



# TOWN OF FAIRFAX

## STAFF REPORT

### May 7, 2014

**TO:** Mayor and Town Council

**FROM:** Garrett Toy, Town Manager 

**SUBJECT:** Adoption of a resolution adopting intended ballot language which proposes an increase in the paramedic service tax; adopting a ballot argument; calling and giving notice of the holding of an election to be held November 4, 2014; requesting the County of Marin to consolidate said election; authorizing the Town Clerk to carry out all the necessary procedures for said election and; directing that rebuttal arguments may be received.

---

### RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution proposing an increase in the paramedic service tax, establishing a date for election, adopting intended ballot language and ballot argument, requesting the consolidation of said election, requesting election services of the Town Clerk and directing that rebuttal arguments may be received.

### DISCUSSION

The Ross Valley Paramedic Authority (RVPA) is financed primarily through a residential per unit and non-residential square footage tax. Every four years, the elected bodies of each of the member agencies have the opportunity to decide whether to continue the program by calling for an election. The Ross Valley Paramedic Tax has been annually levied and approved by voters every four years since 1983. The Fairfax voters last approved the special tax for the funding of paramedic services in November 2010. The maximum allowable tax was established at \$51.00 per residential unit plus a \$.50 County administrative fee, and \$51.00 per 1500 square feet of structure in non-residential use, plus a \$.50 County administrative fee. This current tax is scheduled to expire in June 30, 2015.

*The RVPA is proposing an increase in the tax and the following ballot language:*

***Shall there be a continuation of the four year special tax for paramedic services in the amount of \$57 in the first year and raising the tax \$6 annually to a maximum of \$75 per taxable living unit, or per 1,500 square of structure on a developed parcel in non-residential use, with the appropriations limit increased by the amount of said tax for the next four years?***

The RVPA board is seeking a \$6 annual increase in the tax over the next four years. This is due to the following factors:

- Annual need to transfer funds from reserves to balance the budget.
- Anticipated 5% (\$64,800) increase in the County Contract beginning in FY2014-15
- Anticipated reductions in transport billing revenue.

The proposed tax rate for the next four years is as follows:

2015 -16	\$57
2016 -17	\$63
2017 -18	\$69
2018 -19	\$75

AGENDA ITEM # 16

All the member agencies have or will be placing this matter on the ballot for November 2014. The tax is needed to maintain the current level of paramedic services. Also attached is the ballot argument and key information regarding the RVPA.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

None, since the RVPA reimburses the member jurisdictions for the cost of the election.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Ballot Argument

Overview of RVPA JPA

Resolution

## **Ballot Argument**

The Ross Valley Paramedic Authority is a partnership of 8 Ross Valley communities that have combined efforts to deliver an exceptional level of paramedic and ambulance service to our communities.

Since 1982 the voters of the Ross Valley have continued to approve a special tax to help fund this fire department based paramedic service. You are being asked to again support the tax with modest annual \$6 incremental increases for four years to a maximum rate of \$75.

The initial Ross Valley Paramedic Authority tax provided for a single ambulance. The growing recognition of the importance of quality paramedic care has dictated that service levels continue to expand and evolve. Paramedic care is now provided through a system that includes state of the art fire department paramedic ambulance units and with trained paramedics aboard all fire engines so that advanced emergency care can arrive as quickly as possible.

The Ross Valley Paramedic Authority will continue the responsible, transparent approach to managing the costs of our emergency medical response service and adequately provide for the long-term health and safety of our community.

A Yes Vote Will:

- Ensure the existing high level paramedic emergency medical response services
- Continue local control over these tax revenues
- Maintain rapid emergency response times

Your tax pays for a significant portion of our local paramedic program. Additional funds are collected from insurance companies through third party billing and from billing of non-resident customers. In addition, your tax covers continuing paramedic training, the cost of supplies and equipment and the replacement of ambulance units when needed.

Our goal is to continue to provide state of the art paramedic care in the Ross Valley. We need your vote to continue this vital service. Please vote YES on Measure \_\_\_\_\_.

## OVERVIEW OF THE ROSS VALLEY PARAMEDIC AUTHORITY JPA

### Governance and Administration

- The RVPA is an eight member JPA that was formed in 1982 for the express purpose of providing fire department based paramedic service to the Ross Valley. The JPA service area includes:

Town of Corte Madera	Board Members:
City of Larkspur	Michael Lappert Board Chair
Kentfield Fire District	Dan Hillmer, Board Member
Town of Ross	Bruce Corbet, Board Member
Town of San Anselmo	Bruce Hart, Board Member
Sleepy Hollow Fire District	Janice Przybylski, Board Member
Town of Fairfax	Tom Finn, Board Member
County of Marin CSA 19 areas	Larry Bragman, Board Member
	Dennis Gilardi, Board Member
- Each member agency provides one representative to serve on the RVPA board of directors. The board meets monthly on the first Thursday at 6:30 pm at the City of Larkspur council chambers.
- The RVPA executive officer is a volunteer role, historically handled by one of the member agency fire chiefs.
- Currently, the Larkspur finance director serves as the RVPA finance officer.
- The RVPA pays the City of Larkspur \$46,000 annually for financial services, accounting and auditing.
- The Town of Corte Madera is a full voting and partnering member, providing regional first-due paramedic engine company and ambulance transport services to Corte Madera, CSA 27 areas and portions of the City of Larkspur.

### Staffing and Service Deployment

- Upon launch of the program, paramedics were initially employed by the RVPA. Eventually, the Marin County Fire Department took over staffing the ambulance on contract and hired the JPA's medics. The RVPA ambulance has been successfully staffed with Marin County medics under this contractual arrangement since the late 1980's.
- The RVPA owns one transport vehicle. The ambulance has been housed at the Ross Fire Station. This site was selected due it being a central response location.

*The RVPA pays \$26,200 annually to the Town of Ross for housing of the RVPA ambulance and personnel.*
- In the mid 1990's, the Town of Corte Madera launched a medic transport ambulance to serve the Town and to back up the RVPA ambulance. The Town has been operating under a successful subcontract partnership.
- The Marin County Fire Department provides additional back up service to the Upper Ross Valley with a fire department paramedic ambulance stationed in Woodacre.
- ALS back up service fees are paid to our partnering agencies under several approved funding arrangements.

Budget / Property Tax / Revenue Streams

- The FY 2013-14 operating budget is \$2,229,950
- In FY 2013-14, a total of \$349,783 was transferred from reserves to balance the budget.
- Every four years, the RVPA property tax must be placed on the ballot **separately** in all member agency communities.
- It is the member agency’s responsibility to hold the election.
- The RVPA board establishes the proposed tax rate for the next four-year period, based on future budget and cost projections, and forwards this information to the member agencies.
- The RVPA has two funding streams:
  1. The property tax. Currently set at \$51 per living unit or per 1,500 square feet of non-residential construction. The property tax has been on a regular cycle of \$3 annual increases.

The current tax amounts per member agency are as follows:

Fairfax	\$181,300
Kentfield	\$137,000
Larkspur	\$368,000
County CSA	\$ 36,000
Ross	\$ 45,867
Sleepy Hollow	\$ 44,000
San Anselmo	\$288,000

2. Third-Party Billing Program. The RVPA seeks reimbursement for ambulance transport from the patient’s insurance provider and directly from non-Ross Valley area customers who are transported.
- Revenue from a failing tax measure could be addressed by the following options:
    1. The member agency would place it back on the ballot the following year. (The member agency could be liable for the equal amount of tax revenue in order to maintain adequate funding to support the program.)
    2. Expand the transport-billing program to invoice all customers transported. Currently no Ross Valley resident receives a bill for transport. The RVPA receives only what is collected from private insurance companies. If the patient has no insurance, the RVPA receives no compensation. If the insurance company only pays a portion of the transport bill, the remaining balance is forgiven.

Program Expansion

- In the late 1990’s, the RVPA expanded its scope to include a supplement paid to member agencies for engine medic programs. The RVPA pays a stipend to supplement existing staff trained to the level of paramedic. Currently, two agencies receive stipends:

Ross Valley Fire Department	\$198,000
Larkspur Fire Department	\$137,500

- For approximately 10 years, the RVPA has paid a medical supply stipend to member agency departments:

Ross Valley Fire Department \$43,562  
 Kentfield Fire District \$11,507  
 Larkspur Fire Department \$31,007

*Amounts calculated on a percentage of member agency property tax contribution.*

- The RVPA sponsors an automatic defibrillation program for all member agencies. This included an initial purchase and replacement program of equipment for all member agency vehicles and an ongoing annual maintenance contract that presently costs \$18,000 annually.
- Both the RVPA and Town of Corte Madera medic staff are provided with medical direction and program quality (CQI) oversight by representatives of Marin General and Kaiser Hospitals.

#### November 4, 2014 Election

- All member agencies must place the tax on the ballot for this election.
- All member agencies have been furnished with tax rate information approved by the RVPA board of directors.
- The RVPA board is seeking a \$6 annual increase in the tax over the next four years. This is due to the following factors:
  1. Annual need to transfer funds from reserves to balance the budget.
  2. Anticipated 5% (\$64,800) increase in the County Contract beginning in FY 2014-15.
  3. Anticipated reductions in transport billing revenue.
- The proposed tax rate for the next four years is as follows:

2015-16	\$57
2016-17	\$63
2017-18	\$69
2018-19	\$75

- Even at the 4<sup>th</sup> year amount of \$75, the tax is well within the norm of property tax fees for the other fire department based paramedic programs in Marin County.
- The Board is currently working on proposed ballot and ballot argument language. This should be confirmed and ready for use by the member agencies after the April 3<sup>rd</sup> RVPA meeting.

*It is imperative that all member agency administrative and elected representatives recognize the importance of the November 2014 election and thus actively support the RVPA tax measure.*

*It is incumbent upon each member agency to place this matter on the ballot for the November 4, 2014 election.*

*Your fire department based paramedic program could be compromised if the property tax does not pass.*

RESOLUTION 14-\_\_

**A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFAX  
PROPOSING AN INCREASE IN THE PARAMEDIC SERVICE TAX, ESTABLISHING A DATE FOR  
ELECTION, ADOPTING INTENDED BALLOT LANGUAGE, REQUESTING THE CONSOLIDATION  
OF SAID ELECTION, REQUESTING ELECTION SERVICES OF THE COUNTY CLERK AND  
DIRECTING THAT REBUTTAL ARGUMENTS MAY BE RECEIVED.**

**WHEREAS**, on November 2, 2010, the electors of the Town of Fairfax approved a special tax for the funding of paramedic services through the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority; and

**WHEREAS**, the maximum allowable tax was established at \$51.00 per residential unit plus a \$.50 County administrative fee, and \$51.00 per 1500 square feet of structure in non-residential use, plus a \$.50 County administrative fee; and

**WHEREAS**, the Ross Valley Paramedic Tax has been annually levied and each four years the tax rate reset and approved by election and scheduled to expire June 30, 2015;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Fairfax Town Council hereby calls for an election to be held on November 4, 2014, at which election the issue to be presented to the voters of the Town of Fairfax shall be:

*Shall there be a continuation of the four year special tax for paramedic services in the amount of \$57 in the first year and raising the tax \$6 annually to a maximum of \$75 per taxable living unit, or per 1,500 square feet of structure on a developed parcel in non-residential use, with the appropriations limit increased by the amount of said tax for the next four years?*

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town Council hereby requests that said election shall be consolidated with the general election to be held on said date and requests the County Clerk to provide all necessary election services and to canvass the result of said election.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that rebuttals shall be received to ballot arguments made by this Town Council on behalf of said measure.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town Clerk is hereby authorized to carry out all the necessary procedures for said election submitting to the voters the question relating to a special tax for paramedic services.

The foregoing resolution was duly adopted at a regular meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Fairfax held in said Town on the 7th day of May 2014 by the following vote:

AYES:  
NOES:  
ABSENT:

---

DAVID WEINSOFF, Mayor

ATTEST:

---

Michele Gardner, Town Clerk