

Public Comment

Subject: Public Meeting - April 23rd 2025 – MHCC Bond

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Dear Commissioners:

Why are you here?

TSCC staff might prepare an independent and impartial fiscal analysis of this bond proposal, its impact on the region's cumulative tax burden, and provide an overview of the region's cumulative debt, but it's pointless because none of it is in the voter pamphlet. Tonight, you might ask hard and probing questions of MHCC representatives that might identify weaknesses in their bond levy proposal. Those questions might identify strengths, but again, it's pointless because those questions should have been asked and answered before the March 20th deadline for MHCC to finalize their proposal and submit it to the voters.

None of your feedback will be incorporated into the measure. None of what is discussed tonight will find its way into measure arguments placed before the voters. If MHCC makes promises tonight or to the voters and fails to deliver, there are no consequences. At most, some bored journalist might be sitting in and write an obscure article.

So, again I ask: why bother?

TSCC staff and you are engaging in little more than pointless busy work. I pity their lack of purpose. If I had their jobs, I wouldn't get out of bed in the morning.

Worse: you're not even doing your job of "supervising" and "Conserving" the region's cumulative tax burden. The final report of the Governor's Central City Task Force released in January, 2025 identified the region's cumulative tax burden for driving declines in job growth and for causing wealth flight. The task force found in spite of aggressive taxation, the region's services are poor because of the abundance of special-interest taxes. In December, 2023, the Governor called for a moratorium on new local taxes for the greater good, but you're not enforcing it.

The sad thing is this is one of the better bond levies in recent years. Two years ago, I sat through PCC's charm-offensive about their bloated bond proposal where they didn't even know what they were going to build and had no capital plan. TSCC didn't call them out. MHCC can't pass a bond because poorer East County voters are wiser and less charmed about shiny things "for the children." Where's the TSCC's influence in starting a conversation about redrawing districts or coordinating the cumulative tax rate, given East County residents reject MHCC levies because they are already oversaddled with a slew of Metro Council levies they didn't want.

I recognize the toothlessness and ineffectiveness of the TSCC is largely a product of State law, but the appropriate reaction is not to hold this pointless hearing and go through the motions. The appropriate action is to walk away in protest since you're not able to do your job anyway.

Reforms of the TSCC should start with:

- Publishing independent overviews of the region's debt and tax burden, as well as independent fiscal analysis of tax measures in the voter guide,

- Holding hearings on tax proposals with agency required responses at least 30 days before the deadline for measure submission by local agencies,
- Having the authority to reject deficient, vague, or excessive tax proposals, or send them back to local agencies for an election cycle for revision,
- Having the authority to modify existing taxes when they raise more than proponent's forecasts or get repurposed for uses other than what was promised to the voters
- Having Tax Supervisory and Conservation oversight authority for income and business taxes and tax proposals,
- Having authority to force joint sessions of agency boards to discuss governance proposals such as merging the Soil and Water Conservation districts with the Urban Flood Management District.
- Commissioning a regional capital plan that prioritizes need over politics.

Yours truly,

Tom Busse

[I am a professional performance auditor]