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Chiefland city manager feels city residents should get waiver from garbage special assessment



Chiefland City Manager Mary Ellzey shares her opinion on Monday night (Sept. 10) that residents in cities with mandatory garbage pickup should not have to pay the county's new \$116 annual fee. Levy County Commissioner Lilly Rooks on Wednesday (Sept. 12) said there is a method to waive the fee for those residents, however that cannot happen this year due to deadlines for sending tax bills. The waiver for those residents can happen next year, County Commissioner Rooks said, if a majority of County Commission members vote for that. Rooks was the only county commissioner to vote against the new \$116 annual fee for residential garbage in Levy County. That fee only covers the cost for the person who delivers his or her own residential garbage to the solid waste transfer site in Bronson.

Story and Photo

By Jeff M. Hardison © Sept. 12, 2018 at 11:08 a.m.

CHIEFLAND -- Chiefland City Manager Mary Ellzey shared with the Chiefland City Commission on Monday night (Sept. 10) that she had attended the hearing the previous week in regard to the Levy County Board of County Commissioners imposing an added \$116 fee on each residential property owner who has a structure on their property.

Another meeting is scheduled for the Levy County Commission to hear input from the public in regard to special assessments that are imposed by the county government for it providing ambulance service, fire service and now as an annual fee for taking things to the solid waste transfer station (the dump).

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The next meeting is set for Sept. 18 at 6 p.m. in the Levy County Commission meeting room in the Levy County Courthouse. That Sept. 18 meeting will be the final public hearing where the County Commission can adopt special assessment fees for the year.

There is also the regular twice-monthly County Commission meeting scheduled for Sept. 18 starting at 9 a.m.

On Monday night (Sept. 10), City Manager Ellzey said she believes that people who live in cities like Chiefland, Williston and Bronson, where garbage collection is mandatory, should have a waiver from the \$116 proposed special assessment on developed residential property.

Everyone in Levy County who owns residential property that has a structure on it will notice the proposed \$116 annual fee on their tentative tax bill this year. The County Commission can impose that fee at its final public hearing on Sept. 18.

The annual fee for Chiefland city customers of Waste Pro is \$185.64, Ellzey said on Monday night. Added to that is the \$116 special fee by the county, Ellzey said. So, the \$301.64 for city residents is more than Ellzey thinks the Chiefland residents should pay.

Ellzey favors the county waiving this special assessment fee on city residents in cities where there is mandatory garbage pickup.

On Wednesday (Sept. 12), a city resident in southern Levy County shared her perspective.

Drinda Merritt of Inglis said Inglis does not have mandatory garbage pickup in that city. However, Merritt added, she pays Waste Pro to collect her residential garbage.

Speaking as a city resident who pays a collection fee to a provider, and not speaking as the mayor of the city, Merritt said she understands the County Commission taking the step it took.

Merritt said she has attended the county budget workshops and regular meetings. She knows that taking money from a reserve fund to subsidize the cost of operations is not a good management practice.

Merritt said people who use garbage collection services like Waste Pro and who own residential property in Levy County are still going to pay the fee, even though they don't take their garbage to the dump.

Also, on Wednesday (Sept. 12), Levy County Commissioner Lilly Rooks addressed, via a telephonic interview, City Manager Ellzey's idea about a waiver of the fee for city residents where there is mandatory garbage pickup.

Commissioner Rooks, who is the consistent lone dissenter in the 4-1 votes leading to the imposition of the \$116 fee, said there is a method to provide a waiver for certain residential property owners.

As for a waiver for residential property owners in cities with mandatory garbage service, Rooks said, that is not going to be possible for this year's collection of taxes. It could happen next year if three or more County Commissioners voted in favor of that, Rooks said.

As for people who have been taking their garbage to the solid waste transfer station, that 75-cents per bag fee for residential customers is going to become a zero fee, given that the County Commission adopts its assessments as currently appears to be extremely likely.

A person would have to take 154 bags of garbage to the dump at 75-cents per bag to equal \$116. That is about three bags of residential garbage per week.

As for Waste Pro and other commercial haulers, the tipping fees for residential

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garbage collected in Levy County will be waived, Levy County Solid Waste Department Director Rod Hastings said during an interview on the telephone Wednesday.

Mayor Merritt said the people of Inglis are anticipating a slight reduction in the fee that they pay Waste Pro as a result of that company not having tipping fees on residential garbage it delivers from Levy County to the Levy County Solid Waste Transfer Station (the dump).

Hastings mentioned that Levy County is one of the few last counties out of Florida's 67 counties that has tipping fees for residential customers.

He added that his discussion with County Commissioner Matt Brooks in regard to satellite collection points for residential garbage in Levy County is progressing.