



To: Cherry Point Fire District Residents and Businesses:

You have received a letter from Jasper County dated November 2018 advising you that the County will terminate the long-standing contract with the City of Hardeeville to provide fire protection and the County has told you that it is in the best interests of its residents and businesses. The County has not given you the reasons why they believe this and are asking you to trust their judgement.

The City of Hardeeville strongly disputes the claim that it is in the best interests of its residents and businesses. The City of Hardeeville believes that the County is making an unwise financial decision in the use of your tax dollars and the additional ad valorem tax you pay for fire protection. We submit the following information to you:

- Jasper County plans to invest in a new fire station on Mead Rd 1.8 miles from the Hardeeville fire station on Argent Blvd. that is currently servicing your district.
- The total cost of this investment for building, land, and equipment is projected by the County to be \$607,000 and operational costs will be approximately \$527,000 per year.
- The County does not plan to equip the new stations with new, unused fire trucks. Hardeeville has newer, more modern equipment.
- The County plan provides for fewer full-time trained staff than the City of Hardeeville. This contributes to the higher ISO rating. As noted by the County's letter, the higher ratings are worse, not better.
- The County states that this higher ISO rating may not affect insurance rates. That may or may not be true for businesses who have fire suppression systems, but there is a high chance that it will cause an increase to residential insurance rates.
- The City of Hardeeville has consistently increased the number of trained firefighters that it employs, which is a key element in the betterment of ISO ratings. Additionally, the City's Firefighters are qualified as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). This qualification makes them adequately skilled to handle medical emergencies.
- Jasper County plans to hire a consultant to lower the ISO ratings. The primary factors are staffing and station placement. Please note that this consultant will be hired in 2019; well after this decision was announced.

In summary, the County proposes to renovate an existing building on Mead Rd. at a capital cost of \$607,000, 1.8 miles from a better equipped, properly designed fire station. This new facility will be staffed with fewer firefighters than Hardeeville, and, based on nationally standard ISO ratings, deliver a lower quality service.



In response, the City delivered a comprehensive proposal to provide all of southern Jasper County with Fire and Emergency Services that would save Jasper County \$2.5 M in capital investment and an annual savings of \$705,773 each year in operational costs for both services. In spite of the obvious benefit to the taxpayers of Jasper County, the proposal was rejected. The City cannot explain why because all discussions were conducted in private.

To conclude, the County Council deliberated for months in private Executive Sessions without input from the City or you the Public. The City of Hardeeville believes you, the taxpayers of Jasper County, should have a voice in this controversial decision. Finally, on February 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 in Council Chambers in Ridgeland, Clementa C. Pinckney Government Building, 358 Third Avenue, County Council is asking for public input - after they have already purchased the property on Mead Rd. Please let the Councils of Hardeeville and Jasper County know your evaluation of the facts. Come to Ridgeland on the 19<sup>th</sup> or email your County representatives. Below are the email addresses of both Councils.

City of Hardeeville, SC

Mayor Harry Williams, [hwilliams@hardeevillesc.gov](mailto:hwilliams@hardeevillesc.gov)

Mayor Pro Tempore John Carroll, [jcarroll@hardeevillesc.gov](mailto:jcarroll@hardeevillesc.gov)

Councilman Michael Sweeney, [msweeney@hardeevillesc.gov](mailto:msweeney@hardeevillesc.gov)

Councilman David Spisso, [dspisso@hardeevillesc.gov](mailto:dspisso@hardeevillesc.gov)

Councilwoman Carolyn Kassel, [ckassel@hardeevillesc.gov](mailto:ckassel@hardeevillesc.gov)

Jasper County Council

Chairman D. Thomas Johnson, [tjohnson@jaspercountysc.gov](mailto:tjohnson@jaspercountysc.gov)

Vice Chairman Henry Etheridge, [hetheridge@jaspercountysc.gov](mailto:hetheridge@jaspercountysc.gov)

Councilwoman Barbara Clark, [bclark@jaspercountysc.gov](mailto:bclark@jaspercountysc.gov)

Councilman L. Martin Sauls, IV, [msauls@jaspercountysc.gov](mailto:msauls@jaspercountysc.gov)

Councilman Dr. Curtis Brantley, [cbrantley@jaspercountysc.gov](mailto:cbrantley@jaspercountysc.gov)

For additional information please log onto the City of Hardeeville's website, [www.hardeevillesc.gov](http://www.hardeevillesc.gov), on the home page.