

QUESTION NO. CC2

Shall the Board of Supervisors of Carson City be authorized to levy an additional property tax rate for public safety, including, assisting in the funding of the Carson City Fire Department's ambulance service and wildland fire protection services; assisting in the funding of the Carson City Sheriff's Department Gang Unit, Detention Facility and Communication Center; and assisting in the funding of any other public safety agency that has an increased workload attributed to the funding provided to the Carson City Fire Department and Carson City Sheriff's Department, in the amount of up to 12.6 cents per \$100 assessed valuation for a period of 30 years? The cost for the owner of a new \$100,000 home is estimated to be approximately \$44.10 per year. If this question is approved by the voters, any property tax levied as authorized by this question will be outside of the caps on a taxpayer's liability for property taxes established by the legislature in the 2005 session.

EXPLANATION TO QUESTION NO. CC2

A citizens ad hoc committee was formed in 2007 to review and study current public safety services, their efficiency and adequacy in meeting the needs of Carson City residents. The Committee provided findings demonstrating the need for additional funding for public safety services in the amount of \$4.4 million which would have required an increase in the property tax rate of 26 cents. After review and consideration, the Board of Supervisors has approved a ballot question that asks the voters if an additional 12.6 cents should be added to the property tax rate for Carson City in order to generate revenues to fund the following public safety related activities:

- (1) For the Carson City Fire Department, an additional 24 hour ambulance unit and support for wildland fire protection efforts.
- (2) For the Carson City Sheriff's Office, a gang unit that can operate a full 3 shifts per day, additional deputies to serve in the jail in order to insure 4 deputies to cover the jail at any time and additional dispatchers in the public safety communications center to provide a minimum of 3 dispatchers on duty at any time.
- (3) For any other public safety agency, funding to pay for the increased workload that results from the additional funding provided to the Carson City Fire Department or Carson City Sheriff's Office.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF A “YES” VOTE

Who benefits from an improvement in public safety? Everyone benefits! Citizens and visitors alike need public safety services to keep Carson City safe and secure. The Board of Supervisors will allocate funding to the Fire and Sheriff’s Departments for staffing needed to meet the current safety demands.

In 2000, the Board of Supervisors commissioned a professional study of public safety to look at both the Fire and Sheriff’s Departments. The recommendation was for an additional ambulance, fire station, more Sheriff’s deputies and 911 dispatchers. Neither additional ambulance nor personnel were put into service from this study. In 2008, a committee made up of 16 Carson City residents was tasked to review public safety and, again, additional staffing was identified as needed by the Fire and Sheriff’s Departments. In the past 10 years, demands on both Departments have greatly increased. Fire and medical calls have increased from 4,505 in 1997 to 7,769 in 2007 or approximately 72%, increasing the emergency 911 operator functions equally. The demand for Sheriff’s gang enforcement efforts has greatly increased over the same period. In the past three years, gang related calls for service increased 186%, while arrests and citations increased 376% from 2005 to 2007. Additional staffing is needed to confront the increased presence, apprehension, and sentencing of gang members in the community. A “Yes” vote will help meet these needs.

Carson City has one of the lowest property tax rates in the State. The Board of Supervisors has done well to provide public safety services to the citizens of this community in a very cost effective and well-managed format. The Board has no other options to meet current public safety needs without the help of the citizens to increase revenue to fund these needs.

A “Yes” vote will give the Board of Supervisors the ability to hire six dual role Firefighter/Paramedics, to staff one 24-hour Advanced Life Support Ambulance to meet the critical response time, and to hire additional personnel to increase the Fire Department wildland firefighting force. The Sheriff’s Department will be able to hire an Operational Gang Unit, 911 dispatchers, and deputies for the jail and court systems.

A "Yes" vote will provide increases in both the Fire and Sheriff's Department personnel which will staff additional units to respond to your calls for help. Vote "Yes" on Question No. CC2.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF A "NO" VOTE

The devil is in the details and frankly this is one scary detail. The money we will pay for the Fire and Life Safety proposal is, to home and business owners, very scary.

The proposal mandates additional taxes on all Carson City property owners. Unlike the existing property tax whose allowable increases in revenues generated by the taxes are capped at 3% for homeowners, this tax is not subject to abatement. The revenues generated by the tax can increase over a 30 year period if the assessed value of the property being taxed increases. Because this tax is imposed upon the actual assessed value of property and the revenues generated by the tax are not limited to a 3% increase for homeowners, it has the potential of making our homes so expensive that we can no longer own them. Those of us on fixed incomes may not be able to continue living in our homes.

It is proposed to tax property owners 12.6 cents per \$100 of assessed value to pay for added police and fire protection. Do we need the added services that Sheriff and Fire Chief say we need? The city is not growing; and, there are no new construction projects in Carson City, except for a few houses in Silver Oaks. The distance to respond in Carson City has not changed. The crime rate is down. So, why can't deputies be transferred to other departments as the need arises?

The proposed tax, if approved by the voters, will be calculated on the assessed value of the property and will not be subject to abatement. In other words, this new tax will not be subject to a limit on the amount of revenues it generates. The amount of revenues generated by the tax can increase if the assessed value of the properties being taxed increases. This tax may hurt senior citizens on fixed incomes and may make affordable housing less affordable.

If the proposed tax is approved, businesses that own property will have to pay more taxes on that property. Businesses pass increased costs on to their customers who then pay more for the products they buy. Business may not be able to give their employees raises due to

the added cost of the tax. Carson City businesses can be hurt due to increasing prices and services which makes them less competitive with businesses in other counties. This tax is not needed and will harm all property owners and renters. So beware, in this economy, our expenses are high enough. We do not need higher taxes.

REBUTTAL TO THE "NO" VOTE

Raising taxes can be a scary proposition. In the case of life safety issues, not providing the basic services is even scarier! Carson City has demonstrated by both a professional study and a citizens' committee the need for additional public safety services. While growth has slowed, fire and medical emergencies continue to increase. Though crime in general is down, gang activity, arrests, and citations have dramatically increased. Now is the time to take action!

The proposed tax is calculated upon the assessed value of property. As stated in the ballot question, the tax is capped at a maximum 12.6 cents to sunset in 30 years. This tax is not subject to the legislated cap on revenues generated by the tax. Public safety officials must justify the annual tax rate to the Board of Supervisors which will set the annual tax rate based on need. The money generated by this tax will be deposited into a special account so that the City will be accountable to the public for the use of the tax proceeds.

Carson City has one of the lowest tax rates in the State. New taxes are scary; but losing loved ones to a fire, medical emergency, or crime is even scarier!

REBUTTAL TO THE "YES" VOTE

Who pays for public safety? Everyone pays. How much can we afford? Why do the supervisors, in these times of poor economic conditions, rely on the recommendations of an unelected committee to ask the populace for a property tax increase? The sheriff tells us that the rate of crime has decreased in our city. Why, then, does he need added manpower? Profitable businesses reallocate resources when their markets change. The sheriff should do the same thing.

Carson City is geographically bounded by other counties and federal land. Its size has not increased. There is virtually no construction of

new homes. Yes, some could say there is a need for increased ambulance service but this service is organized as an enterprise fund and costs are paid by those who use the service. There is not a need for an additional fire station and additional personnel.

In closing, vote no on question CC2. If there is truly a need for additional public safety manpower, these needs should be discussed at public hearings of elected official's, not by a citizens ad hoc committee. To date, there has not been a public hearing on this issue and that, in itself, should be reason enough for a no vote.

DESCRIPTION OF ANTICIPATED FINANCIAL EFFECT

The City estimates that the additional property tax of 12.6 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation will generate between \$2,587,903 and \$15,640,662 annually for a period of 30 years. The cost for the owner of a new \$100,000 home is estimated to be approximately \$44.10 per year. If this question is approved by the voters, the additional property tax authorized to be levied will be outside of the caps on a taxpayer=s liability for property (ad valorem) taxes established by the legislature in the 2005 session.

ENVIORNMENTAL IMPACT

None.