



NEWS



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Victorville's Measure K: What to know

Shea Johnson, Daily Press

Posted: November 6, 2017, 8:08 AM



Ballot measures in Victorville and Barstow on Tuesday are promised to buoy funding for fire services in both cities, and law enforcement in Victorville. [Photos by James Quigg and Danial Diaz, Daily Press]

The tax would begin being collected April 1. It amounts to \$100 in taxes for every \$20,000 spent on taxable items.

VICTORVILLE — Voters on Tuesday will head to the polls to decide on the city's Measure K. Here's what you need to know:

What is it?

A half-percent sales tax (technically a transactions and use tax) that will raise the city's current sales tax rate from 7.75 to 8.25 percent. Certain necessities of life, including food and medicine, are exempt. The tax would begin being collected April 1. It amounts to an extra \$100 in taxes for every \$20,000 spent on taxable items.

How does it pass?

A two-thirds majority vote is required.

What will it do?

According to city officials, it's projected to raise \$8.5 million yearly in revenue to supplement General Fund dollars, and it will be earmarked specifically for public safety services.

The city, bound by law, vows to hire 15 San Bernardino County firefighters/paramedics, at least 10 San Bernardino County Sheriff's deputies and open Fire Station 315 near Sunset Ridge Park, while acquiring new equipment, training and support and setting aside funds for public safety reserves.

Why is it needed?

City officials say current tax revenues can't keep pace with rising contract costs — largely attributed to Victorville's agreement with the Sheriff's Department — and that fire equipment is in need of upgrades or replacement.

Who's for it?

The vast majority of senior city officials are behind it. The Victor Valley Chamber of Commerce also announced its support. The pro-campaign is being funded largely by developer groups. Sheriff John McMahon said the department "would welcome the additional funding."

Who's against it?

Councilwoman Blanca Gomez has declared her aversion to taxes. The County Fire union has stated it's not sold that law enforcement won't receive the majority of funding and it also can't support a plan without a stronger commitment from the city.

Victorville is currently mulling options for fire services, including re-launching a city Fire Department and re-upping a contract with County Fire after the department's 10-year contract expires June 30.

The anti-campaign is organized by the Inland Empire Taxpayers Association, which has opposed the sales tax for its effect on vulnerable populations including the elderly and economically disadvantaged.

Who's staying out of it?

The sheriff's union, the Safety Employees Benefit Association, is not actively supporting the measure, worried that it would appear self-serving.

County Fire Assistant Fire Chief Dan Mejia, who heads Victorville operations, has declined to offer support or opposition, but has extolled the virtues of a permanent, non-contractual agreement between the city and County Fire, known as annexation.

What happens if Measure K fails?

City officials say they'll almost certainly have to annex into County Fire's Service Zone FP-5. Such a move would be accompanied by a \$153 yearly parcel tax on nearly 38,000 parcels in the city.

The parcel tax is subjected to a yearly 3 percent cost-of-living increase, which has equated to \$36 in extra tax since 2008 when it was only \$117.

Parcel tax revenue would be collected by County Fire, which would also assume assets and liabilities from the city including fire apparatus and facilities, as well as be responsible for capital improvements and service expansions.

Is their voter choice in annexation?

The Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) would oversee the process, and registered voter recourse is retroactive. Fifty percent or more voters subsequently protesting would kill the annexation, while at least 25 percent of voters protesting would trigger a simple majority-vote election.

If less than 25 percent of voters protest, the annexation is approved.

What's the argument for annexation?

Mejia, the County Fire assistant chief, says it enables the department to plan long-term versus on a 10-year basis, and affords firefighters the ability to rely on resources elsewhere under the County Fire umbrella to drive costs down.

An example of this regional approach includes cohabiting fire stations.

In January, a city staff report said that annexation would result in a \$3.4 million net benefit to the city and, that by retaining more of its property tax dollars, the city could re-focus funds to law enforcement expenses and more.

What's the argument against annexation?

Mayor Pro Tem Jim Cox is adamant about not giving up local control, which effectively the city would permanently do under annexation. City officials also say that Measure K is more fair than burdening only property owners — who could raise rents — because it spreads the tax to out-of-town motorists who stop in the city, essentially requiring them to help pay for services they also use.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20171106/victorvilles-measure-k-what-to-know>

Barstow's Measure J: What to know

Paola Baker, Daily Press

Posted: November 6, 2017, 8:08 AM



Barstow residents on Tuesday will make the final decision on what City Councilman Rich Harpole has called "the most important issue to face our community in a while" — Measure J. [Kay Lovato, Daily Press]

BARSTOW — Residents on Tuesday will make the final decision on what City Councilman Rich Harpole has called “the most important issue to face our community in a while.”

That issue is Measure J — or specifically, what the sales tax measure on the ballot is aimed at: saving the struggling Barstow Fire Protection District.

Here’s what to know before heading for the polls:

What is Measure J?

Measure J is a special purpose tax that will impose a half-cent sales tax hike throughout the city if approved by voters. The half-cent sales tax hike could generate an estimated \$3.8 million per year, with residents paying an average of \$47 a year, according to city officials

The funds would be used to bolster the financially-strapped BFPD, which has been struggling with increased retirement costs. As a special purpose tax, the measure requires two-thirds voter approval.

What happens if Measure J passes?

The measure will effectively raise Barstow’s total sales tax rate from 7.75 percent to 8.25 percent, according to figures from the California Board of Equalization. City officials estimate this will result in residents paying an average of \$47 more in sales tax each year.

Funds generated from the tax hike will be used to repay loans the BFPD received from the city, as well as bring on more firefighters, with BFPD Fire Chief Jamie Williams voicing her wish to add a firefighter squad. Some of the money will be put in a reserve fund meant to replace aging engines and equipment.

“We can’t buy new engines or hire new personnel because we just don’t have the funding,” Williams said. “We want to address response times and also maintain fiscal sustainability.”

What happens if Measure J does not pass?

According to city officials, BFPD officials and the Barstow Professional Firefighters Association, there are limited alternatives. Williams and city spokesman Anthony Riley both mentioned the possibility of new property taxes or a parcel tax on property owners.

However, the most likely option would be the City Council annexing the BFPD into the San Bernardino County Fire Department. The region would then fall under the umbrella of County Fire's FP-5 parcel tax, estimated to be about \$150 for every parcel in the city. That tax would increase 3 percent each year thereafter. City and fire officials have previously opposed a parcel tax, stressing how difficult it could be to residents with a low or fixed income.

"We wanted to look at it as objectively as possible," Riley said. "The city felt like this was the most equitable option."

Who is behind Measure J?

The Barstow City Council has given its support of the measure, with Harpole and other council members saying it would allow residents to maintain local control.

"We can't necessarily rely on the county to make the best decisions for us," Harpole said. "Measure J is the best solution for our community and it's what we need to do to keep Barstow safe and strong."

The Barstow Professional Firefighters Association is also backing the measure, with association president John Wymore stressing the tax hike is overall much cheaper for Barstow residents, as compared to other options.

"All government services are stressed right now, but we have to find a way to pay for them," Wymore said.

Who is against Measure J?

The San Bernardino County Professional Firefighters Union, or Local 935, has been vocal in its opposition to the sales hike. The union's opposition is solely based on what union president Jim Grigoli characterized as "derogatory comments" from Barstow firefighters against County Fire.

"We are opposing it because the comments on the parcel tax makes us look very bad," Grigoli said.

The Inland Empire Taxpayers Association (IETA) is also opposing the measure, with IETA president Chris Mann saying the organization believes higher taxes would hurt the financially-strapped community.

"It just seems like there's no end to state and local government asking the taxpayer for more, when we already have some of the highest taxes in the nation," Mann said. "So to us, it's about government budgeting properly, as opposed to always going back to the taxpayers for more."

The ties between Local 935 and IETA have been heavily scrutinized by Measure J's supporters. Both City Council members and Barstow firefighters have decried what they claim is "big union money" trying to influence local decisions. Some Barstow firefighters also claimed Local 935's opposition is driven by its hopes to annex the BFPD, which Grigoli has flatly denied.

"We don't think the parcel tax is a bad thing for citizens, but we have our own thing here," Wymore said. "And hopefully, on Nov. 7, it comes to pass."

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20171106/barstows-measure-j-what-to-know>

Motorcycle rider injured in Yucca Valley crash Sunday

Z107.7 News

Posted: November 6, 2017

A 35-year-old man was injured in a motorcycle crash in Yucca Valley Sunday afternoon. According to County Battalion Fire Chief Mike Snow, the motorcycle rider lost control on Old Woman Springs Road near Farrello Road about 3:30 p.m. The unidentified rider suffered serious injuries and was taken to Desert Hospital in Palm Springs.

<http://z1077fm.com/motorcycle-rider-injured-in-yucca-valley-crash-sunday/>

Firefighters respond to fires in Joshua Tree and Yucca Valley Saturday

Z107.7 News

Posted: November 6, 2017

Area firefighters responded to two fires called in at the same time Saturday morning. According to **County Fire** Battalion Chief Mike Snow, at 11:04 a.m., firefighters from Joshua Tree, Yucca Valley, and Yucca Mesa were called to a house fire in the 61900 block of Golden Street in Joshua Tree. When firefighters arrived, they found heavy black smoke and flames visible from the living room area of the home, extending into the patio area, and the homeowner's 67-year-old son trying unsuccessfully to put out the flames with a garden hose. Fire crews immediately began an aggressive exterior attack on the fire, and had the fire under control in about 15 minutes. The home's main living area received extensive damage, with a fire loss estimated at more than \$100,000.



Photo Courtesy of San Bernardino County Fire Department

While at the scene, county fire paramedics learned that the homeowner's son suffered burns and smoke inhalation from his efforts to put out the flames. The man was resistant to being taken to a hospital for further care and observation, but finally after about 45 minutes Morongo Basin Ambulance took him to Arrowhead Medical Center. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

And in Yucca Valley, firefighters were also called at 11:04 to a possible vegetation fire near Barron Drive and Avalon Avenue. Firefighters from Twentynine Palms, CalFire, and the Combat Center responded and found a single off-road vehicle fully involved in flames. An aggressive attack had the fire quickly put out, but the vehicle is a total loss. The fire had not spread into the surrounding vegetation. Fire crews determined that the owner had recently completed some mechanical repairs on the vehicle, which was a homemade sand rail. While testing the repairs, the vehicle started on fire. The occupants were unharmed.

<http://z1077fm.com/firefighters-respond-to-fires-in-joshua-tree-and-yucca-valley-saturday/>

Blaze at Victorville apartment complex deemed accidental

Paola Baker, Daily Press

Posted: November 5, 2017, 7:18 PM



San Bernardino County Fire Department personnel battle a blaze at an apartment building in Victorville on Oct. 11. [Paola Baker, Daily Press]

VICTORVILLE — Fire officials say the blaze at a local apartment complex that left almost 40 residents displaced three weeks ago was determined to be accidental.

A hastily thrown-out cigarette was deemed to have sparked the blaze, which occurred Oct. 11 at the Rodeo Drive Meadows Apartments in the 14000 block of Rodeo Drive.

The fire erupted at the complex's "B" building just after 3 p.m. that afternoon, eventually spreading to two apartments and the building's roof before **San Bernardino County Fire Department** personnel could douse it.

Fire investigators responded to the scene and immediately launched an investigation to find out how the fire occurred. County Fire spokeswoman Tracey Martinez said it was eventually ruled to be accidental.

"The fire actually started on a balcony, when a resident was out on the balcony smoking a cigarette," Martinez said. "It was an improper disposal of a cigarette butt."

County Fire Battalion Chief Joshua Sprague said one woman was injured from a fall while evacuating the building, and another person reported smoke inhalation injuries. They were both treated at local hospitals. No other injuries were reported.

Red Cross was requested to assist 37 residents displaced by the blaze. Red Cross San Bernardino chapter spokeswoman Georgia Duncan said volunteers ultimately assisted 18 people.

"By the time we got there, most of [the residents] had already decided that they were going to go stay with family or friends," Duncan said.

The residents assisted by Red Cross volunteers received lodging for the night and stipends for food and clothing, Duncan said.

Rodeo Drive Meadow's "B" building was red-tagged following the blaze. It remains red-tagged as of Friday, with all building windows boarded up and tarps covering the scorched areas of the roof.

City of Victorville spokeswoman Sue Jones said building inspectors determined the units were not safe for occupancy.

“The building owner will be responsible to submit plans for the required repairs,” Jones said. “Once the plans have been approved, permits issued, and all required work inspected, the structure will be safe for occupancy.”

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20171105/blaze-at-victorville-apartment-complex-deemed-accidental>

County urges residents to sign up for emergency alerts

Douglas W. Motley, Alpenhorn News

Posted: November 5, 2017

Since 2004, the **San Bernardino County Fire** and Sheriff's departments have provided a Telephone Emergency Notification System (TENS), which uses listed and unlisted phone numbers in the region's 9-1-1 database to alert residents of life-threatening emergencies. However, according to County Fire Public Information Officer Tracey Martinez, the 9-1-1 database only includes landline telephones, so other numbers must be registered. "If a resident wishes to receive an emergency alert text message on their cell phone or an emergency call on their Voiceover Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone, they must register the number in the system," Martinez said.

TENS is only used in potentially life-threatening incidents such as an evacuation during a wildfire or earthquake. When the county deems it necessary to activate TENS, it will call the numbers in the 9-1-1 landline database in the affected area, while another separate alert will go out by way of a text message to cell phones of residents that have signed up for these alerts. In addition, a call will also be placed to any VoIP numbers that have been registered.

To sign up for these alerts, residents are advised to visit www.sbcounty.gov and click on the "Sign Up for Emergency Alerts" icon or from the home pages of the County Fire and Sheriff's departments at www.sbcfire.org or www.sbcisd.org. Those without Internet access may register by dialing 2-1-1 to sign up.

Another tool offered by San Bernardino County Fire Department is the "Ready SB" disaster preparedness app. The application, said Martinez, provides residents with multiple resources that will assist them in preparing for a disaster, and is available as a free download from the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.

Features of the Ready SB app include instant notifications of emergency situations in your area from the county's Office of Emergency Services; the ability to send an instant status update to your personal emergency contact to let them know you're OK or that you need assistance; view evacuation routes with live traffic patterns and shelter locations; learn all you need to plan for and respond to natural disasters, terrorism, pandemic flu; floods or earthquakes and the ability to find contact information for local health and public safety agencies such as the American Red Cross, Animal Care and Control, county departments and fire protection agencies.

"The San Bernardino County Fire Department goes above and beyond to protect its residents from emergencies. The Ready SB app empowers residents with the information they need to take action and prevent themselves from becoming victims of a disaster," added County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig.

<http://alpenhornnews.com/county-urges-residents-to-sign-up-for-emergency-alerts-p8443-170.htm>

Fire Administration Office will be relocated to Fontana Civic Center campus

Fontana Herald News

Posted: November 3, 2017, 12:58 PM

To commemorate the relocation of the **San Bernardino County Fire** Administration Office to the Fontana Civic Center campus, a brief ribbon cutting ceremony will be held on Monday, Nov. 6 at 10 a.m.

An open house with guided tours will follow at 17001 Upland Avenue, located near Fontana City Hall and the Fontana Police Department. The event will include displays of various engines, refreshments and giveaways. Fontana officials will be joined by San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig and Assistant Chief Jeff Birchfield during the ceremony.

The Fontana Fire Protection District Division I - West Valley Headquarters serves Fontana, Bloomington, Upland, San Antonio Heights, Lytle Creek and other various area of San Bernardino County. The new area will act as a centralized location to serve the public, conduct regular planning meetings and house Fire Administration and support staff. The main line for the administration office is (909) 356-2520.

The previous administrative office will be used as a training facility.

http://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/fire-administration-office-will-be-relocated-to-fontana-civic-center/article_5b908d38-c0d1-11e7-b392-ff8e45dc0685.html

Transient is arrested for allegedly burglarizing and causing extensive damage to local church

Fontana Herald News

Posted: November 3, 2017 7:43 AM

A transient was arrested for allegedly burglarizing and causing extensive damage to a local church in the early morning hours of Nov. 1, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

At 2:41 a.m., deputies from the Fontana Sheriff's Station were requested by the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** to respond to the Upland Indonesian Seventh Day Adventist Church, located in the 11100 block of Cedar Avenue in Bloomington.

Upon arrival, deputies were advised that Fire Department personnel heard someone inside the building and deputies began to systematically clear the building.

In an apparent attempt to evade deputies, the subject, later identified as 35-year-old Abel Pelayo, used his fists to beat a hole in a wall that led from the interior of the building to the exterior of the building. Pelayo left the building on the second story and was contacted by deputies while on the roof.

Pelayo refused verbal commands from the deputies to come off of the roof and raised his fist in an aggressive manner challenging the deputies to fight, according to the Sheriff's Department.

With the assistance of Fontana and Rialto Police Department officers, Pelayo was subsequently taken into custody.

Through investigation, deputies determined that Pelayo allegedly broke into the church and vandalized and ransacked the interior, causing extensive damage by breaking cabinets, appliances and damaging several walls. In the process of damaging the building, he set off the fire alarm.

Any persons who witnessed the incident or have additional information are urged to contact the Fontana Sheriff's Station at (909) 356-6767. Callers wishing to remain anonymous may contact the We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME (27463) or leave information on the We-Tip website at www.wetip.com.

http://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/transient-is-arrested-for-allegedly-burglarizing-and-causing-extensive-damage/article_67856a5e-c0a5-11e7-8592-4b569a74ec38.html

Daylight Savings Time means changing clocks, checking safety devices

Daily Press

Posted: November 2, 2017, 8:45 AM

San Bernardino County residents are encouraged to enjoy their extra hour this weekend with the peace of mind that comes with checking the safety devices throughout their homes.

County Fire officials are reminding residents to not only set their clocks back an hour Saturday night for Daylight Savings Time, but to also change the batteries on smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors and flashlights.

“Smoke alarms and all life-saving devices should be tested on a regular basis, with new batteries installed at least twice a year,” fire officials said. “An alarm should be installed on every floor of your home and outside of all sleeping areas to ensure all areas of your home are protected.”

Residents are also encouraged to have an emergency evacuation plan in place and to take time to practice it. “Make sure everyone knows how to get out and where to meet,” fire officials said. “Review with your family the different sounds between your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors and practice evacuation plans at different times of day/night.”

A working smoke alarm can decrease a family’s risk of perishing in a fire by nearly 50 percent, officials said. For more information or to prepare your household for an evacuation, download County Fire’s Ready! Set! Go! Guide at www.sbcfire.org/readyssetgo.aspx.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20171102/daylight-savings-time-means-changing-clocks-checking-safety-devices>