



# NEWS



## News Headlines 10/24/2017

- Joshua Tree National Park fire's smoke visible in Coachella Valley
- On Measure K, neutrality comes center stage amidst the noise
- Family and pets escape from house fire in Yucca Valley

## **Joshua Tree National Park fire's smoke visible in Coachella Valley**

**Colin Atagi, The Desert Sun**

Posted: October 24, 2017, 8:11 AM

A fire is burning in Joshua Tree National Park and its smoke is visible in the Coachella Valley.

Firefighters were responding to the fire just before 8 a.m. and they had not determined its exact location, said Tracey Martinez, spokeswoman for the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

Cal Fire and National Park Service are involved in the incident.

A thick line of smoke could be seen north of Interstate 10 in an east-to-west direction. According to several Indio residents, the smoke was visible at 6:15 a.m.

Smoke may be pushed by gusty winds of 10 to 20 mph, said Andrew Deemer, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Phoenix.

"Winds are definitely out of the northeast, so any fire is going to bring smoke into the Palm Springs area," he said. "It's pretty gusty all the waya round."

Check [desertsun.com](http://www.desertsun.com) later for updates as they become available.

<http://www.desertsun.com/story/news/2017/10/24/joshua-tree-national-park-fires-smoke-visible-coachella-valley/794160001/>

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## **On Measure K, neutrality comes center stage amidst the noise**

Shea Johnson, Daily Press

Posted: October 23, 2017, 5:30 PM

VICTORVILLE — City officials will host a community forum Tuesday on Measure K, the proposed half-percent sales tax for public safety, in the final major effort to facilitate conversation on the ballot measure before the Nov. 7 special election.

While the proposed tax, which would generate a projected \$8.5 million yearly earmarked solely for public safety spending, has been subject to debate in online comment sections of news articles, it has so far failed to elicit the discourse officials have sought during public meetings.

On two occasions, the topic has been carved out for discussion at City Council meetings, only to be met by little to no commentary.

The latest try, during the Oct. 17 meeting, initially spurred just one comment card, but that individual had apparently left before they were summoned to speak.

Three individuals did later approach the dais, including two who explicitly expressed favor for the funding source.

“It’s one of my concerns and has been all along, is that we’ve got this issue out there on a ballot,” Councilman Jim Kennedy said. “People are gonna have to vote and decide — and public discussion and information and, you know, the pluses and minuses. It’d be a good thing to talk about, but I guess there’s not a lot of public interest in it.”

Despite the luke-warm public participation in council chambers, city voters can be promised they will have been sufficiently exposed to Measure K materials by next month’s election.

Anti-measure campaign signs have been plastered throughout the city since early September and both the anti- and pro-campaigns have delivered mailers to voters’ mailboxes.

The anti-campaign’s assertions have received a tongue-lashing from policymakers for blatant misinformation, while the pro-campaign is backed by a political action committee that previously employed similarly lambasted tactics in an effort to upend Kennedy’s re-election bid.

Since July, when they backed the decision to put the tax in front of voters, city officials have acted cautiously to not upset state political rules and show preference within their public capacity for the ballot measure one way or the other.

In toeing that line, the city recently sent to voters a mailer explaining Measure K in elementary terms. As an information-only piece, reviewed by City Attorney Andre de Bortnowsky, the city sought to ensure it didn’t run afoul of the rules.

It was authorized by the Council three weeks ago, in part to combat what officials believed has been the campaign of untruths from opponents of the sales tax.

Yet the mailer and a permissible pro-argument letter for Measure K, signed by four council members, were called out during an earlier Council meeting this month by Councilwoman Blanca Gomez as a signal of the

city's advocacy, forcing her colleagues to defend against accusations they were engaged in the very behavior they had been vocal to avoid.

It was the first visible sign that officials would be unable to keep internal politics from spilling into the issue. It's also been difficult to separate Measure K from the city's ongoing debate over the future of its fire services. By standing against a permanent agreement with the San Bernardino County Fire Department, the inevitable outcome to Measure K's failure, Mayor Pro Tem Jim Cox has indirectly signaled he stood with the pro-campaign.

Gomez, the lone signature missing from the pro-argument letter, has since declared her support for Measure K's alternative: annexation into County Fire Service Zone FP-5 and the accompanying \$153 parcel tax.

The display of support from the dais was immediately chastised by Kennedy as "totally inappropriate." "That influences a large number of voters, their constituency," Cox said in a recent phone conversation, discussing the dilemma of formally taking a position.

Gomez did not respond to messages seeking comment.

A splintered Council isn't the only obstacle in front of the city. The two-thirds threshold required in a special election is admittedly more difficult to secure than had officials punted the measure to the general election in 2018.

"The other issue, the Council brought on themselves," Cox said. "We could have had a general tax, put it on the November ballot next year and all it required was a majority."

But a general tax doesn't require how funds must be spent. Cox defended support of the special election, calling the special tax's obligatory earmark of funds for law enforcement and fire services a critical provision because he would be "distrustful" of a non-binding vow to allocate such funds.

Most voters likely received the city's informational mailer two Fridays ago, the same day as a pro-campaign piece, funded by the Quality of Life Coalition, was delivered.

The city's mailer emphasized in bold italics that visitors would help pay for public safety, an allusion to the steady stream of out-of-town motorists traveling Interstate 15 who would also contribute when purchasing goods in the city.

It also featured an image of a firefighter on both sides, doubly highlighting a key city message: that law enforcement would not be the lone beneficiaries.

The Measure K forum is scheduled for 5 p.m. at City Hall, 14343 Civic Drive. Meetings can be viewed live online at [ci.victorville.ca.us](http://ci.victorville.ca.us).

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20171023/on-measure-k-neutrality-comes-center-stage-amidst-noise>

## Family and pets escape from house fire in Yucca Valley

Stacy Moore, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: October 23, 2017, 4:26 PM



Firefighters bring in ladders and tools to ventilate the house.

YUCCA VALLEY — Ellen Henley was sitting in her living room on Monday afternoon when she heard a popping sound coming from the garage of her home on Anaconda Drive. “I opened my back door and looked and through the whole garage, smoke was roaring,” Henley said.

Fire of an unknown origin devoured the garage, but **county firefighters** stopped the flames from spreading to the rest of the house.

Henley, her husband and son and their two dogs, Heidi and Max, all escaped unhurt, although it was a close call for Heidi. The tiger brindle pit bull, whom the family found abandoned in the Joshua Tree Post Office a few years ago, was too afraid to go out the door.

“I went in a few times to try to get her but she was too scared. She wouldn’t come out,” Henley’s son said. While masked firefighters strode in and out of the house, Henley paced on the street, calling out that her dog was still inside. Finally, she got the thumbs up from one of the firefighters. Her husband disappeared into the backyard and came out holding a leash with Heidi trotting along on the other end.

Even the family goldfish survived, Henley learned from an engineer during mop-up.

The fire was reported at 2:16 p.m. and firefighters were on scene within seven minutes, Battalion Chief Mike Snow said. They had the fire contained by 2:41 p.m. “We were able to keep it out of the main living area,” Snow said.

Firefighters from the county stations in Yucca Valley, Yucca Mesa and Joshua Tree responded, along with Southern California Edison and sheriff’s deputies.

An investigator was called in from San Bernardino to determine the cause of the fire. No one was hurt from flames or smoke inhalation, Snow said.

Looking at the wreckage of their garage, Henley could only be grateful everyone, including Heidi, made it out alive. “Thank God she’s fine and thank God for the firemen!” she said.

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