

## The 12-Million Dollar Question

Oro Valley Town Ordinance (O)95-84 gives Golder Ranch Fire District (GRFD) a monopoly to be the only Fire District allowed to solicit Oro Valley property owners for annexation. They now have responsibility for Fire Protection in about half of the Town. Due to the sheer amount of work required in signing people up, Golder Ranch Fire District can't possibly call on all of the remaining property owners remaining uncommitted in Oro Valley this year---and probably not in the next year.

Now, for illustration purposes and the fun of mathematics - when we're talking about our pocketbooks, let's imagine that if Golder Ranch could succeed in getting 51% of the property owners in all of the neighborhoods in Oro Valley on board. Each neighborhood constituting an "Annexation District" in which GRFD has a one-year time frame in which to sign up the majority of property owners, we estimate at the rate applicable in 2008 of \$1.88 per \$100 of the valuation of each property (counting a 19-cent per \$100 of assessed valuation for bond retirement) will be in excess of 12 million dollars. We're talking big business here. But why be greedy when there's so much to offer two Fire Districts?

We arrived at the numbers by ascertaining the 2008 secondary value for tax purposes for Oro Valley to be better than \$686-million. Take off two decimals (the property tax is based on each \$100 of valuation) and multiply by \$1.88 = \$12,896,800 dollars. See how important that tax rate is? This is big "bidness," as they say in Texas. Now, for even more enjoyment, take the recent assessed evaluation of your home, the one used by the Pima County Assessor for property tax purposes and multiply it by \$1.88 for each \$100 valuation.

Now, consider the bonanza awaiting Golder Ranch Fire District in those thousands of homes planned for Willow Springs, just north of Oracle Junction in Pinal County. Then, whenever the Big Ditch (Arroyo Grande) becomes some any sort of reality in the next decade. Well, sugar plums must already be dancing in the heads of GRFD Chairperson Vicki Cox and Fire Chief John Fink every night as they dream of this windfall. However, we who live in the old, developed OV neighborhoods will be helping finance the expansion with investments in 3-million dollar fire stations in Pinal County. Who else will be doing that for GRFD? Not the cows and coyotes up there.

My neighborhood, Suffolk Hills, has been promised that it will be covered by a new GRFD Fire Station at Linda Vista near North Oracle. It will cost Golder Ranch FD some \$3-million to build and equip it. The average cost of a fire engine is \$450,000 to \$500,000. It will take about \$1.5-million a year to maintain it. Personnel Costs for a year will range around \$850,000.

The trouble is, it's too far away. An OV Council member and I drove separately from the location of the proposed Linda Vista Station to my home last Saturday. It took him 7 minutes and it took me 6.5 minutes and we weren't within 30 seconds of the farthest homes in Suffolk Hills. Neither of us was driving a big tanker, which would have to slow down to a couple of miles an hour at each of 6 speed humps to keep from breaking an axle. From the looks of a map, it appears there will be many homes north of Linda Vista in the same situation. This is unacceptable. Once this is reported to the Insurance

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Companies by an independent, unbiased firm that's hired to document this information, our Fire Insurance will soar – but more important, we will be in greater jeopardy!

This article is written by a person who had a neighbor in Suffolk Hills burn to death in his house because 40 years ago a tanker tried and failed to negotiate Cambridge Drive, possibly the longest and steepest incline in NW Pima County. Seconds are critical!

Here's what I would like to see happen: The Oro Valley Council coming on board in June should permit La Canada Fire District to solicit us down in the tail end of the Town for annexation. La Canada FD contracts for fire fighters and equipment from Rural Metro Corporation, a private business with a Station already located on Magee – just a stones throw from North Oracle. La Canada Fire District, which has now annexed properties contiguous to Oro Valley, ought to be allowed to begin to attempt to annex the southern end of Oro Valley into their district. We homeowners will initiate the annexation in La Canada Fire District.

Competent, well-trained Fire Fighters and the same insurance rating as Golder Ranch Fire District will offer better response times and at a rate of only \$1.25 per \$100 assessed valuation! This is a win-win situation, as La Canada and Golder Ranch Fire Districts could continue to help cover each other's nearby territories. A mutual aid situation that would be much safer and far less costly for all concerned.

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April 25, 2008