



May 20, 2022

MEASURE L EXPLANATION

Measure L is a proposed sales tax increase of $\frac{1}{4}$ cent, which comes before the voters of Napa County on June 7.

At our most recent meeting the Officers and Directors of SPOA voted, virtually unanimously, to place SPOA on record in support of a YES vote on Measure L. We owe the owners an explanation for why we have taken this position. Please bear in mind that everyone should vote his or her conscience on this issue. But here is why we recommend a YES vote:

SPOA's highest priority is the prevention of a repeat of the October, 2017 wildfire that destroyed nearly 15% of all Silverado residences. Fire suppression is, quite frankly, a matter of money.

The recent extensive brush clearing project north and east of Silverado cost nearly a million dollars including in-kind contributions from CalFire personnel. This work will need to be repeated just about every year after new flammable brush grows back, not just adjacent to Silverado but literally all over Napa County. And brush clearing is only one of many needed fire suppression actions, all of which cost money- just think of examples like firefighting aircraft, early-warning technology, training of owners in home-hardening, and the like.

Napa County is blessed with a highly-skilled, committed and nonpartisan organization, the Napa Communities Firewise Foundation, which has done the yeoman work of creating the five-year Community Wildfire Protection Plan for fire-suppression activities throughout the County. The 2021-22 Silverado brush clearing project was a high priority for the second year of the Plan. As of 2020, the total estimated cost for five years of county-wide activities per this Plan was \$43.8 million, or almost \$9 million per year. It's not going to get any cheaper.

Where will this money come from? The state of California has a substantial budget surplus, but Napa is one of 58 counties which would fight for it among numerous priorities. It is no secret that money from the State would come with significant strings attached, as well as almost inevitable bureaucratic inefficiency and waste. Grants from the State will only take us so far.

Better to keep the funding as local as possible, but Napa County simply does not have this kind of money lying around.

We have debated asking Silverado residents, an affluent group, to commit to regular funding for fire suppression. \$250-\$500 per household each year might suffice to fund most of Silverado's needs, but expecting all our households to voluntarily write checks in that amount every year is not realistic.

In this context, a quarter-of-a-cent sales tax increase would be the most painless way to assure a funding stream over the long haul. The Supervisors estimate that the tax increase will raise roughly \$10 million per year, a more than sufficient amount to fund the most important fire suppression priorities throughout the County. Nearly one-third of this total will be paid by visitors and tourists. Virtually every dollar raised by this tax must be applied to enumerated fire protection priorities. A local citizens' oversight committee will audit expenditures to assure the money will go where it is supposed to.

My friends will attest that I am usually skeptical to the point of cynicism as to whether any tax increase will achieve its purposes. But this is the right new tax at the right time. The combination of local control, a well-defined target and a profoundly important purpose make this the rare tax increase I can get behind 100%. I and the Officers and Directors of SPOA hope you agree.

Bill Foureman
President, Silverado Property Owners Association