

February 3, 2012

Special Message from Friends of Delray

The new Fire Tax: You thought you killed it, but it's back.

On January 17th the Commission listened as hundreds of residents came to City Hall to protest the proposed new tax on houses located in Delray Beach. Under the proposal, every house would be required to pay an assessment each year, based either on the square footage or a flat fee. The January 17th meeting saw one of the largest turnouts of residents from all neighborhoods in many years. After hearing comments from the public for a couple of hours, the Commission voted 3 to 1 not to proceed with the tax, but to seek other budget cuts to close a budget gap. However, on February 1st City Manager David Harden sent a memo to the Mayor and Commissioners stating, **"It is the opinion of staff that those who spoke at the hearing do not represent the majority view of our community, but rather a minority of our citizens who adamantly oppose the assessment"**. Who are the "staff" that came to the conclusion that hundreds in attendance from neighborhoods in the east to those in the west, both black and white, were not representative? 5 candidates for the Commission all spoke out against the proposal. So much for the voice of the people.

In the February 1st memo, Mr. Harden urged the Commission to consider the new tax on Delray houses once again, and he attached a list of possible budget cuts that he knew were politically difficult.

Commissioner Carney does not seem inclined to support Mr. Harden's proposal. But the Mayor and other Commissioners do. Just 2 weeks after turning it down, they seem ready to introduce this new assessment on Delray houses to plug a \$3,200,000 hole in the budget for the current year. (The current year is half finished by the way. Not an impressive job of planning.)

The new tax is to be discussed once more at City Hall on Monday, February 6th at 6PM at a Commission workshop and again at the regular meeting of the Commission on Tuesday, February 7th.

Some city employees seem to have been encouraged to attend and to speak in favor of the proposal. So now the question is: do you represent the will of the residents, or do unnamed City Hall "staff" who claim to speak for you?

You probably will not be able to speak on Monday night at the workshop, so if you wish to express your opinion (once again) we suggest you attend on Tuesday night's regular Commission meeting. In addition, you can send the Mayor and each Commissioner your opinion:

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Thanks for your attention from Friends of Delray.