

DCC dorms should be welcome addition for the town

[Joel Miller](#). [The Poughkeepsie Journal](#). Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: [Jun 21, 2009](#). pg. A.10

Abstract (Summary)

DCC has indicated its willingness to bypass Fairview for medical calls, paying Alamo Ambulance \$532 per call instead of Fairview's astronomical price. [...] the cost will be negligible, plus we must realize the dorms are fireproof with sprinklers.

Full Text

(661 words)

When Dutchess Community College first proposed a 450-student residential dormitory, I had concerns, but as I researched the issue and spoke with the parties involved, I realized those concerns were unsubstantiated. Now, I fully support the DCC dorm project.

As a State University of New York institution, community colleges must cater to the academic needs of county residents and students from across a region. This is why half of all community colleges statewide have residential dorms. With 21 percent of DCC student population commuting from outside Dutchess County, many from Putnam County, which doesn't have a community college, dorms are a logical step. The key is to mitigate any cost that might be absorbed by the host community; in this case, the Fairview portion of the Town of Poughkeepsie.

The residents who live in Fairview already pay among the highest fire taxes in the state. The reason the taxes are so high is because nearly half of the lands in the fire district are tax-exempt properties, including Marist College, Saint Francis Hospital, and DCC. Still, it is difficult to justify a fire district budget of approximately \$3.2 million translating roughly to \$1,825 per call. Of the 1,753 calls in 2008, 49 of them went to DCC (3 percent) and 291 to Marist (17 percent). Keep in mind that Marist houses thousands of students and only accounts for 17 percent of Fairview's calls. Also, it is important to note that Fairview responded to 1,057 other calls (60 percent) plus 135 mutual-aid calls (8 percent) outside the district. DCC does not and will not, even after the dorms are constructed, require a large presence from Fairview.

While not legally obligated to do so, DCC did agree to pay Fairview \$75,000 for the first year the residence halls are operational with a 3 percent increase each year over the next two years ending with a review after three years. Feeling this wasn't enough; the fire district invalidated this agreement and asked for more money. DCC has indicated its willingness to bypass Fairview for medical calls, paying Alamo Ambulance \$532 per call instead of Fairview's astronomical price. Therefore, the cost will be negligible, plus we must realize the dorms are fireproof with sprinklers.

Yet, in an effort to block construction of the dorms, the Town of Poughkeepsie has requested that the town planning board act as lead agency for the project.

In the 50 years of the college's existence in the Town of Poughkeepsie, not once has the town attempted to assert its control over projects on the DCC campus, nor has the town ever failed to act as its own lead agency.

Tax cost can be eased

Despite mitigating the fiscal impact and offering a generous financial contribution to Fairview, DCC is still being perceived as the "bad guy," but DCC is not the problem.

We need to return our focus of finding a reasonable, comprehensive and far-reaching consensus that will address excessive fire taxes in Fairview while allowing the residents to co-exist with this great community college.

I remain resolute in my pledge to continue the public dialogue, put this temporary disagreement aside and find a solution that will be agreeable to all parties involved.

Already having the blessing of the Dutchess County Legislature and the SUNY board, DCC will move forward with dorm construction on its own property.

DCC is the finest academic community college in the state while having the lowest tuition in the state.

Students pass through DCC on their way to better jobs and advanced degrees that will tremendously benefit their families and their communities. We should all be proud of our community college, support it and commend its continued service to the people of the Hudson Valley.

Joel *Miller* is the assemblyman for the 102nd District, which includes the towns of Fishkill, Wappinger, Poughkeepsie, LaGrange, Clinton and Hyde Park in Dutchess County. You can contact him at his Poughkeepsie district office at 845-463-1635 or e-mail him at millerj@assembly.state.ny.us.