appears, not only to me but many others, there is much additional research that is required before property owners are, again, burdened with the responsibility. There remains, many, many unanswered questions.

Thank you all for your commitment to our City and to our citizens. Your dedication is commendable.

Thank you for your time.

jake

Jake Becker

From: [John Holic](#)

Sent: Wednesday, August 9, 2017 10:30 AM

To: [Dena](#) ; [City Council](#)

Subject: RE: Public Hearing - Fire Protection Special Assessments

Dear Mr. Becker

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments and questions. Many of these questions will be addressed at the Town Hall meetings on August 16 at the Venice Community Center at 9 a.m. or 5 p.m. If you are not able to attend, you will be able to go on line and listen to the meeting or request a CD from the City Clerk's office.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

From: Dena [Dena [<mailto:denatravel@earthlink.net>]

Sent: Wednesday, August 09, 2017 10:14 AM

To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Public Hearing - Fire Protection Special Assessments

Please provide further explanation as stated in the Frequently Asked Questions from the Notice of Fire Protection Special Assessment

- 1. What is the purpose of the proposed fire assessment?

Need further explanation regarding: "The assessment would provide the necessary funding to enhance the department's overall level of service to properties in the City."

- What type of "enhancements"?
- Are we now getting poor level of service?
- This assessment revenue to be collected for FY 2018 is estimated to be \$ 4.2 million dollars. What are the current "costs and expenses incurred by the City each year in providing fire protection services, facilities, and programs."?
- The "Maximum Potential Rate for each fiscal year thereafter" is a significant increase over FY2018. What is the basis for the annual increase?
- Will the funds from this assessment be used for payroll and retirement benefits?

-2. Why is the City considering the creation of a fire assessment?

- b) "A dedicated revenue stream". Is there no current "dedicated revenue stream"? Are funds not currently budgeted for services, facilities and programs?
- c) "A way to free up General Fund and One-Cent Sales Taxes revenues for other needed projects". What are these "other needed projects" that the property owners taxes would be used for? Will the taxpayer have any input in the alternative use of these funds?

-3. Do other governments have a "Fire Assessment Program" to fund fire service?

- How many in the state of Florida have this assessment program?
- What percentage of Florida cities and counties charge this assessment?
- How large are those cities? Properties serviced per fire facility? What is the ratio for the City of Venice compared to these other cities in Florida?
- This is a seasonal city. How is this assessment justified since the city is only fully occupied 3-5 months out of the year?

- Are these “many cities and counties throughout Florida” who have a Fire Assessment Program also seasonal areas?

-8. What period of time does the fire assessment cover and when will the assessment be payable?

- Reasonably, there will be expenses, i.e.. new fire facilities, vehicles; unexpected repairs or losses, that will occur and will require funding. However, this assessment is permanent. It would be much more agreeable and logical to propose an assessment be rendered every 5 years or every 10 years. This would capture additional revenue to fund these aforementioned expenses. Day-to-day operation would still be funded by the General Fund or One-Cent Sales Taxes or current funding aspects. Adopting a permanent assessment sets unreasonable precedence for additional taxation for other “services, facilities and programs” as deemed “**necessary**” by the City.

“The annual assessment amount will include expenses incurred by the City in administering and collecting the assessment including fees imposed by the County property appraiser and tax collector, and will be adjusted as necessary to account for any statutory discounts which are necessitated when employing the efficiencies of collecting the assessments annually on the same bill as property taxes.” In simple terms, does this mean that it’s going to cost us (property owners) in order for the City to charge us for the assessment? Not only do we have to pay the assessment but we have to pay the government to take the assessment from us?

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

jake

Jake Becker

From: John Holic

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 10:46 AM

To: chrisferrante34285@yahoo.com

Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>; Edward Lavalley <ELavalley@Venicegov.com>; Linda Senne <LSenne@Venicegov.com>

Subject: FW: Special Assessment comments

Dear Mr. Ferrante,

On behalf of Venice City Council, thank you for your comments.

Sincerely,

John Holic

Mayor, City of Venice

From: Christopher Ferrante [<mailto:chrisferrante34285@yahoo.com>]

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 10:19 AM

To: City Council <CityCouncil@Venicegov.com>

Subject: Special Assessment comments

Please see the attached letter concerning the Monday, August 21, Council Meeting. Thank you

Christopher A. Ferrante
PO Box 294
Venice, Florida 34284-0294
(941) 400-8971
chrisferrante34285@yahoo.com

August 17, 2017

City Council of Venice
Mayor John Holic
Vice Mayor Richard Cautero
Mr. Bob Daniels
Mr. Fred Fraize
Ms. Jeanette Gates

Venice City Hall
401 West Venice Avenue
Venice, Florida 34285

Re; Proposed Fire Assessment, August 21, 2017 Council Meeting.

Dear Council Members:

I am a full time resident of Venice, and have been since March of 2013. I am also a former Dade County police officer, former federal agent, and businessman. I hold a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Florida International University, in Miami. Based upon my education and experience I feel compelled to write and express my extreme displeasure with the scheduling of the debate over the Proposed Fire Assessment on the August 21, 2017, Council schedule, and your rational for this assessment.

Why is this debate on the August Council Meeting agenda?

First, whether it was your intent or not, scheduling this topic for debate, in August, when most of our neighbors are up North on summer vacation creates the perception, true or not, that the council is attempting to "ramrod" the approval of a de facto tax when the residents cannot register their contempt for your plans. The excuse that the schedule was dictated by the need to get it in the budget cycle is not believable. A failure to plan ahead on your part does not constitute an emergency on our part.

Furthermore, setting this for a 9:00 AM meeting, instead of an evening meeting suggests an attempt to limit comment by citizens who are fully employed, and will have to choose between earning their day's wages, or being heard before the council. None of this may be true in your minds, but it is the perception of the citizens whom I know. "Bad Form" on the part of the Council. Assuming this perception is not the case, there are still issues to address.

Anyone with experience in government knows the most uncontrolled, wasteful expenditures are always made in August, at "the last minute to meet a deadline", to get it into the next fiscal year budget, Blah, Blah, Blah. The last two weeks in August are the most expensive in every budget year, for every agency of government. "Make sure we spend it all so we can justify the need for more next year."

Can we afford a Municipal fire Department?

Do we really need a Municipal Fire Department if it cannot be cost effective? You should, based upon the now completed research on costs, revisit this issue. Would we receive the same protection by contracting with Sarasota County for fire service?

When the citizens were asked whether they wanted to keep the municipal fire service, we were told that the cost to transfer the assets and liabilities to the County would be about four million dollars. I don't recall being told that the cost to keep them would be in excess of that, annually.

No one from the City thought it important to mention that Sarasota County would provide exactly the same coverage by population count, that the city does. I don't recall anyone from the city telling us that Sarasota County already responds, with their ambulances based in Venice, to every traffic accident, and medical emergency that City of Venice responds to. Duplication of service on the over 2,240 calls handled last year in the city. Sarasota County is already responding to the majority of our emergencies, anyway.

Let's talk about the demand for fire service for a moment. I requested statistics from the Fire Chief for the last twelve months of service. What I received were the stats for the 12 months in the year 2016, not the last twelve months. That being said, my information may not be up to date, however, in that period, the Fire Department responded to 147 fire calls. In the same period, they responded to 2,241 Emergency Medical Service calls. Sarasota County also responded to every one of those as well.

Equipment is I'm sure another large part of the fire budget. I cringe every time I see that big, beautiful 100' Ladder Truck being used as a traffic barricade to block the traffic lanes while the police write their reports. I know from personal experience, having had a minor accident without injuries, in Venice, that both Venice fire and Sarasota EMT's respond anyway. They respond to accidents every day where there have been no injuries. How many of their responses are actually necessary? What percent of calls result in service declined? No one gave me those figures.

By comparison, as a police officer in Dade County, I handled between one and two dozen calls, every day, and never had Fire Rescue respond until we requested them, or unless they were dispatched because of a 911 call specifically asking for medical rescue.

No one disputes the need for a Fire Rescue service when you need them, but how often are we paying for unnecessary dispatch?

Venice is a small town. Are we letting our egos dictate the need for Municipal fire services when contracting with the county would suffice? I looked at Fire Department Staffing. If the information received was correct, as we sit in the council meeting on Monday morning, there will be (9) Firemedics, and (3) Lieutenants on duty in the city. At the same time, there will be (8) Management and Administrative personnel on duty who do not fight fires or attend to rescues. Any business trying to remain cost effective with that ratio of managers to workers would fail in its first year of operation.

Because the size of our city doesn't warrant more firefighters, and because the organization of a fire department requires that certain management positions must be staffed, we have a top heavy department that has become too expensive to maintain. If we contracted with the county for service, those top eight positions would not need to be funded. The county's existing management structure would envelope them. If new developments create the demand for more fire service, those developers should provide the land for new fire houses, and the homeowners buying the new homes should pay for the expansion through impact fees. Current residents should not shoulder that cost.

I also understand that there is no residency requirement for a job in the city fire department. Those employees whose families we support may not contribute one penny back into the economy of the city if they live elsewhere.

It is no secret that the unfunded pension costs play into this problem. Frankly, it would be more cost effective to pay the penalty for passing off those obligations one time, than continue to obligate the residents to pay in perpetuity.

Does this “Assessment” meet the Two Pronged test to be legal?

This “assessment”, as you describe it will be an annual charge, not a one-time fee for increased service. As such, it is in fact not an assessment, but it instead another ad-valorem tax. One which you admit will rise again after the first year, without the consent of the citizens under your proposed plan.

As clarified in the report of your consultant, Stantec, there is a two pronged test for the justification of an assessment under Florida law:

- There must be a “Special Benefit” from the service provided
- The assessment must be fairly and reasonably apportioned.

Special Benefit, the first prong of the two pronged test includes:

- Continuous availability of immediate response to fire
- Provision of First Responder Medical aid to protect life and safety
- Enhanced property values, marketability and/or the ability to develop property
- Protection against the spread of fire to neighboring parcels
- Increased use and enjoyment of the property due to comprehensive fire protection
- Enhanced property value compared to similar parcels without fire protection.

The problem with the Council justifying the assessment according to this test, is that the test is neither restrictive, nor exclusive. Nowhere in the statute does it address the fact that if County fire service, or Privatized fire service is available at a lower cost, without a special assessment, that the citizens may be compelled to maintain a municipal fire department, by funding such special assessments. Therefore, imposing this assessment without a vote of the electors, when a less costly alternative to obtain equal service is available, may very well:

- Not be legal as it would in fact be an ad-valorem tax
- Fail to meet the First Prong test to justify an assessment.

Both should be decided by a vote of the electorate in the City of Venice.

The Constitution of the State of Florida, Article VII, Section (9)(b) clearly states that ad-valorem taxes, exclusive of those levied for a period of no longer than two years,

shall be authorized by a vote of the electors. You may call this an assessment, but it is a tax, a perpetual tax. You should not do an “end run” and impose this tax by going around the voting populace as it appears that our situation fails the Two Pronged test.

Giving the Council \$4.1 million this year, and perhaps fifty percent more next year will simply allow you to squander equal amounts from the general funds already paid in by the residents to support the fire service. No matter how much the citizen's give to government, government is always broke at the end of the fiscal year. It is the nature of public administration. Creative ways to spend a windfall will most certainly present themselves during the next fiscal year.

Everyone respects the individual firefighters, and paramedics for the selfless job they do, and the risks they take to protect us and save lives. However these same individuals would do the same work, with the same enthusiasm and sense of duty that they give to the citizens of Venice whether their pay check was issued by the city, or the county. If the county picked up the obligation to provide service in the city, they would pick up the personnel to staff these positions as well. None of our competent firefighters and paramedics would be unemployed. In fact, they would have greater opportunity for advancement in a larger department. If the management positions were justified, they would pick them up too. If they were excessive, they would have to move on.

This is not the federal government. A good many city residents are retirees on fixed incomes. We do not have unlimited spending ability, and by giving you our blessings, we would just be giving you another four to six million a year to spend on other projects without voter approval, just because you have it! I read a few weeks ago about new stop signs for Venice Avenue being part of a \$1.8 million project. Really? Since I have lived here this council has wasted thousands on consulting fees for parking, and other senseless projects that never seem to be finalized. Enough, is enough. We need to make do with what we have, or make changes to operate within our means. I believe that if this council pushes this tax through against the will of the people, each and every member up for re-election will pay for it in the polling place.

This is a difficult issue, but a fully informed populace would be much easier for you to deal with than one that perceives that it has been deceived, and misinformed.

A common sense recommendation.

I would recommend that you table this plan. If not, at least re-schedule your vote on this until November's meeting, when all of our residents will have an equal opportunity for consideration and comment. If you miss the budget cycle, so be it. You should have planned ahead. In the mean-time, now that all of your "Staff" and "Consultants" work product is available, give us a real, spread sheet cost comparison showing the difference in cost between keeping the City Fire Department, and contracting with the County for identical services.

Thank you for your consideration. See you Monday!

Sincerely,

Christopher A. Ferrante