

Council,

I would like to say thank you for taking the time to read this email. I would also like to thank each one of you for the time, effort and dedication you put into the city. Volunteer work is not easy, and it can take a toll on you both mentally and physically.

You were all elected to represent the city of Oakridge and to make hard decisions that nobody can make. That is a tough burden to hold. You were all elected at a time where the city is faced with an impossible budget and now you are all sitting in a lose/lose position. I do not envy your position and my heart goes out to you all.

I hope I do not come off cross with this next sentence, but I feel it is an important reminder, and reality that needs to be faced. No matter what decision you make regarding a city fee, you will make people upset. Regardless of if it is passed or not passed, this is not a situation where you are going to please everyone, but your backs are against the wall, and a decision must be made. All I ask from the leaders of the city, is that you make a decision that will benefit the community, for the long run and not make a decision with the intent to try to please a small crowd.

The decision on this public safety fee, or city utility fee, whatever it will be called, should not be looked at as just a financial burden. It is easy to view it as that because we are talking about the budget. But this fee will determine the lively hoods and safety of peoples lives. This fee will ultimately determine life or death in our community.

To look at this fee from a business aspect, I would like to address the big picture of what the fee covers. Please bear with me and read through the entire email. As a side note, I would like to clarify, when I say "emergency services" or "public safety" I am referring to the services of police, fire, and EMS

At the Police Department, you have a Chief with over 25 years of experience in law enforcement. He has been dedicated to the city and despite all the city has been through in his years of service in Oakridge alone, he has encouraged his team to stay positive, he has expressed appreciation for his team, and he has treated his team with fairness and respect. He has been honest, and he genuinely cares for the community, despite times of criticism. I have personally heard Chief Martin say he loves Oakridge.

Sgt. Mikal McPherson has been with the city for I believe 15+ years. She is also very encouraging to her team. She treats her community with honor and integrity. Sgt. McPherson is knowledgeable and has built quality relationships with stakeholders our citizens rely on. I have witness Sgt. McPherson handle difficult calls with grace and respect for the person on the other line that is sometimes in crisis or irate.

Officer Davidson has 11+ years of experience in law enforcement. Officer Cleavenger has approximately 10+ years in law enforce, plus a law degree, and is a private attorney. I have 8 years in law enforcement, and a degree in human services with a major of criminal justice.

Everyone at the police department has been dedicated to this community for years! I am the most recent to join the police department and I have been serving the city of Oakridge for over 4 years. The PD currently has 2 reserve officers that have been serving the city for well over 10 years as volunteers (they do not receive a stipend). We are not just dedicated to our community; we are part of this

community. We all have family and friends here, and we all rely on emergency services just like everyone else. We love our community and show up daily to serve the community to our fullest capabilities. We know we have limited resources, and we have felt the burden of limitations year after year, but we are all still showing up every day to give the citizen our all. When we I say, "we give it our all," I mean it. Due to the limited resources and the lack of personnel, we put ourselves at risk every time we respond alone to a dispute, suicidal person, arrest someone with a warrant, deal with a disorderly person, etc. I can go on and on. Even code violation contacts have resulted in our lives being threatened at times.

At the Fire Department, you have Scott Hollett who has dedicated most, if not all his career to the City of Oakridge. I have been on calls with Scott, and he is knowledgeable and caring to his patients.

I cannot give you the years of experience from Aric, Nick, or Justin, because I do not know. But what I do know, they each have years of experience and dedication to the community, and it is shown on every call.

I would go into each quality and years of service for volunteers at both the PD and FD, but I would be writing all night. I will say this about volunteering though. I have volunteered both as a fire fighter and a police officer. I know personally, I have left my family day and night to respond to calls ranging from house fires to homicides. The dedication to do the work of a first responder takes a toll on a person; both physically and mentally. It also takes a toll on our families. This is not easy work, and it takes a special person with a unique skill set and bravery to do the work of a first responder. The mental toll this work takes in a smaller community seems to have a larger impact, because we personally know each other as friends, family, and neighbors. Most of our calls we have built a relationship or repour with at least 1 person involved in the incident.

I would like to mention the hours and hours that go into training, doing maintenance at the departments and to upkeep equipment, not to mention the time that goes into calls.

The city of Oakridge is fortunate to have the few dedicated first responders we have. Not only do each of us have the dedication to the community to stay here in Oakridge to serve through budget cuts and limited resources, and constant public and political critique, but we have the dedication to show up every day and put all the negatives behind a difficult. We show up and provide special skills and lifesaving service this community deserves.

The level of experience and quality of service currently being dedicated to the community should be considered when considering this fee. If you were to look at it as a product you are buying at a store, you are getting a quality packaged deal. In my opinion to take any of these services or personnel away from the citizen's is unfair and a disservice from leadership. There is not one person mentioned above, that hasn't saved a life in this town, or put their life at risk to save someone else in our community. We lose sleep, we have stress, we see the things nobody wants to hear about or see, in order to protect our community and sustain the lives of our citizens. Like I said earlier, the job of a first responder (Fire and Police) cannot be done by just anyone. Every first responder the city of Oakridge has, has years of quality training and experience. We are all here serving the community we love!

The conflict that has been brought out in this budget crisis has taken a toll on us all. It has brought out the worst in all of us. Council and the budget committee has repeatedly engaged in heated

arguments and taken jabs at each other and targeted both the PD and FD. I cannot speak for the FD but I know as a police officer in such a small PD, it becomes personal to hear comments suggesting the police aren't doing enough for this community, hearing on a regular basis how we should be cut and the county should take over, and I think the most recent very hurtful comment said was how one councilor stated they are not willing to lose THEIR EMS service and said the police were a lower priority. These debates, arguments, and hurtful comments have become a devaluing of the skills and service the first responders of Oakridge provide. I will personally say, when I was doing CPR ALONE on someone for over 20 minutes last week because there were no medics in town to respond, when it was all said and done and I cleared the scene, I had two thoughts, "who would have responded to this call if Oakridge didn't have police?" and "would that councilor consider my response to this call a priority?" This was an exceedingly difficult call, and I cannot begin to describe what its like to have someone look you in the eyes and desperately ask you to "please keep going." (Doing CPR). I would like to boldly say, when it comes to POLICE and FIRE/EMS we are EQUALLY IMPORTANT!!! We need each other, and the community needs us. We should be working as a team and not be divided by politics.

Before I wrap up this email, I want to stress how we as a community are already under covered when it comes to emergency services. This comes from my own personal experience with calls lately.

This month alone, I have responded to 2 medical calls because there were no medics available to respond. The medics were on other calls or transports. It is fortunate I do have the training and experience I do to be able to respond to those calls until a medic can arrive.

Officer Davidson and I responded to a wildfire at the Oakridge Sand and Gravel. We ran into the "People's Village" at the end of Fairy Glenn, to clear people off the trails and out of the area. We ran down those trails blindly, not knowing yet if we were running into a fire or not. All we knew was this was the general location and we had to get people out of the area and to safety.

On 8/21/21, myself and the medics responded to two separate calls that utilized all the resources we had in town before 9:30 am. One was a fatal accident, and the other was a CPR in progress call with no medics available to respond.

This week I was called-out to assist Officer Davidson on a dangerous call regarding someone barricading themselves inside of someone else's house. I cannot give full details due to privacy reasons, but I will say, if this call were at any other police department in Lane County a swat team would have arrived. We called for assistance from reserve Officer Ritz and made a plan to de-escalate the incident, by talking the suspect into coming out peacefully. Officer Davidson was able to de-escalate the suspect and negotiate with him for a peaceful resolution. This would not have been a successful plan had we not personally known the suspect and victim of the call. There is a great reward and skills that is priceless when it comes to having a relationship with our citizens in order to have these kinds of successful results.

During a call last week, I responded to a park in the middle of the night where someone had lit a fire in a fire pit. The suspect was instantly aggressive and was wanted for 5 felony warrants. I called for cover because the suspect was wanting to fight, had 3 friends with him, and 2 dogs. I was told there was no units available locally or from the valley. I was on my own in this dangerous situation. This situation again boiled down to my training, experience, communication skills, and the relationships I have built with the suspect. I was able to safely and effectively make the arrest without him or I am getting hurt. I

was able to clear out the park, put out the fire, and find a safe shelter for the suspects dogs. Any other police department, this would have required a team of officers.

Last month on my way to the office at the beginning of my shift, I noticed a large plume of black smoke. I responded to the location, and intuitively knew when I arrived what house was on fire and who's life was at risk. I called for fire to respond, and dispatch advised me they were tapping our fire for another call. I ran up the driveway and saw flames, I had burning debris falling in front of me while I tried to negotiate with the resident to leave. I was able to evacuate the neighbors around this house because I knew how easily the fire could spread (and it did spread). With the help of a few citizens and 1 OSP trooper, we were able to get all surrounding homes evacuated while we waited for the FD to arrive. This fire could have turned out to be much worse had it not been for a quick response from police and fire. If we had to wait for responders from the valley, this would have been a very tragic call.

In the very few calls I listed above; you can see how important the team effort is to provide safety for our citizens. Without the first responders in Oakridge or with further cuts, none of these calls would have the fortunate outcomes they did. **LIVES WILL BE AT STAKE.** I think about the risk I take going to work every day and wondering if something bad happens to me, because I do not have cover, will I have a medic unit to respond to transport me to the hospital. Or if there are no police and the medics are called to a violent scene, will they be able to respond to save the victim's life if they must wait for an available officer from the valley to show up. With further cuts, every first responder in the city must weigh the risk vs. reward. The job is already dangerous, and with more cuts on either side, this job will become more dangerous.

I know this was long, but I appreciate your time in reading this letter. I feel it is important for Council to know and fully understand the quality of service and skills the first responders of Oakridge are currently providing for the city and what is truly at risk if we face more cuts. I respect whatever decision you all make, but I cannot sit back with a good conscience and be quite about the risk and liability the city will taking if we make more cuts to the limited resources Oakridge has to offer.

Please take into consideration the temporary fee that will give the city an opportunity to find a permanent solution to reorganize and restructure our services before lives are lost. Please take into consideration this temporary fee will help sustain the future of Oakridge, but without the fee, we as a city will not have the opportunity to become sustainable. Many residences will move if they do not feel safe in their community.

I would like to remind you all, this budget is not your fault, but we cannot go back in time to change the problem that was caused by others. All we can do is move forward, accept the problem for what it is, and make a hard decision to save Oakridge and save lives by supporting emergency services.