FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 16, 2019

Voting Begins for Lehigh Acres Fire Control and Rescue District’s June 4 Special Election; Fire Chief Speaks to Community Council; Commissioners Act

Lehigh Acres, FL – The Lehigh Acres Community Council met on May 6 to hear from Fire Chief Robert DiLallo about the June 4 special referendum election on fairly sharing the costs of emergency fire, rescue and other services. The Lehigh Acres Fire Control and Rescue District (District) serves 142 square miles of subdivided parcels in eastern Lee County.

Chief DiLallo explained that previously the District moved to a demand-based method with a “non-ad valorem assessment” to fund the District. That approach has not satisfied public perception of fairness in sharing costs and is also no longer adequate to serve Lehigh Acres’ growth. He shared concerns that the District is also in jeopardy of losing its ambulance service. To address these concerns, the District is seeking approval from Lehigh Acres voters to charge $165 to every parcel plus a smaller proportional amount for any improvements on each parcel. This simplified approach has been tested and approved by Florida’s Supreme Court in other jurisdictions and should achieve the goal of making the assessment fairer to all property owners of the District.

Charles Edwards, Chair of the Community Council, said the audience was “interested” and observed afterwards, “many left with a changed and positive disposition” toward the June 4 ballot question. Commissioner Cathy Kruse, a 25+ year resident and the current Chairperson of the District’s Board of Commissioners, attended the Community Council meeting as well and shared that “this new methodology provides a more equitable formula that is more fair to home and business owners throughout the District and will provide the resources we need to improve response times of services to the families of Lehigh. It simply boils down to the issue of our ability to better provide public safety to our residents.”

Chief Dilallo has also announced that the District has posted a Quick Search feature on their website to further explain the proposal by showing voters what their new assessment would be if approved by voters. This search engine allows for searches by either (1) owner name, (2) parcel location address, or (3) tax parcel identification number. The Quick Search and other information related to the proposed assessment can be found at www.lehighfd.com/administration/page/special-election-and-fire-district-assessment-information.

Chief Dilallo added, “The first page of the Quick Search feature explains fully the amounts of identified nominal administrative charges, and how the adjustment for statutory discounts works when non-ad valorem assessments are collected on the same bill as property taxes each year. This search will give voters a better understanding of exactly how the proposed changes will affect their specific rate.”

Supervisor of Elections Tommy Doyle is conducting the election, and voting by mail has already begun. Early voting is from Tuesday, May 28, to Saturday, June 1, from 10 am to 6 pm at the East County Library. Go to https://www.lee.vote/Election-Information/Election-Dates-and-Deadlines/June-4-2019 for more election information. All voters registered as of May 6 are eligible to vote, regardless of whether they own property.

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