

Wake County Fire Commission Meeting July 19, 2018 Concerning Closing of Fairview Station #2

Continued Town Annexations and Shrinking Fire Tax Revenue: False

First of all, this is a false assumption. The Wake County Fire Commission would lead you to believe that eventually most all of the unincorporated areas will be annexed. But the fact is that annexations have dwindled tremendously. The days of towns going outside their area and grabbing parcels, has been ended by the State Legislature. Now 51% of landowners in an area, must vote to be annexed. The towns have already grabbed all the areas that they feasibly can. Further, anything they annex going forward, they must provide water and sewer. Because most of this area falls in the Lake Wheeler Watershed, running water and sewer becomes legally impractical. This means no annexation, and this area will remain unincorporated county land.

As to Fire Tax Revenues lets look at the facts, and ignore hypothetical conjecture. Where are the Commission and staff getting the idea that revenues are shrinking? What data do they have to support this? The fact of the matter is, that the Fire Tax revenue has increased for each of the past five years. This is based on their own data. Now they'd like you to believe that with more and more annexation, revenues will decrease. But we've shown both of those to be false. Wake County's is currently growing by nearly 25,000 people a year. These people have to have somewhere to live. Because the unincorporated county has larger tracts of land available, we are seeing subdivisions popping up everywhere. Most of these homes are in the half million to million plus dollar range.

With a Fire Tax of 9.6 cents per \$100, and increasing property values, this will continue to produce an increasing revenue stream. For point of reference, Raleigh residents pay 1.83 cents per \$100 for fire service. We, who live in the county, pay 9.6 cents per hundred, or over five times as much.

New cost-share formula premised on continued reduction in county share: Inaccurate

The facts stated above about annexation and fire district revenues, renders this new formula obsolete. The new cost-share formula is factually inaccurate.

Opportunity to Leverage Municipal Fire Service to Lower County Costs: Flawed

The County has entered into contracts with the towns to provide "cost share" services. The contracts pay the towns to cover portions of the unincorporated county, not easily covered by the 100% departments such as Fairview. The Departments that receive 100% of their funding from the County, are 100% devoted to the county.

ISO Ratings: Getting worse

The District would be going from an ISO rating of 3 to an ISO rating of 4. Lesser protection with a marked increase in response times.

ISO stands for Insurance Service Office. It scores departments to judge anticipated financial payout by insurance companies. For residential properties, the only measure ISO uses, is how close houses are together. ISO's only concern is limiting the claim to one structure. They don't judge on life saving, pet saving, or fire spreading to other parts of the house. Nope. They're only concerned with not having to payout on other claims. ISO scores are a horrible means of judging fire departments.

Today's fire departments don't just fight fire. Over half their calls are EMS related. They help with wrecks. They cut fallen trees. They assist in disasters and countless other services to the community. All ISO cares about are fire insurance claims. ISO is not a measure of fire department quality.

Effect of Changes on Volunteers: Negative

Fairview has a robust volunteer program, that they nurture, encourage, and continue to develop. Garner on the other hand, is slowly killing their volunteer program. Garner is not accepting new volunteers, and are not replacing the ones that leave. Death by attrition. Keep in mind that the Town of Garner has fire hydrants. The County does not. Both Fairview and Garner utilize volunteers to drive tankers, to supply water where there are no hydrants. If Fairview's volunteer program is thriving and Garner's is dying, who is best equipped to provide water to the unincorporated homes?

Parcels not impacted by ISO change from 3 to 4 -2997: Way wrong

2,997 parcels in the county will go from an ISO rating with Fairview of 3 (better), to an ISO rating of 4 (worse) with Garner. While it's true that this won't result in an increase in homeowner's insurance premiums, we know fire departments do much more than just fight fires.

Wake County averages 2.64 people per parcel. So, nearly 8,000 people are affected. What is important, is that if you live on one these parcels, you will see an increase in response times. Increases in response times may kill you, may kill your spouse, may kill your kids, may kill your dog, but don't worry about it, at least your insurance rates won't go up.

Ideal location Caddy Road: Not so ideal

The Caddy Road location is a very poor location. When responding, and they reach Highway 401, Garner would have to turn right. The NCDOT has closed the left hand turn across from Caddy Road. With heavy traffic on 401, and having to go down 401 to make a u-turn, this will further increase response times providing worse service.

There already exists north of Lake Wheeler a coverage gap, also called the "donut hole." The donut hole is an area partially served by Fairview Station #2, where response times can be upward of 12 minutes. Moving the station that serves this area further away from Lake Wheeler, will only exacerbate an already bad situation. Response times in the 6 to 8 minute range presently, will be pushed to 10 to 12 minutes or even greater.

The American Heart Association states that for every minute without CPR the odds of survival decrease by 10%. A delay in response of 2 to 3 minutes is the difference in living or dying.

NFPA 1710 vs NFPA 1720: 1710 is better

The National Fire Protection Association, an organization that sets standards for fire departments, decided in 1999 to come up with an accepted standard for how many people need to get to a fire, and how fast they should get there. Relying on a study by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, they wrote the NFPA 1710 standard. This standard states that the maximum travel time for the first fire truck should be no more than 4 minutes, and that all trucks should be there in 8 minutes. After developing these standards the rural volunteer departments in remote areas, decided they could not meet that standard. They petitioned NFPA to write them a more lenient standard. This standard is NFPA 1720.

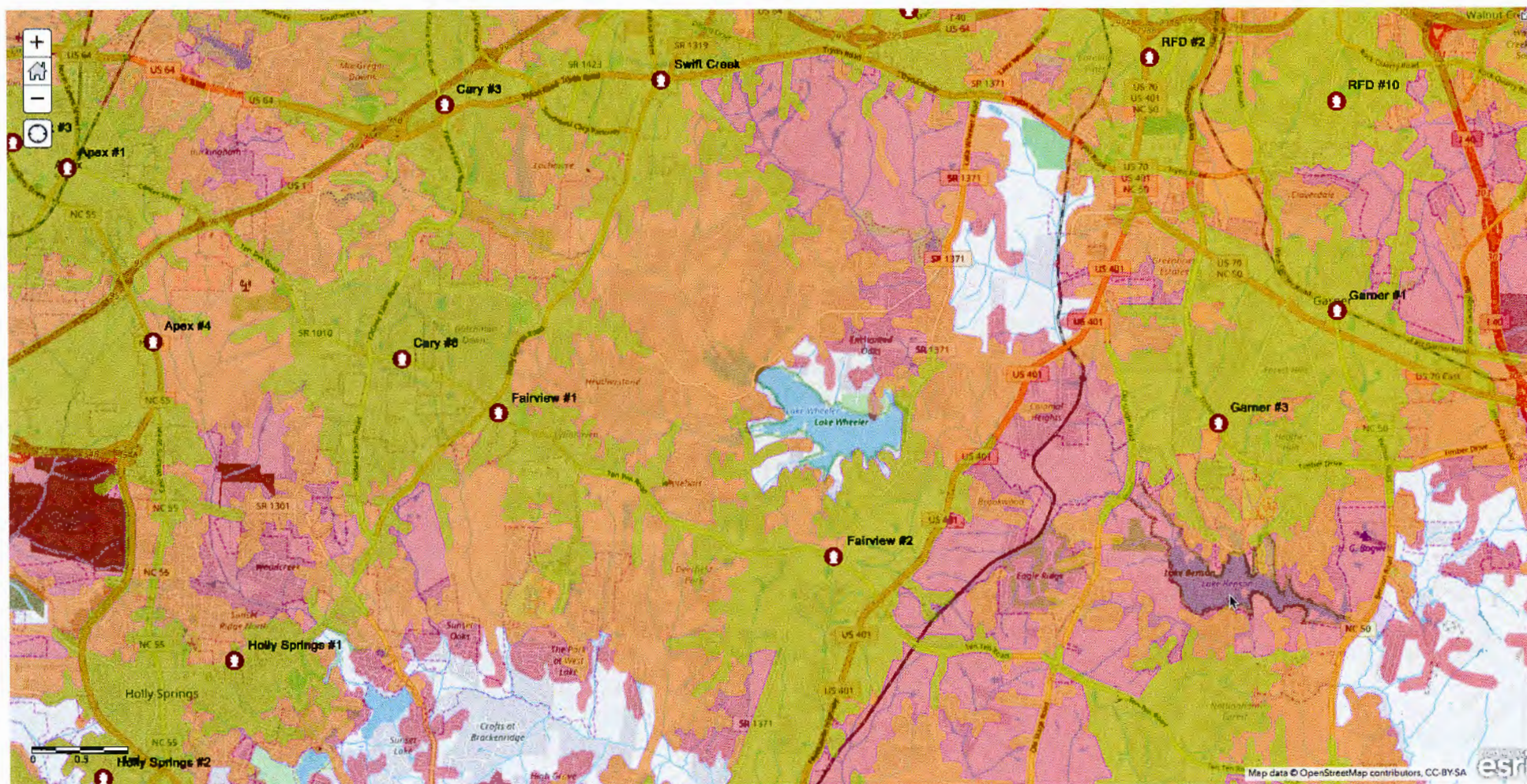
Unlike NFPA 1710, NFPA 1720 is not based in science. A fire grows 16 times its size in 3 minutes. NFPA 1720 allows up to 14 minutes for the bare minimum needed fire fighters to arrive. This difference in time allows a minor fire to become a major fire, greatly increasing the risk of losing lives.

Wake County fire stations are staffed 24/7 by well-trained, full-time, career fire fighters. NFPA 1720 was intended for volunteer, rural fire departments, in remote areas, like cornfields in Nebraska, not the suburbs of Raleigh. To apply 1720 to this area would be flat out wrong. Fire will continue to grow, whether you're driving 4 minutes, 8 minutes, or 10 minutes. The sooner fire fighters get there, the better your chances of survival.

Station construction participation is considered on a case-by-case basis: Don't

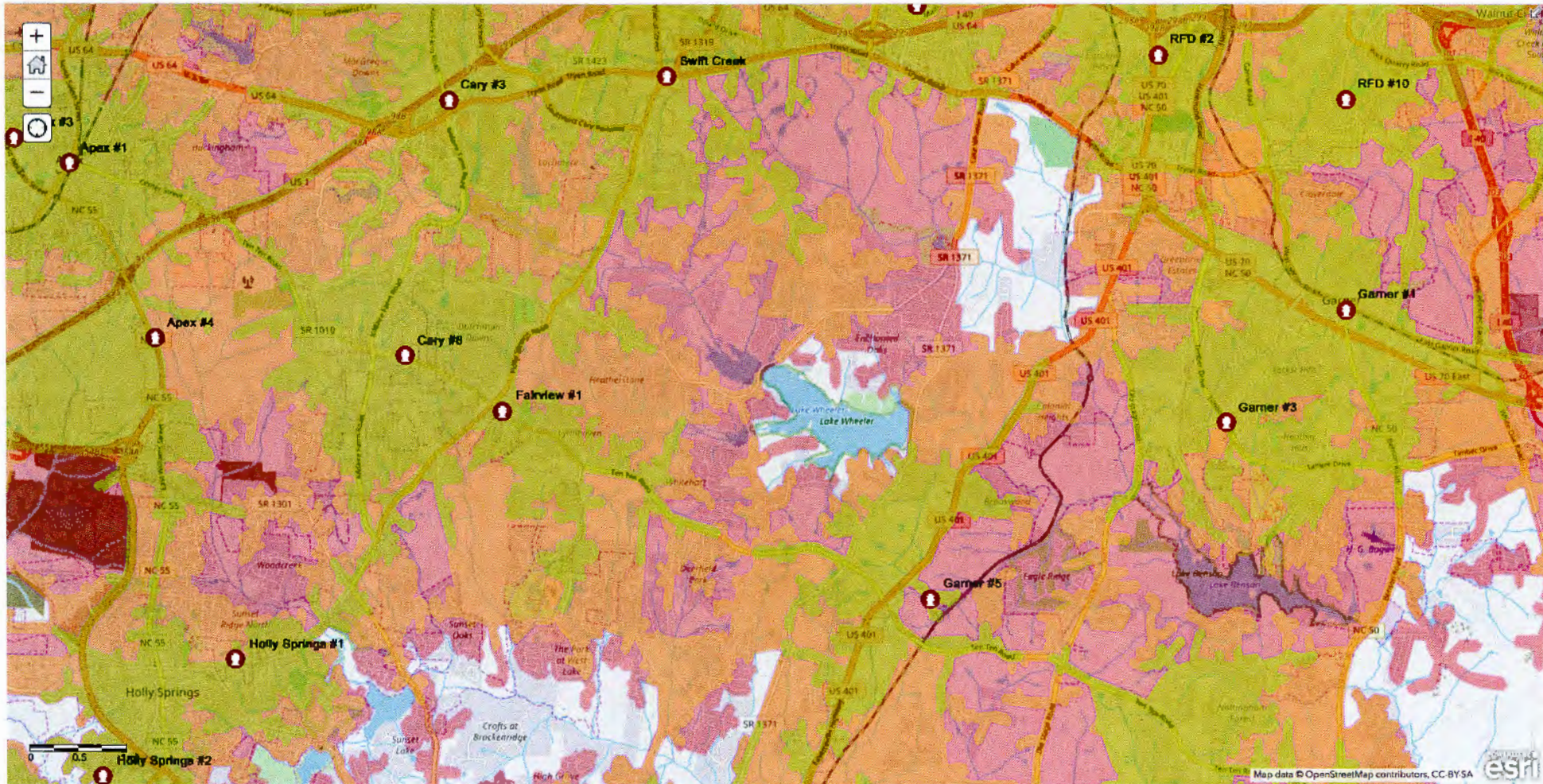
Like we've established, Wake County does not know what the cost will be. I've never committed to buy a house or a car, without knowing the price. How can this Commission commit to participate in something, when they don't know the cost?

Current Fire Station Drive Times



Green = 4 minute driving area
Orange = 6 minute driving area
Red = 8 minute driving are
Uncolored = More than 8 minute drive

Proposed Fire Station Drive Times



Green = 4 minute driving area
Orange = 6 minute driving area
Red = 8 minute driving area
Uncolored = More than 8 minute drive