

Tuesday, July 03, 2018

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Re: June 25, 2018 Public Hearing- Oral and Written Petitions

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for attending the James Island Public Service District (JIPSD) Public Hearing on June 25, 2018. I was happy to see our residents passionate about the work of JIPSD.

As a fellow resident of James Island, the decisions and actions of JIPSD and the elected Commission also have a direct impact on my personal life. As your Commissioner, I have worked to maintain a balance to my decisions; attempting to ensure just cause with all decisions that impact both my constituents and the functions of JIPSD. Unfortunately, this means not everyone involved will always be completely happy with my decisions.

While listening to your input during the recent Public Hearing, I heard a lot of statements that seem to be misinformed. I believe with clarification, I can put to rest some of the misgivings I heard. I compiled a list of all the comments raised during the Public Hearing. Next, I worked directly with the associates of JIPSD to address the comments and I have attached a detailed response hereto.

JIPSD is dedicated to public service excellence. Upon reading the attached response from JIPSD you are still left with questions, I encourage you to reach out to us! All of us with the JIPSD are here to help you find the information you need.

Sincerely,


Bill Cubby Wilder, JIPSD Commission Chair

JIPSD Responses to Public Hearing of June 25, 2018: Residential Statements

JIPSD Commission Meetings

JIPSD Commission meetings are currently held on the fourth Monday of every month at 6 p.m. in the conference room of the JIPSD main complex on Signal Point Road. The Commission may vote to schedule additional meetings as business needs demand them. The conference room the Commission meets in is the largest meeting space JIPSD currently owns.

Notice of Commission meetings are posted on the JIPSD website, JIPSD social media, sent to the Post and Courier for publication, and posted on the two information signs JIPSD owns on the island (one on Folly Road, one on Harbor View Road). JIPSD follows the laws set forth by the Freedom of Information Act and will send a notice of an upcoming meeting to anyone who makes a request. To be added to the JIPSD mailing list, simply email your contact information to jipsdinfo@jipsd.org.

Relocation of Fire Station 1

The discussion to replace Fire Station 1 began several years ago. Fire Station 1 and Fire Station 2 are both approaching 60 years old. However, JIPSD decided to replace Fire Station 1 first as it is the busiest and most centrally located on the Island.

Initially, JIPSD planned to demolish the existing station and rebuild on-site. Unfortunately, this option was taken away from JIPSD due to the Camp and Folly Road intersection improvements.

It took time to analyze the acceptable locations Fire Station 1 could be moved to so as to not reduce the response time for our residents. Once an area was selected, JIPSD pursued negotiations with the owners of the lots. Negotiations are wrapping up and JIPSD plans to occupy a new station mid to late 2020.

Extensive research, negotiations and major "hiccups" have all contributed to the time it has taken to move forward with the relocation of Fire Station 1. If anyone has additional questions regarding the project, please contact Chief Chris Seabolt, Fire Chief, at seaboltc@jipsd.org or call 843-270-1556.

Tax Increase

JIPSD uses tax revenues to pay for Solid Waste, Fire and Rescue services. Wastewater services are not funded by tax revenue.

JIPSD understands the impact of a tax increase on the residents, especially those living on a fixed income. However, for JIPSD to continue to provide the services residents expect and deserve, taxes will sometimes have to increase. Unfortunately, JIPSD is affected by inflation just as a resident is affected. Gasoline prices increase, health care costs increase, utility rates increase, rising vehicle maintenance expenses... all affecting JIPSD bottom line. JIPSD will always remain fiscally responsible and ethical.

When you see the headline "JIPSD increases taxes by 13%", it is a little jarring. The headline implies JIPSD's tax increase will make your property taxes increase by 13%. That is simply not true.

A more accurate headline would read "JIPSD approved a 7.5 millage rate increase". "Millage Rate" is the amount per \$1,000 of property value that is used to calculate property taxes. Simply put, 1 mill is equal to \$1 in taxes per

\$1,000 of a property's assessed value. Below are a couple of examples of how the increase will impact owner occupied, primary residence property owners.

	<u>Example 1</u>	<u>Example 2</u>
Appraised Value	\$250,000	\$350,000
Assessment Ratio*	<u>x 4%</u> <u>x 4%</u>	
Assessed Value	\$10,000	\$14,000
Millage Increase	<u>x0.0075</u> (7.5 mills)	<u>x0.0075</u> (7.5 mills)
	\$75 annual increase (\$6.25/month)	\$105 annual increase (\$8.75/month)

** The assessment ratio used in the examples above are based on owner occupied/primary residence properties. For commercial properties, rental properties or other non-primary residence properties, the rate will be higher.*

For any additional questions regarding the JIPSD tax increase, please contact Susan Gladden, Chief Financial Officer, at gladdens@jipsd.org or call 843-998-6176.

Audit

JIPSD undergoes an external audit annually. An external audit/accounting firm reviews all JIPSD financial policies, procedures and reporting. Typically, a completed audit report is expected by the end of the calendar year, which reports on the previous fiscal year. A copy of the report is published to our website along with other important documents such as our budget, transparency reports and financial statements. For any additional questions regarding the JIPSD audit, please contact Susan Gladden, Chief Financial Officer, at gladdens@jipsd.org or call 843-998-6176.

Solid Waste Automation

JIPSD is in the process of fully automating garbage collection. Phase one of this process was completed in 2016 when JIPSD issued roll carts that are compatible with automated collection vehicles. As funding permits, the next phase will involve replacing the garbage trucks with new automated vehicles. Through natural attrition (current associates leaving JIPSD on their own), no associate will lose their job. Positions will simply not be filled.

For any additional questions regarding the Solid Waste automated collection plan, please contact Walter Desmond, Director of Solid Waste Services, at desmondw@jipsd.org or call 843-998-6191.

Town of James Island Proposal

JIPSD is simply unable to accept funding from the Town of James Island at this time. The Town and JIPSD are two totally separate entities governed each by their own elected officials from their respective service areas. Both have their own source of tax revenue and enabling laws. The legality is questionable when it comes to one entity using the tax revenue of another entity. For any additional questions regarding the Town of James Island proposal, please contact Robert Wise, JIPSD Administrator at wiser@jipsd.org or call 843-998-6178.

Additional Funding Sources

JIPSD will always work to find additional, legal sources of funding. Here are a couple of examples on how JIPSD has found additional funding sources in the past:

Since 2002, JIPSD has been performing preventative maintenance and repairs on all Folly Beach solid waste vehicles and fire trucks. The average income per year from the last seven years is \$35,547.

Since approximately 2002, JIPSD Fire Department has applied for and received grant funding totaling more than \$300,000. Grant funds have paid for things like the Fire Safety House, gas detectors, thermal imagers and SCBAs (self-contained breathing apparatuses). JIPSD Fire Chief Chris Seabolt researched grant opportunities to help offset the cost of a replacement fire station but was only able to find opportunities for rural areas. James Island is not considered a rural area.

Inter-governmental Agreements

JIPSD is already a part of some inter-governmental agreements. One example is the preventative maintenance and repair service agreement between JIPSD and Folly Beach mentioned above. Another, and more well-known, is the automatic aid agreement between JIPSD, City of Charleston, City of North Charleston, Saint Johns Fire Department and Saint Andrews Fire Department.

The automatic aid agreement between local fire departments ensures rapid response to medical, fire and rescue emergencies regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. For residents on James Island, this means that a City of Charleston fire department may respond to a JIPSD resident if they are closer so critical care can be started sooner.

The automatic aid agreement has not had a significant impact on JIPSD's budget compared to other agencies because JIPSD does not typically respond to emergencies off James Island. The agreement has allowed greater services to our residents in the way of decreased property losses, faster medical care and more efficient and safe operations for our firefighters. For any additional questions regarding the automatic aid agreement, please contact Chief Chris Seabolt, Fire Chief, at seaboltc@jipsd.org or call 843-270-1556.

Safety

JIPSD values the safety of associates. This is not just a statement. It is a summation of all JIPSD does to ensure every associate can make it home to their families each day.

At all times, associates are supplied with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Associates receive OSHA training and JIPSD emergency operations training. JIPSD has been able to reduce the cost of outside training thanks to a more cost-effective vendor, however, quality has not been reduced.

Some safety items that were budgeted in the past on their own budget line have been moved to be included with other budget items. For example, "safety medical supplies" have simply been moved to "Safety Supplies/Equipment".

For any additional questions regarding the JIPSD budget for safety items, please contact Susan Gladden, Chief Financial Officer, at gladdens@jipsd.org or call 843-998-6176.

New Developments

James Island has had a boom in new developments recently. JIPSD does not have the authority to allow or disallow new developments. Anytime a new development is added to the City of Charleston on James Island, JIPSD receives no tax revenue from the new properties.

However, developers pay for all construction costs for new developments. Ownership of wastewater main extensions on James Island are transferred to JIPSD upon completion of the project and acceptance by JIPSD.

Also, residents pay their sewer bill based on where their property is located. Properties located in the City of Charleston will pay CWS and properties located in the JIPSD will pay the JIPSD.

If a home or business is connected to a JIPSD wastewater line but they are in the City of Charleston, CWS will pay a transportation fee to JIPSD every month. Customers do not see this as it is all handled internally.

Remember, wastewater services are provided without a single penny of tax revenues. Wastewater services are provided using revenue collected from monthly wastewater bills. At no time are services provided for "free" or "given away" to residents or developers.

For any additional questions regarding wastewater services, please contact David Hoffman, Director of Wastewater Services, at hoffmand@jipsd.org or call 843-998-6188.