



CITY OF MARTINEZ

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA October 17, 2012

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Mercy G. Cabral Deputy City Clerk

SUBJECT: Measure Q, Special Fire District Parcel Tax

DATE: October 3, 2012

RECOMMENDATION:

Consider a resolution in support of Measure Q, Special Parcel Tax by the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District.

BACKGROUND:

At the City Council meeting of July 11, 2012, Fire Chief Louder, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, provided information on Measure Q, the November ballot measure that would establish a parcel tax to support the Fire District.

Contra Costa Fire District is facing significant challenges with declining property tax revenue and increasing costs which has created a "fiscal crisis." The District felt it necessary to put a measure on the ballot for increase revenue.

If the parcel tax fails, Fire Chief Louder has indicated that there will be severe consequences and drastic changes in services. At the present time the District consists of 28 fire stations serving approximately 600,000 people in 304 square miles in nine cities and several unincorporated area through the central part of Contra Costa County. Without supplemental funding, he will have to close seven fire stations in July 2013 and an additional three in 2014, which would significantly affect response times.

The proposed parcel tax would require a 2/3rds supermajority for approval. If Measure Q is approved by the voters, it would levy a parcel tax of \$75 each year on owners of single-family homes, the equivalent of \$1.44 per week. Industrial and commercial landowners would pay \$75 per quarter-acre. Agricultural and vacant property owners would pay \$37.50 per parcel. Apartment owners would pay \$37.50 per unit. The proposed tax would go into effect July 1, 2013 and terminate on June 30, 2020.

Measure Q will be placed before the electorate on the November 6, 2012 election ballot.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact.

ACTION:

Motion to adopt a resolution supporting Measure Q.

Attachments:
Resolution

APPROVED BY:



City Manager

RESOLUTION NO. -12

**SUPPORTING THE CONTRA COSTA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT'S
BALLOT MEASURE Q**

WHEREAS, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (ConFire) is a full-service fire agency providing fire protection suppression and first-responder emergency medical support to the residents of Martinez; and

WHEREAS, responsive fire protection and emergency response is paramount to the public safety of the residents of Martinez; and

WHEREAS, ConFire has announced property tax revenue decreases which have resulted in the de-staffing of two units, the reduction in staffing at all levels, and affected the ability to provide the same level of service the Martinez community as in the past; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to ensure response fire protection services, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District has placed Measure Q, a special fire district parcel tax, on the November 6, 2012 local ballot; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Martinez City Council to support the effort of the Contra County Fire Protection District and Measure Q.

* * * * *

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the City Council of the City of Martinez at a Regular Meeting of said Council held on the 17th day of October, 2012, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RICHARD G. HERNANDEZ, CITY CLERK
CITY OF MARTINEZ

Contra Costa Fire Protection District parcel tax, Measure Q (November 2012)

From Ballotpedia

A **Contra Costa Fire Protection District parcel tax** ballot question is on the November 6, 2012 ballot for voters in the Contra Costa Fire Protection District in Contra Costa County.^[1]

If the measure is approved, it will levy a parcel tax of \$75 each year on owners of single-family homes. Industrial and commercial landowners would pay \$75 per quarter-acre. Agricultural and vacant property owners would pay \$37.50 per parcel. Apartment owners would pay \$37.50 per unit.^[1]

The proposed tax would go into effect July 1, 2013 and terminate on June 30, 2020.^[1]

The tax, if approved, is expected to generate \$16.8 million a year in additional tax revenue for the district.^[2]

Over 100 retired workers for the district are being paid in excess of \$100,000 each year in retirement benefits. 8 retired workers for the district receive an annual pension in excess of \$200,000.^[3]

Measure S, a \$197/year parcel tax proposal for the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District, was on the June 5, 2012 ballot. It was decisively defeated, with 56.2% of voters rejecting it.

A 2/3rds supermajority vote is required for approval.

Support

- Fire chief Daryl Louder says that if the parcel tax fails, he will have to close seven fire stations in July 2013 and three in 2014.^[1]
- Vince Wells, president of the United Professional Fire Fighters of Contra Costa County, says that the proposed tax "is a critical piece of the long term plan to make up for essential revenue lost from property taxes and to maintain the 9-1-1 emergency services that keep our community safe."^[2]
- Tom Barnidge, a columnist for the *Contra Costa Times*, says, "If passed, the measure would cost each property owner \$75 per year, which works out to a whopping \$1.44 per week. With that windfall, you could buy a cup of coffee every Monday morning -- as long as you got it at McDonald's, not Starbucks."^[4]

Opposition

Opponents include:

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- Bill Gram-Reefer, the editor of "Halfway To Concord". He says, "Despite the feints and public pronouncement made by Supervisors over the past year, budgets and expenses, and pension reform were never really seriously considered as Supervisors and union leaders joined forces to make mince meat of taxpayers, with intimidation, cries of calamity if the parcel tax is not passed, and the full force of the County machinery invested in the passage of the tax."^[5]
- The editorial board of the *Contra Costa Times*. They say, "Residents of the Contra Costa Fire Protection District are being offered a false choice: Approve a \$75-a-year parcel tax on the Nov. 6 ballot or face the shutdown of nearly one-third of the district's stations. It's political blackmail. And it ignores potential savings that could have, and still could be, attained if fire district officials make meaningful pension changes and seriously examine ways to restructure, especially when it comes to providing emergency medical services. The Contra Costa Board of Supervisors, which runs the district, should have made every effort to find savings before going to voters. It didn't. There has been no serious evaluation of alternatives. Instead, voters are told to either pay more or watch homes burn. They're told the district plans to implement serious pension reform for new hires. In fact, the new pension formulas under discussion are just slightly less generous than the current ones and far more costly than the ones in effect a decade ago."^[6]

About the district

The Contra Costa Fire Protection District is often referred to as "ConFire."^[1]

The district includes 28 fire stations. It serves 304 square miles in nine cities and several unincorporated areas throughout the central part of Contra Costa County.^[1]

The fire protection district is "among the 14 largest metropolitan fire agencies" in California.^[2]

It serves a population of approximately 600,000 people.^[2]

Path to the ballot

The parcel tax was referred to the ballot by a 4-1 vote of the governing body of the district.^[5]

Supervisor Candace Andersen voted against the motion to place the tax on the ballot.^[2]

See also

- November 6, 2012 parcel tax elections in California

External links

- Website of the Contra Costa Fire Protection District



References

- [↑] ^{1.0} ^{1.1} ^{1.2} ^{1.3} ^{1.4} ^{1.5} *Inside Bay Area*, "Contra Costa fire tax measure sent to voters", July 31, 2012
- [↑] ^{2.0} ^{2.1} ^{2.2} ^{2.3} ^{2.4} *Pleasant Hill Patch*, "ConFire Places Parcel Tax Measure on Ballot", August 1, 2012

3. ↑ *Confire Pension Benefits Table*
4. ↑ *Contra Costa Times*, "Barnidge: Beware the consequences if Contra Costa fire tax fails", September 21, 2012
5. ↑ ^{5.0} ^{5.1} *Halfway to Concord*, "The fix was in: CoCo Supervisors promised firefighters a parcel tax in July 2011", July 30, 2012
6. ↑ *Contra Costa Times*, "Contra Costa Times editorial: District voters should reject false choice offered in fire tax", August 9, 2012



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