

External Affairs October 2009

Thanks to the E-mail campaign from Hunters Ridge and the neighboring gated communities, we were able to sway the fire commissioner's plans and convinced them to lower the tax millage rate for the 2009-2010 Bonita Springs Fire District budget. Their initial budget submission called for a tax rate of \$1.96/ \$1,000 assessed value. As a result of our pressure, the commissioners have settled on a millage rate of \$1.795/\$1,000, a reduction of \$0.165/\$1,000, or an 8.4% reduction. This rate is expected to be finalized at their September 22 meeting. Not too bad! Thanks everyone for your support.

Everyone has probably received their Proposed Property Tax notification for the 2009/2010 tax year by this time. If you tried to calculate the Fire District assessment portion of this notice, you probably were not successful. That's because the calculation for this form is based on the original \$1.96 millage rate times the assessed value, not the taxable value. It turns out that the Fire District is allowed, by Florida law, to use the full assessed value, as opposed to the taxable value, which includes the Homestead and other exemptions. The School tax rate is likewise based, not on the taxable value, but on the School Taxable Value.

It looks like our E-mail campaign related to the City Council's idea to impose a service user fee (tax) on such things as telephone, water, sewer, cable, dish TV, and others was, also, a success. We haven't heard any more talk about this technique to offset the lower income the City is seeing as a result of lower assessment values, so we think it has died a deserved death.

As mentioned in our last report, we received a CD from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) referencing our questions on some of the noise barriers on I-75. Their response is a long and detailed data dump that is taking quite a while to absorb. Bear with us and we will get through it. At this point, however, we haven't found any silver bullet to change FDOT's position with regards to Hunters Ridge qualification for a noise barrier. This may well have to wait until the expansion is complete and we can take the necessary sound measurements.

Here's hoping everyone has great final days of summer. We will see everyone back in Hunters Ridge soon. Have a safe trip back.