

Jordanelle residents protest fire fee increase

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SPECIAL TO THE WAVE

On Thursday, October 13, homeowners in the Jordanelle area attended a public hearing at the Jordanelle Fire Station to protest a fire assessment proposed by the Wasatch County Fire Board. County records show that Jordanelle property owners have paid approximately thirty-one percent of the total Wasatch County taxes, not including additional fees charged to them as part of the Jordanelle Fire Assessment Area. Many of the owners objected to the fact that they are the only special fire assessment area in Wasatch County, paying fees for fire protection in addition to the county-wide property taxes for the Wasatch County Fire District.

In an interview prior to the public meeting, Steve Farrell, Chairman of the Wasatch County Council, confirmed that Jordanelle owners were paying the only fire fees in the county in addition to their county taxes because the Jordanelle Fire Station is the only full-time fire station in Wasatch County. He stated that all other fire stations in the county were strictly volunteer stations.

Farrell stated, "I think another benefit that this station provides to the valley is we have the most expertise up here in terms of fire fighters. The full-time firemen, they've got the most training and most education related to it, most experience, and there's a lot of classes being held here for the valley volunteers to take advantage of that training, so there's an indirect benefit right there is that the training done here helps the valley."

When asked to respond to Farrell's comments about the fire station, Ted Browne, incoming president of the Homes at Deer Mountain HOA said, "There is no factual question about whether the Jordanelle Fire Station is a great asset for all of Wasatch County. Not only are the majority of calls serving county residents along Highway 40, the Jordanelle fire station responds to every major fire in Wasatch County. This professional fire station should be paid for by all of the residents of Wasatch County as it serves the entire county and all county residents benefit from its existence."

Since 1999, owners in the Jordanelle Fire Assessment area have been charged \$12.15 monthly per equivalent residential unit (ERU). The proposed resolution would increase the assessment for improved properties slightly over one hundred percent.

According to the Notice of Proposed Assessment Area Designation dated September 7, 2011, the proposed assessment would charge owners of improved property \$25 per month per residential unit, owners of

Fire

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month per platted lot, and owners of unimproved property \$6.66 per month per equivalent residential unit of approved density determination.

The Notice of Proposed Assessment stated that protests must be filed by the close of the meeting and that "there must be at least fifty percent of the amount charged in that tier to defeat the proposed assessment."

Attorney Jodi Hoffman, representing Cummings Land and Livestock, said, "What I can tell you just to kind of ease people's minds, I turned in sufficient protests by the property owners to defeat this

assessment and I think there are others that have submitted independent of the ones that I have gathered."

The meeting ended with the appointment of two homeowners, Mike Godfrey, President of the Owners Association at the Lodge at Stillwater and Barney Saunders, President of the Fox Bay HOA, as "observers" in the counting of protests.

When asked when homeowners would find out the results of the count, Farrell said, "We'll set up a time to go through the protests and then the board will take action on this at the next fire board meeting which will be November 3rd. And at that time if it passes we'll look at the implementation of it. If it doesn't pass we'll look at other options."