

Citizens for Equitable Fire Districts of Dutchess County

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Dear Fairview Fire District Resident and Property Owner:

In the near future one of our fellow Fairview Fire District residents will be knocking on your door, to ask you to sign a petition. The signed petitions will be presented to our elected representatives in the Towns of Hyde Park and Poughkeepsie imploring them, to dissolve the Fairview Fire District. **Only through our action**, can we force the State, County and both Towns to take responsibility for their portion of the financial crisis. Please read the following letter that outlines the inequities and history of our fire district.

Once the petitions have been presented to the elected officials of both Towns, there are several courses of action available to them, according to law that can fix the tax burden of all the fire districts.

We need your help. Please sign the petition.

Anyone interested in joining this effort and obtaining signatures, please contact us. We need volunteers. We need your help in this effort. Join us now and be a part of the solution. Most importantly, sign the petition!

Thank You,

Citizens for Equitable Fire Districts of Dutchess County

To: Concerned Fairview Fire District Taxpayers:

From: Citizens for Equitable Fire Districts of Dutchess County

Proposal: Terminate the Fairview Fire District

Action: Petition the Town of Hyde Park and The Town of Poughkeepsie to end the unfair fire tax on the residents within the Fairview District by the following:

- 1- Dissolve the fire district and add the whole of the dissolved district to the adjoining fire districts within the Towns of Hyde Park and Poughkeepsie.
- 2 – An Alternative is: Alter the boundaries of the fire district to exclude a portion of its territories and in particular the not for profits that are the major source of the emergency responses without contributing to the support of the district.

1-Marist College, 2-Saint Francis Hospital's complete properties, 3-Hudson River Psychiatric Center, 4-Hillcrest House and Homeless Shelter, 5-Dutchess County Community College and 6- all other properties that do not pay fire taxes including the following: NYS DOT Highway Facilities, Dutchess County E 911/Fire Training Center, Town Water Pumping and Treatment Plant , Hudson River Boat House, Dutchess County Mental Health Buildings, Hyde Park Sports Complex on Creek Road, Town of Poughkeepsie Park "Quiet Cove", and The Children's Home. Note that all of these properties are located within the roughly 4 ½ square mile Fairview Fire District. This is an unlikely alternative. It will not happen because someone must protect these institutions. Fairview District has the experience, equipment and has already incurred the expenses to do the job. Therefore, we are only left with the first option, dissolve the fire district.

Note: The inequity of the Fairview Fire District costs relative to the adjoining districts - on the percentage of 2008 property tax bill:

Fairview Fire Dist. within the Town of Hyde Park	58.1%
Hyde Park Fire Dist. within the Town of Hyde Park	13.4%
Fairview Fire Dist. within the Town of Poughkeepsie	44.6%
Arlington Fire Dist. within the Town of Poughkeepsie	28.9%

Why should the cost of protecting these facilities be the responsibility of 2199 Taxpayers only? The 2008 Budget was \$ 3,210,700.

In 2008, for Hyde Park, the Tax increase was 34.8%. The 2009 budget is complete. However, we should expect future budgets will increase again, due to the additional emergency services required by this year's new Marist College dorms, the future Dutchess Community College dorms and a new five year union contract agreed to by the Fairview Fire District Board of Commissioners.

Fairview Fire District Taxes cause home buyers to go elsewhere:

Recently, a realtor requested tax information from the Town of Hyde Park about a home for sale within the Fairview Fire district on West Dorsey Lane. She was advised to look one block further north, on Holt Road, where land taxes for a comparable property would be at least \$ 3,000.00 less a year! The decline of home values in the Fairview Fire District is made worse by the high fire rates. Thus, the tax-exempt entities become the only interested buyers, further degrading the tax base.

Brief History:

Fairview Fire District was founded in 1910.

On February 11, 1929, the Fairview Fire District was created and, with that, the first paid firefighter, Sal Lozier, was hired. Over the years as the volunteer ranks diminished and the district became more developed, more paid firefighters were hired. At that time (1950s -1970s), the District was much different from what it is today. Marist College was home only to the Marist Brothers Order (it opened to lay students in 1960 and became a coeducational institution 1966 to 1968). The Hudson River Psychiatric Center had its own fire department. Dutchess Community College (founded 1957) did not exist, being a former TB Hospital and farm land. Saint Francis Hospital had two wings and only three additional buildings, and Saint Andrews on the Hudson (now the Culinary Institute of America opened 1972) had a few priests, one building and a chapel.

The district once had a strong industrial base, including such companies as:

Western Printing & Lithographing Company, Schatz-Federal Bearings, Poughkeepsie Steel, Fairview Foundry Inc., Poughkeepsie Foundry & Machine Co., Blocksom Company, Hamilton Press, John Arborio Construction, Woodcliffe Amusement Park, Kem Cards, Clay's Service Station, Fairview Service Station, Hyson' Garage, Bridge City Distributors, J.C. Paper Co., a Grand Union Market, Frank's/ Skinner's Bar , Wilbert Burial Vault Works, Merchants Press, Fitchett Bros. Dairy, Windsor Building Supply, Hoe Bowl Bowling Alley and other small and larger businesses. Most of these companies have left the tax role; note how many are now part of the expansion program of the (tax free) Marist College campus. Taxpaying Wilbert Burial Vaults is now becoming a church. A few of these good businesses have been replaced by new ones, but other properties remain vacant at near bankruptcy values on the tax role.

At one time the number of taxpaying parcels was higher and the district had a stronger and larger residential community:

Many homes around Saint Francis Hospital have been purchased by the hospital for its expansion and have become offices, laboratories and parking lots, all part of the new, larger, tax free Saint Francis Hospital Complex. Further, each time an emergency helicopter lands at Saint Francis, the Fairview Fire District fire trucks and staff must be there for security and fire protection in case of a helicopter crash. Marist College's amazing growth has come in part at the expense of the Fairview Fire District taxpayers. Taxpaying parcels and homes continue to become part of its tax free expanded campus.

Fairview Fire District's \$ 500,000 Ladder Truck # 41-45 was purchased solely for the need to protect the multi-story buildings of the District's tax-free properties:

The # 41-45 truck with a 100 foot ladder was not necessary for the small homes within our district. Its half million dollar expense was required only because of the growth of the tax exempt properties: Marist College, Saint Francis Hospital, Hudson River Psychiatric Center and Dutchess Community College, and the other tax exempt properties.

Finally, our elected officials have done little to change the inequity of the Fairview District Tax:

On our State level, Senator Stephen Saland, N.Y.S. Senate and Assemblyman Joel Miller, N.Y.S. Assembly both represent our district. And while they have introduced legislation they claim would have provided us some aid, neither bill passed committee. It would appear our state government is unconcerned with any mere "local issues". On the County level, County Legislator James R. Doxsey of District #1 has been our best supporter and hardest working advocate. He lives in the Fairview Fire district and knows firsthand the problems. He has worked very hard on all levels including; the fire district, the state, county and town elected officials to find a solution. He has met all sides including Marist College, Dutchess Community College, Saint Francis Hospital and our Fairness For Fairview Group to broker a settlement. In the county legislature, Jim Doxsey, Diane Nash, District #4, and Dan Kuffner, District # 7 have all been supportive of the Fairview Fire District and our plight. Unfortunately, they have been unable to convince the other county legislators to formally address our issues. Our small district has very few votes and little clout to sway the county legislature! Even worse, our County Executive William Steinhaus has shown he has no interest in Fairview's existence. He has repeatedly refused to meet with any representatives of the State, County, both Towns or Fire Commissioners to deal with the Fairview issues. Our Town Supervisors and Councilpersons sympathize with the district's problem, but they need our help to make a change!

Conclusion:

As Fairview Fire District Taxpayers, we have endured this unfair tax burden too long!

Without the state, county and towns' financial help, why should Fairview taxpayers continue to fund the fire department? Why should we be solely responsible for fire protection of the colleges, hospitals and all public lands without reimbursement? Consolidation between our district and any other district would seem to be out of the question, because of all the financial baggage that our district carries. Unless we force our towns to terminate the Fairview Fire District there will not be any change! It would be political suicide for those in town office to suggest a merger. We must force the issue! **Our only alternative is to demand our town boards to abolish the Fairview Fire District!** Only through our action can we force the State, County and both Towns to take responsibility of their portion of the financial crisis and force the need for the "not for profits" to pay some form of their fair share.

Please sign the Petition!!!

Note: Thank you to Valarie Hail for her research of the law. Without her hard work these petitions would not have been possible!