

# Jefferson Countians can not afford fire/EMS fees

January 25, 2012

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Jefferson County faces numerous obstacles in the onset of 2012. Expenditures are growing out of control, county agencies and personnel are constantly demanding larger budgets and staffing needs, and residents can no longer afford to live in the community and area founded upon farming.

Jefferson County, given its proximity to Washington, D.C., has always been advertised as a metropolitan bedroom community, and a handful of the residents who moved to the area within the last five years still work in D.C. and the surrounding area. However, what I encourage county officials to remember, are the original residents of this county. On the same note, I have expressed strong opposition to this county's impact fees, which are approximately \$14,000 to simply obtain a building permit.

As expressed by our county commissioners and impact fee coordinator, the thought process surrounding this inflated fee is to offset the burden and cost expenditures on our current residents and ultimately make county "newcomers" and transplants pay for the added services and infrastructure demands. Apparently, what the county is now reviewing is because the impact fee money is insufficient, a new fire/EMS fee is reviewed. At some point, the bank and residents' wallets run dry and instead of constantly seeking a new tax or fee, leaders need to examine and stream-line existing budgets.

This proposed fire/EMS fee is not about "saving lives" or growing a 24/7 professional fire service, it's simply about expanding a budget because individuals have lost sight in how to manage budgets, make cutbacks and employ those difficult decisions in a time when our economy and financial growth is stagnant and ultimately, injured.

I understand the need for emergency services as I work within the Jefferson County law enforcement field, but at the same time, what needs evaluated is not another tax to our county residents but a budget overhaul.

I greatly appreciate the duties our fire and EMS personnel do on a daily basis, and with their efforts, they save lives every day. But without this fee, those service personnel are going to continue saving lives and performing their duties because that is what they are required to do. If this fee is ultimately implemented, these services are no longer going to save lives, it's going to have the adverse effect and cause our residents to go broke.

With the recent reduction in forces within the Board of Education, numerous layoffs in other businesses in the county and the consistent increased costs of living, Jefferson County residents can not afford another fee.

