

Argument FOR Passage of Measure B

Submitted by Chester Public Utility District

Title: Volunteer Fire Dept. Option

Chester Fire Department has spent years relying on one-time dollars to balance its annual budget. As revenue from ambulance operations and fighting wildfires has dwindled, CFD is in desperate need of a stable funding source to continue providing fire protection.

This proposed tax measure would add a \$450/year tax to each parcel within the district. This cost of about \$1.23 per day will allow the fire department to keep some full-time staff while building a volunteer operation. Firefighting volunteerism is on a historical decline in the United States and there is no guarantee of 24/7 fire coverage, however CFD will aggressively recruit and train new volunteers.

The current board of directors and administration at Chester Public Utility District/Fire Department have spent the last two years searching for solutions to the department's fiscal problems and successfully identified significant cost savings. The Fire Department currently operates on tax revenues of less than \$330,000 per year which is insufficient to pay for operations, insurance, maintain and replace equipment, etc.

Approximately \$850,000 is needed to provide a minimally-staffed volunteer department.

The board and administration have also corrected several management deficiencies that have plagued the district for years. CPUD/CFD now posts all financial statements online each month and ensures that an annual audit is performed by an outside CPA firm.

It is important to note that if neither this measure nor Measure C passes, Chester will effectively be without local fire protection. CalFire will not take responsibility for the Chester area unless they are paid to do so. In emergencies Chester will rely on mutual aid from other fire departments.

You may vote yes on both Measures B and C; only the higher of the two will take effect if they both win voter approval.