

# **Fire Commissioners Column.....**

**Bill Madison**

I think we've explained the issues to be considered in the special election on the levy lid lift that the fire district is requesting. Ballots should be in the voter's hands by now and are due not later than August 18<sup>th</sup>. The facts presented to the public at the two forums, in the newspapers and from the information sheets mailed to all voters pretty much tell the story. It appears that we are at an important crossroads and the results of this election will determine the future of the district.

The additional 28 cents per \$1000 is needed to continue current operations from the eight fire stations within our 375 square mile fire district and to maintain our fleet of over 40 vehicles. Belt tightening alone will no longer allow us to continue doing what we are doing today. If you look around our state you will not find another fire district that will match us for assessed valuation (over 1 billion) and a call volume (over 1100 calls per year) that operates more efficiently. Our personnel costs are about 44% of our budget. Most fire departments' personnel costs are between 85 and 90%. In the past 10 years, our calls for emergency assistance have increased by nearly 80% and our fire levy has decreased by 36%. During that same 10 year period, we have replaced three fire stations, six of eight fire engines, six of eight brush trucks, numerous staff response vehicles, protective turn-out gear, all pagers and hand-held radios. The fire district has not received any increases in the fire levy rate in the past 10 years! I believe the fire district has been an exceptional steward of the taxpayer's money. We have secured grants of over \$600,000 to either build stations or buy equipment. We use a competitive bid process for all purchases to ensure the lowest price available. Additionally, the district improved its fire protection rating in 2008 saving many homeowners money on their fire insurance premiums.

There just isn't much more to say. I urge each voter to carefully examine this issue and make an informed decision on the proposition. The results of this election will have a profound effect on the future of the fire district.