



NEWS



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Measure U will significantly cut County Fire services

Maryjoy Duncan, IECN

Posted: October 09, 2020



The League of Women Voters hosted an informational Zoom meeting on “Measure U the Repeal of Fire Protection District 5” with speakers who oppose the measure. Pictured clockwise from top left: Helen Tran, Fire Captain and president IAFF Local 935 Jim Grigoli, County Fire Chief Dan Munsey, Natalie Zuk from the Red Brennan Group, and LOWV board member John Longville.

The League of Women Voters hosted an informational Zoom meeting on “Measure U the Repeal of Fire Protection District 5” with speakers who oppose the measure – **County Fire** Chief Dan Munsey and Fire Captain and president IAFF Local 935 Jim Grigoli, and in favor of the measure – Natalie Zuk from the Red Brennan Group on Thursday, Sept. 24.

Background of FP-5: Helendale and Silver Lakes residents introduced and approved special tax FP-5 in 2006 to fund their own full time fire station. The Board of Supervisors in 2018 approved the expansion of FP-5 to all unincorporated areas of the county and cities that subsequently annexed fire services to the County – Needles, San Bernardino, Twentynine Palms and Upland.

According to Munsey the expansion of FP-5 was to maintain a sustainable funding mechanism to County Fire that was underfunded by property taxes.

FP-5 comprises over \$41 million of County Fire’s \$201 million total revenue.

Munsey’s presentation illustrated the repeal of FP-5 would cause closures of up to 19 fire stations across all county districts – the Valley, Mountain, North Desert and South Desert regions – compromise effective response times and reliability, and reduce the number of firefighters from 623 to 457.

Secondary impacts include the decrease of ISO rating (homeowners insurance rate increases due to lack of nearby fire services), fewer public education/prevention outreach, elimination of technology platforms used to provide crew safety and situational awareness, and a decrease in the ability to respond to all 911 calls and firefighter safety training.

“Responding to calls isn’t our only job, it’s preventing the calls,” explained Munsey. “If we only respond, there’s no time for business inspections, education and awareness campaigns.”

Zuk from the Red Brennan Group, the nonprofit responsible for placing the measure on the ballot, argued that FP-5 is illegal because voters did not have the opportunity to vote on it, and the annual \$157 fee causes undue financial burden to the disenfranchised population.

“Over 350,000 voters did not get to vote on it... and residents in Grand Terrace already pay 10% of property taxes to the County on top of the \$157.26 fire service tax,” Zuk presented. “\$157 is the cost of monthly groceries for one person and equals six days of meals for a family of four.”

Regardless of income each property owner will pay the same rate, from Amazon warehouses to seniors on fixed incomes.

Grand Terrace resident and retired educator Dr. Tom Rivera is one of those residents charged 157 on top of the 10% property tax allocation to County Fire

“We trust elected officials to reach decisions through a fair process,” Dr. Rivera remarked. “This was not the case when the Board of Supervisors imposed a countywide property tax on the basis of a small sample of voters (1,000) that approved that tax for their area, Helendale.”

Grigoli explained that Grand Terrace and Mentone do not generate enough money to sustain their own fire stations, and the 3% annual increase in the tax provides for sustainability.

“The 3% had to be built in otherwise we would never stay up with costs, we would be upside down,” Grigoli noted. “Removal of FP-5 will only hurt our county; our services are already spread incredibly thin, and the removal of a funding measure that helps us maintain fire services cannot be the right way.”

League member and San Bernardino Community College District Trustee John Longville researched financial contributors for both sides of Measure U: Good Government San Bernardino is the major supporter to keep FP-5, while Better Communities, Inc. owned by Eric Steinmann, a registered voter in Florida, is funding efforts to repeal the tax.

According to Grigoli, Good Government San Bernardino received funding from local realtors, builders, labor partners, sheriff employees, teamsters and the SEIU. “People who believe the Fire Department provides essential services needed by the community.”

The League of Women Voters is hosting another webinar on Measures J and K, County Charter Revision and Supervisor Compensation Reduction and Term Limits, respectively, on Saturday, Oct. 10 at 10 a.m. Please email vermin92346@gmail.com if you would like to attend the Zoom event.

The League of Women Voters of the San Bernardino Area is involved in educating the general public on political matters, works to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. It influences public policy through education and advocacy.

LWV is non-partisan and does not support or oppose candidates.

<http://iecn.com/measure-u-will-significantly-cut-county%E2%80%88fire-services/>

VIDEO: U.S. Firefighters Battle Blaze Threatening Trucks

Staff Writer, Jacksonville Free Press

Posted: October 12, 2020



California is engulfed by fire on various fronts.

U.S. firefighters battled a huge blaze at a pallet yard in Southern California, where the flames threatened nearby parked trucks and containers.

The fire took place in San Bernardino. Footage was shared on YouTube by the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** on Oct. 4.

“As firefighters arrived, they found a large lot well involved with fire immediately threatening several storage containers and semi-trucks,” a fire brigade spokesperson said. “Initial suppression efforts were complicated by active power lines that had burned through, as well as insufficient water supply in the water system.

“Firefighters gained the upper hand once aerial master streams were put into service. Crews remained committed through the night for overhaul operations,” the spokesperson said. Several containers appear to be warping from the heat as the flames are slowly extinguished.

However, the pallet yard fire was a modest challenge compared to the huge wildfires that have ravaged California.

Currently, more than 15,000 firefighters work around the clock to contain 22 major wildfires across the state, Cal Fire said in a status update on Oct. 8: “Yesterday, firefighters also responded to 23 new wildfires, quickly bringing full containment to all.”

Since the beginning of the year, there have been more than 8,400 wildfires that have burned well over 4 million acres, killed 31 people and destroyed 9,200 structures in California alone, the state fire information service said.

<http://jacksonvillefreepress.com/video-u-s-firefighters-battle-blaze-threatening-trucks/>