



City of Belle Isle

Office of the Mayor

To: City Manager and City Council

From: Mayor Brooks

Date: March 11, 2013

Re: Orange County Fire and Emergency Medical Services Agreement

As you know, Belle Isle's contract with Orange County for Fire and Emergency Medical Services constitutes the single largest line item in the city's budget. The City of Belle Isle has no control over this ever escalating cost, which is why the city manager began evaluating ways to reduce the cost without compromising AT ALL the level or quality of our service.

Under the city's prior fire and emergency medical services agreement with Orange County which began in 2001-02, we mutually agreed to an MSTU rate that was 7.5% lower than the prior agreement based on the fact that Belle Isle properties have higher property values and appreciate in value more rapidly than average Orange County properties on which the fire / emergency services MSTU is based. Both Orange County and the City of Belle Isle agreed at that time that this was a fair and equitable arrangement. However, when negotiations for renewal of that agreement took place in 2010, even though the same rationale of the prior agreement still applies, Orange County would not agree to the same contract, and thus eliminated the reduced rate over three years. In the time since we signed the 2001 agreement, Orange County has not added any additional stations or equipment to serve Belle Isle yet our costs have gone up over \$341,000 from \$786,887 in 2000-01 to \$1,127,968 in 2012-13, on an MSTU rate Orange County charges of 2.2437 mils in ad valorem property taxes. Furthermore, they are projected to increase this next year to \$1,176,899 for 2013-14.

For these reasons, I recommend the City separate out what costs our property owners pay in the Orange County MSTU tax for the fire and emergency medical services we receive and indicate them separately on the property tax bills so that citizens will understand what they are paying for these services.

Also, for your information, I am making the following recommendation to the City Manager for his consideration. When the city began evaluating the initiative of starting a fire department, I then stated publicly that the only way to move forward with such an initiative would be if the alternative would provide the same or improved service at the same or more efficient cost. With the information we have been presented, I am not convinced that this is possible by starting a Belle Isle Fire Department. Rather, I believe that the most prudent thing to do is to immediately suspend consideration of a Belle Isle Fire Department, release Fire Chief Stanley to seek further employment with our appreciation for his brief service, and to continue under the current agreement we have with Orange County for fire service and emergency medical service.

I appreciate the City Manager's efforts to control costs in our city without compromising quality, and thank him for tackling a very challenging issue with patience and respect for due process and consideration.