



Fairview Fire Department
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Fairview Vol. Fire Dept., Inc. Fire Tax Rate Justification

1. For over 20 years, Fairview Vol. Fire Dept. was one of the lowest tax rates in Buncombe County. At the rate of 7.5 cents, we were finding it very hard to keep up with the growth in our community. Our District was experiencing tremendous growth. Farmlands were being divided and the construction of 100's of very large homes were taking the place of fields and pastureland. We continued to struggle to keep up and maintain with the growth in our district. We applied for every grant possible, consolidated loans, etc. in order to help stretch our funds further.
2. In 2004, we were inspected by the NCDOT and successfully improved our Insurance Rating. We lowered our rating from a Class 9 to a Class 6. This improvement saved our taxpayers hundreds of dollars in homeowner insurance premiums. We had many residents tell us that their homeowner's premiums were cut in half. One resident we spoke with saw his insurance premium decrease from \$2200 a year to \$1100 a year due to our Class 6 rating.
3. The results of this Inspection gave us a summary of what we needed to do to maintain this Insurance Classification. In order to maintain the Class 6 Rating we were required to construct a substation in the northern portion of our district on Old Fort Road in order to house an Engine and Tanker in this area. Response times in this part of our district was sometimes 10-15 minutes from our main station.
4. In 2006 we purchased property at 799 Old Fort Road and constructed a substation. We moved in and became operational in September 2007. We purchased a new Fire Engine in 2007 to be located in the new substation. We were also required to respond with more water on the initial alarm. In 2008 we purchased a 3500 gallon tanker to fulfill this requirement. In order to respond adequately and follow NFPA and OSHA standards we were required to hire more personnel. We hired more personnel with the assistance of a FEMA Grant called the SAFER Grant (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response).
5. We were also required to construct a substation in the southern portion of our district. We purchased property on Cane Creek Road in 2008. At this point we had done our very best to follow the requirements and recommendations of the NCDOT, but our funds were now extremely tight. We found that we did not have enough funding to construct a substation on our property. We were also unable to receive adequate funding from a bank or financial institution due to our financial restraints and current obligations.
6. We began the process of requesting to increase the Fire Tax Rate for the Fairview Fire District. We did not want to increase taxes but we had no other choice. Our improvements to the Insurance Classification had already saved our taxpayers a tremendous amount of money. On a \$100,000 home we saved the homeowner on average at least \$250 a year in Insurance. We requested to increase our tax rate to 10.5 cents, which on the same \$100,000 home was just an increase of \$30.00 in fire tax. The homeowner was still saving money even with our tax increase request.
7. In 2013 The County Commissioners allowed us to increase our tax rate from 7.5 cents to 10.5 cents. We did not begin to receive the increase in funds until late 2013. So we have only operated at the 10.5 cent fire tax for approximately two

- years. Two years isn't enough time to catch up and maintain our growth with the growth of the community.
8. This tax increase did allow us to get a loan in order to work towards constructing a substation in the southern portion of our district.
 9. In 2013 we located a property in a better location with a steel building already on the property. We purchased this property with the building, a well, and a septic system for \$265,000. It cost us \$400,000 to renovate and turn the building into a fire station with living quarters. We had received quotes to build a station on the vacant property that ranged from 1.1 million to 1.4 million. Therefore, the new location saved our department \$600-\$700,000 dollars.
 10. Our district was seeing a drastic increase in medical calls, as was the entire county. We researched all of the possibilities of purchasing an EMS unit and operating it from our department. In 2013 we improved our medical certification from EMT-Basic to EMT- Intermediate. In 2014 we purchased and placed in service an EMS transport unit. We experienced such an increase in call volume that we purchased a used ambulance to use as a backup in case the main ambulance was broke down, being serviced, or on another call.
 11. In 2016 we improved our EMS certification from EMT-Intermediate to EMT-Paramedic level of care. We currently have 6 full time Paramedics, approximately 15 part time Paramedics, and EMT intermediates.
 12. Today, 4/17/17 the NCDOI of Insurance inspected us. We are hoping to improve our Insurance Classification from a Class 6. It was noted during the inspection that due to the growth of Fairview since the inspection of 2004, we need to start looking to construct a substation in the western portion of our district. This substation is needed to bring homes and properties within 5 miles of our station, and to drastically reduce response times.
 13. We have neglected our main station due to the lack of funds and we have many renovations that are needed. We currently do not have an adequate space for physical fitness as we had to construct sleeping quarters in its place. We have restrooms and showers that are not ADA compliant. We have a few sections of roof that are leaking and damaging the ceiling.
 14. We have fire apparatus that is 30 years old that NFPA Standards state should have been retired when it was 20 years old. We have Quick response vehicles that have 150,000 miles on them and are falling apart. We have one station that we need to replace the brush truck as it is over 20 years old and is having mechanical issues. We have one station that we need to add a brush truck because it doesn't have one because we removed it from service years ago due to mechanical failure.
 15. Three years ago we were experiencing a tremendous amount of Firefighter turnover due to inadequate pay and benefits. We had 7 firefighters leave in one year. On an average it costs about \$8,000-\$10,000 dollars to replace one firefighter. This particular year cost the department approximately \$70,000 in uniforms, turnout gear, applying insurance and worker comp, etc.
 16. In 2015 we hired a consulting firm to do a salary study for us and we found that we were losing personnel due to pay. Our employees could leave our department after being here 5-7 years and go to another department in our area and be making \$3500 more within 6 months. You cannot blame someone for leaving with a difference in pay like this. In 2016 we implemented a new pay plan due to the results of the pay study. This pay study increased our payroll budget approximately \$100,000 for 29 employees.
 17. Our health care costs have increased 353% since 2006.
 18. Our call volume has increased 130% since 2006.

19. We are operating 2 EMS units. Our EMS units are experiencing a tremendous increase in response to drug and opioid overdoses. This increase is costing us a tremendous amount more to operate.
20. In 1994 we kept on average 40-50 volunteers. Over the years due to training requirements, and many other mandates we have experienced a drastic reduction in volunteers. Currently we may keep 5-10 volunteers. Out of the volunteers, all of them work during the day and mostly out of town so they miss many emergency calls. We are required to offset the loss of volunteers with paid staff, which again, takes away from our budget.
21. In the past 10 years we have been unable to keep a Reserve Fund or a Fund for Capital Purchases such as fire apparatus, station funding etc. due to our entire budget is allocated in other areas just to maintain our current services and obligations.
22. We have been unable to maintain the suggested reserve fund by NC for Local Government of 8% of our budget. This 8% equals to \$203,349.28
23. The Revenue Neutral Rate for Fairview Fire District is 9.7 cents. At this rate, we would only see an \$84,621 increase from last year's budget.
24. The current tax rate for the Fairview Fire District is 10.5 cents. At this rate, we would see a \$217,797 increase from last year's budget. Even at the current tax rate, we would not be able to meet the 8% suggested reserve fund, but we would not ask for a tax rate increase above our current 10.5 cents.
25. The effect of maintaining our current 10.5-cent tax rate on the average homeowner equates to an increase of \$20.00 for a homeowner with a \$250,000 home.

Fairview Vol. Fire Dept. is requesting to retain our current Fire Tax Rate of 10.5 cents. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Fire Chief Scott Jones.