

Ebbetts Pass Fire District



May 24, 2006

Dear Citizens:

I would like to take a few minutes of your time and comment about two recent Letters To The Editor that appeared in the May 15 issue of the Union Democrat entitled "Taxes Misused" and the May 23 edition of the Calaveras Enterprise entitled "Shell game hides tax of Arnold Station." The letters were submitted by Doug Rischbieter and Mike Francis who once again allege that the twice voter-approved special taxes supporting the District's paramedic and ambulance service are unnecessary and misused.

Rather than try to legitimately debate these allegations through a forum of writing and responding to "Letters To The Editor" in local newspapers, I encourage any citizen who is concerned about what they read to come to the fire station, sit down with me and find out for yourself if what they are saying is really the truth. District Board and committee meetings are always open to the public, the District's financial records and budgets are available for review and the Board encourages public input and scrutiny.

If you do elect to come in, review District records and documents and spend the necessary time to gain a full understanding of how your special tax dollars are spent, and if you are willing to spend some more time to become educated about the planning and decision making process the District went through that led to building the new fire station, you will have done more homework than Mr. Rischbieter or Mr. Francis ever did.

During my 19 year tenure as Fire Chief I can only recall Mr. Rischbieter attending three Board Meetings, all of which had to do with putting Measure D on the ballot. I have never seen Mr. Francis at a Board Meeting. They have never ask me to show them how the District tracks expenditures of the special tax dollars collected and they have never given me an opportunity to dispel their concerns about special tax dollars being diverted for other uscs. Until they take the time do their homework, their allegations and accusations will continue to be based upon unsubstantiated assumptions.

Furthermore, the planning and construction of the new fire station has been a regular agenda item, open for public input and discussion, at every monthly Board meeting since February 2002. Not once did either of them attend a meeting to provide their input as to how big the new fire station should be, nor did they express their concern over cost, nor did they provide suggestions as to where the station would be better located.

I bring this to your attention only because I think it is important that you evaluate and weigh the legitimacy of the information being used to further their agenda, which is to have the special taxes rescinded. It is not only frustrating but difficult for me to understand how they could have come to all these conclusions and can make all these accusations about the special taxes and the new fire station without doing any real homework.

Citizens
May 24, 2006
Page 2

That being said, in all fairness to their position, it is also important that citizens verify the legitimacy of the information being presented to the community by the Fire District as well. I encourage citizens to come to the fire station, look at our special tax budgets and ask questions about the new fire station before you draw any conclusions about what is written in the newspaper. This seems a more honest and trustworthy approach to finding out the truth than for the District to defend itself by continually having to write responses to all of the allegations in their contentious letters to the editor.

Mr. Rischbieter and Mr. Francis have every right to be opposed to the special taxes and, if they believe that the District shouldn't be providing paramedic and ambulance services, they are certainly entitled to that belief. Instead of continually writing scathing letters to the editors in pursuit of their cause, I would encourage Mr. Rischbieter and Mr. Francis to redirect their energies by attending Board meetings and learn all they can about how the District's finances really work, learn all they can about what's at risk within this community and what it really takes to deliver a high level of emergency fire and medical services that mitigate those risks. It may or may not change their position or their agenda but at least the debate becomes more open, honest and legitimate.

Respectfully Submitted For Your Consideration,



Warren Wilkes
Fire Chief
Ebbetts Pass Fire District