



Board of Commissioners
Chairwoman Cathy Kruse

Dear Fellow Lehigh Acres Property Owner,

The notice you recently received in the mail details your 2020 annual fire and rescue assessment under our current Demand-Based program approved by the voters several years ago. In lieu of property taxes, these assessments fund the facilities, equipment, and personnel associated with your fire protection and emergency rescue services. This assessment methodology does not generate the revenues necessary to cover the increasing costs of building, equipping, and staffing the additional fire stations needed, or updating our current stations and equipment to deliver the consistent response times and service levels we strive to provide and which are required by regulators.

We studied this dilemma and in March, we looked at a better assessment methodology approved by Florida's Supreme Court. On June 4th of this year, the District called a special election to move from the Demand-Based assessment system to a Simplified assessment system, which would have generated the much needed revenues to adequately fund our District as well as the additional stations mentioned above ***without raising assessments*** on most homes and businesses. Unfortunately, less than 7% of the eligible 51,117 voters turned out in that election and the referendum failed by only 369 votes.

It is likely your assessment would have been reduced under the Simplified assessment program. Under the Simplified system, 11 of 12 homeowners would have seen a reduction of cost while the assessments for most of our District's 85,000 vacant lots would have increased, creating a fairer fee structure for all property owners – and would have raised several millions for a new fire station, updating existing facilities, retaining ambulance services, and hiring additional first responders.

I encourage you to attend our public hearings and our regular meetings and provide your valued input during the public comment portion on whether or not you wish for us to revisit the Simplified assessment system or continue under the status quo. We are accountable and transparent while serving as the best community stewards possible. As always, the top priority of the Lehigh Acres Fire Control and Rescue District is to ensure the protection and safety of all our residents, businesses, visitors, and their properties. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Cathy Kruse, Chair