



CITY OF
LA MESA

JEWEL of the HILLS

DAVE ALLAN
Councilmember

July 31, 2008

Honorable Ron Roberts
Chairman of the Board of Supervisors
County of San Diego
1600 Pacific Highway, #335
San Diego, CA 92101-2470

RE: Proposed Parcel Tax Ballot Measure

Dear Supervisor Roberts:

The La Mesa City Council at a special meeting on July 29, 2008, voted unanimously to oppose the San Diego County Board of Supervisor's proposed parcel tax ordinance titled "PROPOSED BALLOT MEASURE TO IMPROVE AND ENHANCE FIREFIGHTING RESOURCES AND SERVICES BY ADOPTION OF A REGIONAL AND LOCAL FIRE PROTECTION PARCEL TAX AND FUNDING PLAN." The City Council opposes the drafted ordinance as it is currently proposed.

There were a number of reasons for our opposition, which will be covered later. To a member we want to be clear on two points:

- 1. We support the concept of taking a regional approach to the critical issue of fire protection in the unincorporated areas, but this plan is not the correct approach.**
- 2. We remain completely committed to automatic and mutual aid.**

Reasons for Opposition:

- ✓ Governance Structure
- ✓ City's Existing Commitment to Fire Protection
- ✓ Proposed Annual Adjustment Increase
- ✓ Proposal Subsidizes the County and City of San Diego
- ✓ Deficiency of County's Financial Commitment
- ✓ Proposition 172
- ✓ Land Use Decisions

Governance Structure

We are concerned with the proposed representation of cities on the "Board of Directors." The cities will generate the majority of the parcel tax revenues yet will not have the majority of the seats on the board of directors.

City's Existing Commitment to Fire Protection

The City's current fire department budget is just under eight million dollars covering roughly nine square miles compared to the County's commitment of only fifteen and a half million dollars covering the County's 4,261 square miles, 3,572 in the unincorporated areas. The fire department share of the general fund budget is 21.9%. Additionally, the City has taxed its residents for \$25 million to build public safety facilities in 2004 and is going forward with its own .75 percent sales tax measure for vital services on the November 4, 2008 ballot.

Proposed Annual Adjustment Increase

We are concerned with the proposed two percent annual adjustment increase. Over the 30 years of the parcel tax, the base parcel tax goes from \$52 to \$94.19.

Proposal Subsidizes the County and City of San Diego

By taxing all parcels in the County to improve fire protection in the unincorporated 3,572 square miles the cities will be taxed and still provide fire protection through the mutual aid system. It is our understanding that 19 of the proposed 25 fire engines would be deployed in the City of San Diego while only six would potentially be deployed in the unincorporated area. This does not seem to place the engines in the areas most vulnerable to Wildland fires.

Deficiency of County's Financial Commitment

The County has a fire enhancement program and is currently funding it at \$15.5 million and has two helicopters. The County is the only large urban county in the State that does not have a County fire department.

Proposition 172

According to the last available data from FY 06-07, the County took in 235 million in Proposition 172 and could fund the regional share of \$25 million out of current revenues or out of future growth. To date the County has refused to acknowledge their responsibility for fire protection in the unincorporated areas and to allocate appropriate Proposition 172 funds to meet those obligations.

Land Use Decisions

The County continues to approve development in the unincorporated areas yet has dumped the responsibility for fire protection onto under funded/unfunded districts. This is in sharp contrast with the incorporated areas and in well funded districts where land use decisions and fire protection go hand in hand.

La Mesa City Council strongly urges the Board for Supervisors to take the comments made in this letter into consideration in your deliberations on this matter on August 5.

On behalf of the Mayor and the entire City Council,



David M. Allan
Councilmember

cc: La Mesa City Council
San Diego Union Tribune
All San Diego County Cities
Fire Districts