

## Keri O'Brien

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**From:** Kerry Baker <membership@keywestchamber.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 6, 2026 3:45 PM  
**To:** Danise Henriquez; Gregory Veliz; Samuel Kaufman; Monica Haskell; Lissette Cuervo Carey; Aaron Castillo  
**Cc:** Brian L. Barroso; Keri O'Brien  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Water Quality Testing

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Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

We wanted to reach out before the meeting tomorrow where we plan to speak to express our continued opposition and concerns to the proposed Fire Assessment. Part of the Chambers mission is to advocate for the business community, and to work to sustain a local economy.

This assessment was initially presented as a mechanism that would accompany a reduction or elimination of property taxes; however, that connection no longer appears clear as this is happening before that has been determined on a state level. Without that offset, it feels like an additional cost rather than a replacement, raising concern about increased financial burden on residents and businesses.

It appears the Fire Department budget is evolving, with it being shared that additional personnel need to be hired to create a new shift. It would be helpful to better understand how this assessment aligns with overall budget planning and whether costs are being offset or reallocated.

The total cost of the assessment seems high, and there is concern that figure will continue to grow. From an equity standpoint, applying the same rate across residential properties regardless of size raises fairness concerns as well, while commercial properties appear likely to carry the bulk of the financial burden. Is a flat rate for residential properties fair to all homeowners as residential properties vary in size as well?

Small businesses in particular are highly sensitive to increases in fixed costs, making this proposal especially impactful.

We respectfully ask that this be halted for this coming year to allow for more discussion and understanding. If it indeed is because of the possibility of a reduction in property taxes, there would be time to work this out before those measures would go into place.

Any approach should be equitable, clearly defined, and understandable for both residential and commercial taxpayers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kerry



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“The mission of the Greater Key West Chamber of Commerce is to serve its members and support a viable economy for Key West.”