



Agenda Item No. 10.

Staff Report

Date: March 10, 2022

To: Mayor Robbins and Council Members

From: Christa Johnson, Town Manager

Subject: Calling for Election for Renewal of the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority Four Year Tax for 2023-2027

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Town Council adopt Resolution No. 2242 calling for a municipal election for renewal of the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority (RVPA) Four Year tax for 2023-2027 and requesting the Marin County Board of Supervisors to consolidate with the General Election on that date, and requesting election services of the County Elections Department. Also, staff requests the Council, should it agree to support renewal of the parcel tax, to decide on the proposed ballot argument language and who should sign the argument (i.e. Mayor, Council members, community members).

Background and discussion

The RVPA is an 8-member joint powers authority (JPA) established in 1982 for the purpose of delivering Fire Department paramedic services in the Ross Valley region. The primary funding mechanism for the RVPA is a property tax. Each taxable residential unit is taxed along with every 1,500 square feet of non-residential structure. This taxation-funding source has been in place since the inception of the RVPA. It financially supports a significant portion of the approximately \$2.3 million annual budget.

Every four years, the citizens who reside within the member communities of the RVPA service area vote to fund the tax for a four-year period. The current tax expires June 30, 2023. In order to maintain this revenue stream, each JPA member agency must place the matter on the June or the November 2022 ballot. The purpose of this report and attached resolution is intended to fulfill the member agency's obligation to place this matter on either the June 7, 2022 or the November 8, 2022 ballot.

The 8-member communities of the RVPA consist of:

- Corte Madera*
- Kentfield
- San Anselmo
- Fairfax
- Larkspur
- Ross
- Sleepy Hollow
- Unincorporated areas (CSA 27) in the Ross Valley area

** Corte Madera is a sub-contractor of the RVPA and sets tax rates that are separate from the other member agency areas.*

The RVPA JPA is one of the oldest and most successful regional partnerships in Marin County. The JPA was established in 1982 as a way to share costs among the member agencies in order to provide Fire Department based paramedic first response and ambulance transport services to the communities in the Ross Valley. Since its launch, the JPA has evolved in order to continually provide exceptional levels of advanced life support care to its citizens.

It is important to note that Fire Department based paramedic response holds service to its communities and patient care as its foremost objectives. The seamless combination of Fire Department paramedic engine companies and ambulance units ensures for rapid, seamless, and highly professional levels of care.

In November 2018, the RVPA proposed and the voters in all member agencies (excluding Corte Madera*) approved the current tax that began at \$79 plus a 50-cent administrative fee paid to the county, and incrementally increased each year by \$4. In the fourth year (2022-2023), the tax will top out at \$91 plus the 50-cent administrative fee that is paid to the county tax collector.

For the next four years, the RVPA Board of Directors has approved a tax rate containing \$3 annual increases as follows:

2023-24	\$94.50
2024-25	\$97.50
2025-26	\$100.50
2026-27	\$103.50

Annually, each member agency confirms the tax. At this time, the RVPA and staff from member agencies assess the financial condition of the RVPA and then make a recommendation on the rate for the next one-year period. If the financial condition of the paramedic program is stable, the JPA and member agencies can maintain the tax at its present level and defer the annual increase approved by the voters. This has been done in the past. Thus, while voters approve annual incremental increases, the JPA and member agencies can hold the tax at a lower level.

The RVPA Board has approved the following ballot language and ballot argument for use by the member agencies:

Ballot Language

“To maintain rapid 9-1-1 emergency response times and preserve the number of on-duty paramedics ready to respond to accidents/ medical emergencies, shall the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority measure be adopted continuing for four years the paramedic services special tax of \$94.50 per residential living unit or 1,500 square feet of developed nonresidential property, adjusted up to \$3 per year, generating approximately \$93,000 annually, subject to annual audits, public spending disclosure and all funds for local paramedic services?”

Ballot Argument

See attached sample copy.

Fiscal, resource and timeline impacts

There could be financial and service level impacts if the tax renewal is not approved by the voters as this tax is used to support paramedic emergency services in Ross. According to the Marin County Registrar of Voters, the cost to place an item on the consolidated general election ballot ranges from \$19,000 to \$38,000 depending on the number of items on the ballot and the number of jurisdictions that participate in the election. The Town Council has budgeted enough funds for elections in the general fund to cover the cost of this election.

Alternative actions

The Town Council may take action to place this measure on either the June 7, 2022 or the November 8, 2022 ballot.

Environmental review (if applicable)

Adoption of the attached resolution is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq. (“CEQA”), because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity authorized herein may have a significant effect on the environment. (CEQA Guidelines §15061(b)(3))

Attachments

1. Resolution No. 2242, Exhibit A – Draft Ordinance No. 714
2. Ballot Argument

ATTACHMENT 1

TOWN OF ROSS

RESOLUTION NO. 2242

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF ROSS CALLING A MUNICIPAL ELECTION TO BE HELD IN ITS JURISDICTION ON JUNE 7, 2022 FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUBMITTING TO THE VOTERS A MEASURE AUTHORIZING THE CONTINUATION OF A SPECIAL TAX FOR PARAMEDIC SERVICES; REQUESTING THE MARIN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS TO CONSOLIDATE WITH THE GENERAL ELECTION CONDUCTED ON THAT DATE; AND REQUESTING ELECTION SERVICES OF THE COUNTY ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT

WHEREAS, on November 6, 2018, the voters of the Town of Ross approved a special tax for the funding of paramedic services through the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority; and

WHEREAS, the special tax is scheduled to expire on June 30, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council desires to submit to the voters a measure authorizing the continuation of the special tax for the purpose of funding paramedic services provided by the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council desires to hold a municipal election to be consolidated with the statewide general election scheduled to be held on June 7, 2022; and

WHEREAS, at that election there shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the Town, the following question:

“To maintain rapid 9-1-1 emergency response times and preserve the number of on-duty paramedics ready to respond to accidents/ medical emergencies, shall the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority measure be adopted continuing for four years the paramedic services special tax of \$94.50 per residential living unit or 1,500 square feet of developed nonresidential property, adjusted up to \$3 per year, generating approximately \$93,000 annually, subject to annual audits, public spending disclosure and all funds for local paramedic services?”

WHEREAS, if this measure receives approval by two-thirds of the voters voting thereon, the ordinance in the form attached hereto as Exhibit “A” shall be adopted; and

WHEREAS, the Town Clerk shall fix and determine a reasonable date prior to the election, after which no arguments for or against the question may be submitted; and shall cause arguments for or against the question to be printed and enclosed with the sample ballot approved by the California Elections Code; and

WHEREAS, rebuttal arguments shall be received in connection with the election on this proposition; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 10002 of the Elections Code, the Town Council may request the Board of Supervisors to permit the County Elections Department to render specified services to the Town relating to the conduct of the election on a reimbursable basis; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Town of Ross as follows:

1. That a municipal election is hereby called to be held on June 7, 2022, at which election the ballot question set forth above shall be determined by the voters. The text of the proposed ordinance to be submitted to the voters is attached hereto as Exhibit "A" and incorporated herein by reference; and
2. That the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marin is hereby requested to consolidate said election with the general election to be conducted on the same day; and
3. That the Town Council hereby acknowledges that the consolidated election will be held and conducted in the manner prescribed in Section 10418 of the California Elections Code; and
4. That the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marin is hereby requested to authorize the County Elections Department to render the following specified services for the Town of Ross relating to the conduct of the election to be held on June 7, 2022: Preparation of voter indexes; voter counting by precinct; verification of signatures; drayage and rental of polling places; printing of measures and arguments; printing of sample and official ballots; appointment and notification of election officers; mailing of sample ballots and polling place notification; provision of precinct supplies; training of precinct workers; processing of absentee ballots; central counting; canvass of votes cast; and
5. The Town Clerk is hereby ordered and directed to file a copy of this resolution with the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marin.

PASSED AND ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Ross on the 10th day of March 2022, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Elizabeth Robbins, Mayor

ATTEST:

Linda Lopez, Town Clerk

EXHIBIT A

TOWN OF ROSS

ORDINANCE NO. 714

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF ROSS, CALIFORNIA, AMENDING CHAPTER 3.30 OF THE ROSS MUNICIPAL CODE TO CONTINUE THE LEVY OF A SPECIAL TAX TO FINANCE PARAMEDIC SERVICES

**THE PEOPLE OF THE TOWN OF ROSS, CALIFORNIA DO HEREBY ORDAIN AS
FOLLOWS:**

Section 1. Chapter 3.30.020 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Section 3.30.020 Special Tax Imposed.

A special tax for the purpose specified in Section 3.30.010 of this chapter shall be imposed on all developed parcels of real property in the Town of Ross for each fiscal year, commencing with fiscal year 2023-2024, as follows:

- a. Residential Uses: \$94.50 per dwelling unit on a parcel for fiscal year 2023-24. Beginning with fiscal year 2023-24, the Town Council may approve an annual increase to said amount not to exceed \$3.00 annually to a maximum of \$103.50 for fiscal year 2026-27. For the purposes of this chapter, a dwelling unit means a building designed for or occupied by one family, including a dwelling unit under construction. A residential second unit duly registered with the Town of Ross, or any structure accessory to the primary dwelling, which is used for occupancy by family members, occasional guests, or servants, is not a dwelling unit for the purposes of this chapter.
- b. Non-Residential Uses: \$94.50 per 1,500 square feet of structure on the parcel for fiscal year 2023-24. Beginning with fiscal year 2024-25, the Town Council may approve an annual increase to said amount not to exceed \$3.00 annually to a maximum of \$103.50 for fiscal year 2026-27.

The records of the Marin County Assessor as of March 1st of each year shall determine the use and improvement of each parcel for the calculation of the special tax applicable to that parcel in the following fiscal year.

For the purposes of this chapter, the term "parcel" shall mean a parcel of real property having a separate assessor's parcel number as shown on the last equalized assessment roll of Marin County."

Section 2. Chapter 3.30.080 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Section 3.30.080 Termination of Provisions.

This chapter shall be null and void as of twelve o'clock midnight, June 30, 2027, and shall have no force and effect whatsoever after said time and date. Notwithstanding the previous sentence, section 3.30.050, relating to the collection and enforcement of liens or obligations for the special tax previously levied hereunder, shall continue in effect until such time as the collection and enforcement procedures have been completed."

Section 3. The appropriations limit of the Town of Ross established under Article XIII B, Section 6 of the California Constitution shall be increased by the proceeds received from the special tax imposed by this ordinance. Any future increases in the appropriations limit shall be approved by a majority vote of the voters voting thereon.

Section 4. If any provision of this ordinance or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity or unconstitutionality shall not affect any other provision or applications, and to this end the provisions of this ordinance are declared to be severable. The Town Council, and the electorate by referendum, do hereby declare that they would have adopted this ordinance and each section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, part or portion thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, clauses, phrases, parts or portions thereof, be declared invalid or unconstitutional.

Section 5. This ordinance shall be adopted and become effective only if approved by two-thirds of the voters voting thereon, at an election to be held on June 7, 2022.

Section 6. The Mayor is hereby authorized to attest to the adoption of this ordinance by signing where indicated below.

I hereby certify that the foregoing ordinance was PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED by the people of the Town of Ross voting on the 7th day of June 2022.

By:

Elizabeth Robbins, Mayor

ATTEST:

Linda Lopez, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENT 2

BALLOT ARGUMENT

For victims of heart attacks, strokes, accidents and other emergencies, rapid 9-1-1 paramedic response can be the difference between life and death. Voting YES on _ will ensure paramedics are ready to respond quickly when you or a loved one needs help the most.

For 40 years, local paramedic services in the Ross Valley have been supported by a modest parcel tax that provides dedicated local funding to protect critical lifesaving paramedic services. When this funding was initially approved by local voters, it funded a single dedicated ambulance for the Ross Valley. As our community has grown and emergency medical services evolved, dedicated local paramedic funding now supports state-of-the-art fire department ambulance units with trained paramedics aboard fire engines so that advanced emergency care arrives as quickly as possible.

Local paramedic funding is now set to expire unless renewed by voters for four more years. Increases in the annual tax rate are capped at no more than \$3.

Voting Yes on _ will:

- Protect rapid 9-1-1 emergency response times
- Preserve the number of on-duty paramedics ready to respond to medical emergencies and accidents
- Ensure local paramedics are highly trained and equipped with advanced lifesaving equipment
- Preserve the existing high level of paramedic response services

Voting Yes on _ continues strict fiscal accountability protections:

- Funds from Measure _ may only be used for local paramedic services
- No funds can be taken away by the State, the County or other cities
- All funds are subject to annual audits
- Public disclosure of all spending is required

Nobody knows when a life-threatening accident or emergency will occur. Voting Yes on _ will ensure that paramedics are at the ready when needed.

Join local firefighters, paramedics, elected leaders, business leaders and residents in voting Yes on _.

Signature

Signature

Signature

Signature

Signature