

March 20, 2012

Dear Citizens of Weddington,

The members of the Weddington Town Council have been discussing the future of fire service in Weddington. Our goal is to create a fire service model where the citizens of Weddington can freely choose the level and the cost of fire service they deem to be the most appropriate for Weddington. After looking at multiple options, the Town Council is considering the implementation of a municipal fire service model.

Under a municipal fire service model, the County would stop collecting fire fees and fire taxes from the houses in Weddington. The Town would increase its property tax rate to cover the cost of fire service in Weddington. The Town would establish contracts for fire service with the Providence Volunteer Fire Department, the Wesley Chapel Volunteer Fire Department, and the Stallings Volunteer Fire Department.

The Town would redraw the fire service lines within Weddington, so that each house is served by the closest fire station under contract with the Town. In many cases this would improve response times to 911 calls and also allocate tax dollars from each house to the closest fire department. In other words, the fire department closest to your house would receive the tax dollars collected from your house.

Public Safety

Public safety is a priority for our Town Council. We think it is important to continue the staffed 24 hour/7 days-a-week coverage at the most centrally located fire department in Weddington, the Providence Volunteer Fire Department. It is also important to continue to use the services of the Wesley Chapel Volunteer Fire Department and the Stallings Volunteer Fire Department. We have always been very happy with the service provided from these three fire departments.

Efficient spending of tax dollars

Spending tax dollars efficiently is another priority for our Town Council. We hope the municipal fire service model will provide the Weddington taxpayers a better means of transparency and scrutiny when it comes to spending tax dollars on fire service. Each tax dollar spent should be based on the level of service deemed appropriate by the citizens of Weddington, no more and no less.

Taxes

Weddington citizens are currently paying a 3-cent tax rate to the Town of Weddington. While some citizens are paying a fire fee, most citizens are paying a 2.2-cent tax rate to the County for fire service. For the majority of citizens paying the 2.2-cent fire tax, the total tax is 5.2-cents. Our projections for the tax rate under a municipal fire service model are somewhere between 5.2-cents and 6-cents.

Under the current fire tax system the owner of a house valued at \$400,000 pays the Town \$120 in property tax (3-cents) and pays the County \$88 in fire tax (2.2-cents). The sum of the two taxes equals \$208.

Under a municipal fire service model, it is estimated that the same owner would pay the Town between \$208 (5.2-cents) and \$240 (6-cents). The owner would not pay any fire tax to the County.

Citizen control

Under a municipal fire service model, citizens who wish to influence the level and cost of fire service in Weddington may do so by participating in the open election process held in Weddington every two years. They may also participate in the election process of the board of directors at the fire departments serving Weddington.

Those who participated in the 2011 Weddington election chose candidates who supported a move to a municipal fire service model.

Town Council Meeting on Monday, April 2nd at 6:00 pm

The Town Council will discuss and possibly consider this issue at the next Town Council meeting on Monday, April 2nd at 6:00 pm. We plan to hold the meeting at the Weddington United Methodist Church located at 13901 Providence Road. We look forward to hearing your opinions during the meeting. The members of the Town Council understand that a change to the fire service model in Weddington is significant. We understand there are differing opinions on this issue. We look forward to resolving this issue in a manner that best serves the long-term interests of the citizens of Weddington.

Thank you,

Walker Davidson
Mayor of Weddington