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Supervisors green light hospital sales tax

By Christina Manuel, Staff Writer | October 28, 2021 | Reprinted with Permission

In June 2022, Mariposa County voters will see a familiar item for John C. Fremont (JCF) Hospital on their ballot.

The 1 percent tax — now with a 40-year sunset clause — to support a new hospital was recently approved by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors.

Brought forward by the local Citizens to Save the Hospital group, the 1 percent tax is to be used as a funding source to bring the local health care district's hospital up to current seismic standards as required by Senate Bill 1953. If not completed by 2030, the district faces shutting down its center.

“As you well know, this mandate is unfunded,” said JCF Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Matthiessen, at the Oct. 19 supervisors meeting. “So we have to meet it somehow, and there's not really substantial funds being made available anywhere else.”

County tax collector and treasurer Keith Williams presented to the board that on Oct. 13 the county clerk verified the citizens group petition qualified as a valid petition, and reached more than the 823 votes it needed.

“We do not want to see our hospital go away,” said Beth Tomsick, co-chair of Citizens to Save the Hospital.

Citizens to Save the Hospital is made up of nine community members with “diverse backgrounds,” Tomsick said. Four of the current members were previously on the Measure N committee last year. Measure N needed a . approval to pass, but fell short with only 63 percent. Learning from their mistakes, Tomsick said this time around there is a 40-year sunset clause in place, and there will be more specific expenditure and accountability plans.

This effort to save the hospital comes with another change — as it's a citizen's initiative, only majority approval is needed to pass on June 7, 2022.

“The signers of our petition agreed with us that we need the 24/7 emergency services of the JC Fremont Hospital,” Tomsick said.

It was then requested by Suzette Prue, co-chair of Citizens to Save the Hospital, that each supervisor hold a public meeting in their respective districts for questions on the tax.

High profile people from the community expressed their support for the hospital, including Marilyn Saunders, director of the Mariposa County Economic Development Corporation; Shannon Gadd, director of the Health and Human Services Agency; and Mariposa County Sheriff Jeremy Briese.

“When emergencies happen, time is everything and it’s critical to even fathom not having medical care here in our community,” Briese said. “I don’t know how we would actually function because some things you just can’t wait to take an ambulance ride down the hill on some incidents until stabilized ...”

Supervisor Tom Sweeney of District 2 addressed Measure N’s lack of popularity in North County, saying it is in fact important for his district as they frequently utilize the newly reopened Northside Clinic and home hospice care provided by JCF, “and we certainly make use of the helicopter there on occasion so it’s a value to the northside,” he said.

All five supervisors gave their support to the item, placing the sales tax item on the June 2022 ballot.

Note: Article continues with unrelated topics...

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