

**Alto Park
Five-Year Local Option Levy
Hearing Minutes
Wednesday, October 5, 2022, 11:00 a.m.
Via Zoom Meeting
Measure 26-226**

November 8, 2022, Election

Present:

TSCC:

Chair Harmony Quiroz, Commissioner James Ofsink, Commissioner Mark Wubbold, Commissioner Margo Norton, Executive Director Allegra Willhite, and Budget Analyst Tunie Betschart (all via zoom meeting)

Absent: Commissioner Matt Donahue

Alto Park Water District:

Board Member Robert Leeb

Staff: Michelle Freed and James Thompson Morales

Chair Harmony Quiroz opened the Public Hearing on the Five-Year Local Option Property Tax Levy by explaining TSCC's responsibilities concerning tax measures. She explained that the commissioners will take no action at the hearing but will provide a vehicle for the public to comment and will ask questions the general public may be interested in hearing from the district. The minutes of this public hearing are prepared and retained as a permanent record of this hearing.

She followed with introductions of TSCC Commissioners, staff, and the district's representatives. Following the introductions, Chair Quiroz opened the hearing for public comment. She asked Executive Director Willhite if anyone had signed up to comment or if staff had received any written comments. Ms. Willhite had not received any written comments, and no one signed up to give statements.

TSCC Questions:

Chair Quiroz asked the following question:

How and what have you communicated with voters about the local option levy?

Ms. Freed answered, saying Alto Park is a small district. The five-year local option levy has been presented to the voters continually for many years. The

neighborhood is well aware of the levy and the need for it to continue the services provided.

Mr. Leeb shared a photo of the Neighborhood Annual Picnic held in September, where the levy was presented along with other neighborhood information. He explained there had been little change in the neighborhood population over the years and only three houses changed ownership in the last year. The 60-70 residents are aware of the levy and its need. He explained at the annual picnic about the name Alto Park Water being unusual since they provide only fire protection. He said there is a board member currently out of the country. When he returns, they will have another meeting to present more information on the history of the district and its fifty-year history with Lake Oswego providing fire services.

Commissioner Wubbold asked the following questions:

Have you ever heard of neighbors being confused about the name since the district only provides fire services and your name indicates water?

Mr. Leeb explained that the City of Portland took over the water distribution in the late 60s, and the district partnered with the City of Lake Oswego to provide fire protection services. Many things in the world are misnamed, and the name still works for the district.

Commissioner Ofsink asked the following questions:

In an average service year, how many of your calls are medical/EMT vs. fire calls? Do you have any other types of calls?

Ms. Freed said she had reached out to Lake Oswego for the answer to this question. They reported that from 2017 through 2022, there were:

- 12 medical-related calls
- One call hazard-conditions call
- One invalid-assist call
- Five calls were canceled in route
- One smoke detector false alarm

In the five years, there were twenty-one calls.

Mr. Leeb added that he has lived in the district for 25 years, and there have been two fires; a Christmas tree fire and an electrical fire.

Commissioner Norton asked the following questions:

To ensure we have the correct facts:

- The Local Option Levy is necessary because the permanent rate will not cover the service contract to provide fire protection
- The five-year contract with Lake Oswego ended in June and was renewed for five years
- The contract cost will escalate over this time.

Ms. Freed said this was all correct. The contract escalation is based on the value of the homes tied strictly to the assessed value.

Are there provisions in the contract for labor shortages?

Ms. Freed said they met with Lake Oswego fire, and they did not mention any shortages. She said they have been very impressed with Lake Oswego's response to the district and the desire to maintain a good relationship with them. They are always wanting to know if there have been any complaints or if there are any ways to improve the service provided.

Is there any other potential provider the board has considered besides Lake Oswego Fire?

Mr. Leeb responded, saying they have been very impressed with the Lake Oswego Fire district and the service they provide. Every firefighter is an EMT. The rate of success is very high compared to national standards. They are also the closest firehouse. Portland has a firehouse at Terwilliger, but they have had a good relationship with Lake Oswego Fire and plan to continue it.

Chair Quiroz asked the following question:

We notice the district's annual contingency/ending fund balance is higher than the local option levy is expected to bring in as revenue every year. Do you plan to levy the full \$0.60 per \$1,000 rate if approved? At what fund balance threshold would you consider levying a smaller amount?

Ms. Freed said no, the district had not established a contingency threshold at which they would levy a smaller amount. They have discussed assessing a smaller amount but ultimately have decided to levy the total amount. Each year they use a small portion of the contingency. Levying the full amount and maintaining a contingency gives them a buffer if the levy fails. The board feels this is important because the service provided is essential.

What feedback have you heard from the voters who have voted against the levy?

Ms. Freed has not heard any feedback from the voters.

Mr. Leed added that he has never heard any comments against the levy at the neighborhood meetings, and they have very vocal residents.

Commissioner Wubbold asked the following question:

Is there a clause in the contract with Lake Oswego addressing what the district could do if the levy were to fail?

Ms. Freed said no, there is nothing in the contract. However, the district would push to pass it if it were to fail. There has never been a problem in the past getting approval for the levy; again, this is the reason for the contingency. It would be used to carry the district until the issue is resolved.

Commissioner Norton asked the following questions:

If the levy and contract with Lake Oswego were to go away, would this lack of fire protection become an issue for homeowners' insurance?

Ms. Freed said from her perspective as a homeowner, this would likely be the case.

Chair Quiroz said this concluded the questions TSCC has. She thanked Mr. Leeb, Michelle Freed, and Mr. Morales for coming and answering TSCC's questions. Since there were no members of the public present, she closed the public hearing.