

Request for Millage Increase for Canebrake Fire Department

To: Mr. John Hansley, Deputy County Administrator

Cc: Mr. Lynn Ballard, Greenville County Council

From: Kyle Gilley, Secretary to the Board of Fire Control, Canebrake Fire Department

Date: 3 May 2016

Current Situation: Canebrake serves a large, rural area in Southern Greenville County. It has been in operation for 33 years. It is operated by three paid firemen, and 30 volunteers, operating 14 trucks out of 4 stations. The population is growing as agricultural land is converted to residential. Call volume has doubled in the last 5 years.

Many of the houses in the district are more than 1 mile from the nearest station or even hydrant, requiring tanker truck capacity for hauling water. Most of these trucks are 'home-made' or retrofitted trucks, and, much of the rescue equipment is home-made.

Over the past 3 years, Canebrake added one full time staff member, and began some part time staffing. This has improved call response dramatically after hours, and it allows Chief Terry to participate in Chief's meetings and other day time activities taking him away from the Station. In addition, the Department has upgraded equipment using grants and the improved millage from Greenville County. Examples:

- 1) Provided physicals for all firemen for the first time in more than 15 years.
- 2) Upgraded the air packs for all firemen.
- 3) Began truck and hose inspections in 2016. Will begin ladder inspections in 2017.
- 4) Upgraded radios and AED with discretionary funding from Mr. Ballard and Dr. Cates
- 5) In addition, Canebrake has begun better Community Relations and will have our second annual "Open House" on May 2017. The web-site and Facebook are upgraded.

Canebrake is now able to provide much better fire protection in the District, however, there are still significant opportunities for improvement:

- 1) Having firemen 'on duty at the station' has improved, but we are still 'volunteer' during the late night and early morning. We need to have 24/7 coverage going forward. One additional full-time, and 3 'part time' firemen are needed to minimize response times.
- 2) The station will not support after-hours staffing and needs to be upgraded. Our plan is to build a new station in the 5 to 7 year time-frame.
- 3) Tanker trucks need to be replaced or repaired to maintain fire protection away from hydrants

Canebrake is still one of the lowest millage departments in Greenville County. The following chart describes the current situation very clearly:

Fire Departments in Southern Greenville County					
Department	millage	Nbr Firemen			Nbr Stations
		Full T.	Part T.	Volunteer	
Gantt	70.2	43	0	0	3
Piedmont	65.9	16	0	25	2
Donaldson	58.0	20	0	0	1
Mauldin	56.3	29	0	2	3
South Greenville	39.3	45	0	1	6
Fountain Inn	36.1	10	9	0	2
Simpsonville	32.5	45	0	0	4
Dunklin	27.9	0	0	25	3
Canebrake	25.0	3	2	30	4

This data was used at the 2016 Open House for the District to explain the current situation to the residents. It will be used again at the May 13th Open House. With these Open Houses, Facebook, and the CanebrakeFD website, our residents are well informed of what and how we're doing.

Proposals:

- 1) Canebrake will **continue to apply for grants** and to source trucks and equipment from other Fire Departments. This has worked very well for the past three years, and will continue to be the focus.
- 2) In addition, Canebrake is requesting a millage increase of 12 mils (from 25 to 37) under code 6-1-320D of millage for maintenance of reserve. This puts Canebrake 'in the middle of the pack' for millage compared to all Greenville County Fire Departments. This represents an increase of \$48 on property valued at \$100,000.

If this is approved, Canebrake will launch several actions to continue improving fire and emergency medical protection in the District. This includes adding staff, upgrading equipment, and preparing to upgrade the station to support around the clock staff.

Thank you,

Kyle Gilley, Secretary

for Chief Terry and the Board