

b. Communications

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8. Michael Fretz

Kelly, Sherry

23b 1

From: Smallsreed, Lucy [Lucy.Smallsreed@jud.ca.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, November 05, 2003 11:03 AM
To: Kelly, Sherry
Subject: Budget crisis and proposed parcel tax

I am a resident homeowner of Berkeley. I understand that you are proposing to place a parcel tax on a future ballot in an attempt to offset the current budget crisis. I am opposed to any increase in the parcel tax for this purpose.

I fully support the letter that CENA has sent you regarding exploring alternatives to a parcel tax. I also feel that the Council should hold a public hearing on the budget crisis to solicit input from the public on alternative revenue sources and possible expenditure reductions before a parcel tax increase is placed on the ballot.

Lucy Smallsreed
3029 Hillegass Avenue

Kelly, Sherry

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From: Ding Lee [dingrongl@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2003 6:36 PM
To: Kelly, Sherry
Cc: Berkeley Mayor's Office; maio@ci.berkeley.ca.us
Subject: Opposition for Property Tax Increase

We, as Berkely Owners, strongly oppose increse property tax increase which make Berkely property owner more hardship and property in Berkely more neglected, perishable and ugly.

Diana L.
Mei Byrns
Chih L.
Bruce H.
Peter S.
Steffe L.
Wen L.

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Kelly, Sherry**23b 3**

From: Stuvland@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2003 1:52 PM
To: Kelly, Sherry
Subject: comments on proposedtax increase - re 11-04 meeting

Dear Members of the City Council:

I understand that tonight at the city council meeting there will be a debate regarding a proposal to add millions of dollars in parcel taxes in order to remedy a projected 15M budget shortfall. Due to the fact that I direct a small non-profit arts group that meets on Tuesdays, I will not be able to attend the meeting. However, as a Berkeley property owner since 1987, I am strongly opposed to this proposed tax increase.

How can City Council members even begin to consider adding more tax burden to the onerous burden already carried by property owners of this community -- a burden higher than any other in the state? Especially in light of our current economic environment, it is inconceivable to me that council members would continue to think that property owners can forever subsidize the misguided application of City funds in order to support programs that are bureaucracy-heavy and that benefit a few people at the financial pain of numerous others.

I was laid off my job from UC Berkeley (where I had worked 13 years, and had received numerous citations for excellence in the workplace) over 2.5 years ago! I have lost my health insurance, dental insurance, and other benefits, and struggle each month just to make all my remaining bills payments, and yet I could be hit with HUNDREDS of dollars of annual tax increases as if I have a never-ending supply of "excess" cash with which to fund the Council's excessive spending.

I own a Berkeley duplex together with a friend. We pooled our carefully saved resources in 1987 to buy a decrepit Berkeley eyesore from a probate sale offering, and rehabilitated the building to provide comfortable, now SUBSIDIZED rental property for two families, while we continued to live in market-rate rental property because it was "home" to us. I then inherited a piece of property where I now live, and all earned rental monies go to keeping up the rental property including huge capital investment in new roofs (2), waterheaters, sewer upgrades, etc. My own home I struggle to maintain as it is 100 years old, and in need of constant repair. How - I truly ask you -- can you consider to add to my personal financial burden, not to mention the burden of the elderly, fixed- income people who can currently barely make their monthly expenditures?

Additional city tax burdens you have already hit us with have basically doubled our water bills in the last few years, and other taxes have crippled my ability to further repair my two properties (not to mention, of course, my lack of ability to regain ANY costs due to rent control, which last year said I had NO increased costs and denied even a token increase in rents). On top of this, we as Californians have faced a doubled energy bill over the past several years, as well as skyrocketing other costs for necessary services. And yet the Council will now consider to come to the SAME trough to feed, and call it "fair" under mask of needed "city service?" It is truly insupportable!

11/4/2003

I have lived in Berkeley over 30 years -- and I vote in every single election. At the very least, if I cannot vote with my feet, I will vote my displeasure at the next election if you decide in favor of this unjustified tax increase.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Kay Stuvland
Berkeley Property Owner and Resident, district 7

Kelly, Sherry

23b 4

From: Bgilbertca@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2003 4:58 PM
To: Hawley, Miriam; Wozniak, Gordon; Worthington, Kriss; Berkeley Mayor's Office; Breland, Margaret; Shirek, Maudelle; Olds, Betty; Spring, Dona; Maio, Linda; Englund, Sandy
Cc: Kelly, Sherry; Battle, Minnie
Subject: Redirection of Portion of Rent Board Funds

Dear Council and Manager:

While you are looking at the budget and considering ballot measures, you may want to think about the \$3M Rent Board budget and staff of 22.3 persons. As I have previously suggested, this budget seems very excessive vis-a-vis the actual functions of the Rent Board, and it would make complete sense to redirect part of this budget toward other legitimate housing purposes and to retrain some of the Rent Board staff to carry out other legitimate and necessary housing functions. I do not know whether this is possible under the current authorizing law, but it would be well worth it for the City Attorney to take a good hard serious look. If necessary, you should consider a ballot measure for November that would accomplish a partial redirection of Rent Board funds and/or staff.

It amazes me that the Rent Board budget is as big as the entire City Attorney budget, and that, while we are in such acute fiscal distress, no one is thinking sensibly about this.

Sincerely,

Berkeley Budget Oversight Committee, by

Barbara Gilbert

Kelly, Sherry

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From: KarlReeh@aol.com
Sent: Sunday, November 09, 2003 10:33 PM
To: Bates, Tom; dspring@ci.berkeley; Maio, Linda; Breland, Margaret; Shirek, Maudelle; Hawley, Miriam; Worthington, Kriss; Olds, Betty; gwozniak@ci.berkeley.ca.us skelly@ci.berkeley.ca.us
Cc: mlucas@chcf.org; Pateye1@aol.com; DickLerner@worldnet.att.net; WZSEBEAR1@aol.com; jk_m@pacbell.net; DEJETMAN@aol.com; Monster_milk_man@yahoo.com
Subject: "No" to parcel tax: LeConte Neighborhood Association

Dear Mayor Bates and members of the Berkeley City Council,

I am writing on behalf of the LeConte Neighborhood Association board to urge you not to place a parcel tax measure on the March 2004 ballot.

Our Association objects to this tax for several reasons:

1) It's not fair to expect taxpayers in Berkeley to bear the full burden of the current fiscal mess. City staff should share the burden by reopening their union contracts and agreeing to smaller raises. Union contracts negotiated in fall 2002 increase city employee compensation by 33% over 6 years. That's an average increase of 5.5% a year. Not only are there large annual pay increases, but staff in some job categories are receiving extra "equity increases", and pensions have been increased by over 30% with the 2.7 at 55 formula (3% at 50 for police).

Can any supporter of the proposed tax increase name a single city or county in the Bay Area that has negotiated such large increases in compensation costs in the current economic and fiscal climate? Certainly not the cities of San Francisco or Oakland, where unions agreed to new worker contributions toward pension costs, and certainly not Alameda County, where unions agreed to a one-year contract extension with no pay increase.

We need equality of sacrifice. Right now, taxpayers are being asked to make all the sacrifices through higher taxes and reduced services. The large compensation increases are a major source of the current deficit. Reducing the size of those increases has got to be part of any fair and equitable response to the deficit. This needs to happen before any tax increase is put on the ballot.

2) The Daily Planet reports that seven city developments didn't pay the existing city parcel taxes over the last four years. The City should get its house in order and ensure that everyone is paying existing taxes before asking voters to create a new tax.

3) The City is not the only public entity that may need a tax increase. What about the Berkeley schools where class size has increased sharply? What about Alameda County with its healthcare safety net in a state of collapse? Berkeley voters should know about whether the schools and the county will be asking for tax increases before being asked to decide on a tax increase for the city. If there is going to be a city tax increase, it should wait until November.

4) Many residents of our neighborhood have questions about how current revenues are spent and also wonder whether there aren't other ways to increase revenues. Alternatives to a parcel tax should be thoroughly explored. Each department should consider how fees and collectable fines should underwrite projects being

11/10/2003

considered.

Residents of our neighborhood have traditionally voted in favor of parcel taxes and bond measures by large margins. But if a parcel tax of any size is put on the ballot in March, we predict that there will be strong opposition.

Karl Reeh, President, LeConte Neighborhood Assn. 843-2602

Kelly, Sherry

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From: Paul Rabinow [rabinow@uclink.berkeley.edu]
Sent: Monday, November 10, 2003 4:13 PM
To: Kelly, Sherry
Subject: Parcel Tax

Dear Government,
I would like to add my voice to that of the Le Conte Neighborhood Association AGAINST THE PARCEL TAX.

It is blackmail to call this a fire fighter tax. I would especially like to protest against the lack of parking enforcement in Le Conte and the total lack of speeding enforcement. Enforcing the law would be good for the neighborhood and a source of revenue.

sincerely,
Paul Rabinow
2325 Derby Street
Berkeley 94705

From: WZSEBEAR1@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, November 11, 2003 2:16 PM
To: Kelly, Sherry
Subject: Against parcel tax going on ballot

LETTER OPPOSING PARCEL TAX:

Dear Mayor Bates and members of the Berkeley City Council,

I am writing to urge you not to place a parcel tax measure on the March 2004 ballot.

I object to this tax for several reasons:

1) It's not fair to expect taxpayers in Berkeley to bear the full burden of the current fiscal mess. City staff should share the burden by reopening their union contracts and agreeing to smaller raises. Union contracts negotiated in fall 2002 increase city employee compensation by 33% over 6 years. That's an average increase of 5.5% a year. Not only are there large annual pay increases, but staff in some job categories are receiving extra "equity increases", and pensions have been increased by over 30% with the 2.7 at 55 formula (3% at 50 for police). Can any supporter of the proposed tax increase name a single city or county in the Bay Area that has negotiated such large increases in compensation costs in the current economic and fiscal climate? Certainly not the cities of San Francisco or Oakland, where unions agreed to new worker contributions toward pension costs, and certainly not Alameda County, where unions agreed to a one-year contract extension with no pay increase. AS AN EMPLOYEE OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SF, WE HAVE ALL HAD TO OPEN AND

RE-NEGOTIATE OUR CONTRACTS BECAUSE OF THE ECONOMIC DOWN TURN. SOME OF US HAD TO TAKE A 7.5% SALARY CUT.

We need equality of sacrifice. Right now, taxpayers are being asked to make all the sacrifices through higher taxes and reduced services. The large compensation increases are a major source of the current deficit. Reducing the size of those increases has got to be part of any fair and equitable response to the deficit. This needs to happen before any tax increase is put on the ballot.

2) The Daily Planet reports that seven city developments didn't pay the existing city parcel taxes over the last four years. The City should get its house in order and ensure that everyone is paying existing taxes before asking voters to create a new tax.

3) The City is not the only public entity that may need a tax increase. What about the Berkeley schools where class size has increased sharply? What

about Alameda County with its healthcare safety net in a state of collapse?
Berkeley voters should know about whether the schools and the county will be asking for tax increases before being asked to decide on a tax increase for the city. If there is going to be a city tax increase, it should wait until November.

4) Many residents of our neighborhood have questions about how current revenues are spent and also wonder whether there aren't other ways to increase revenues. Alternatives to a parcel tax should be thoroughly explored. Each department should consider how fees and collectable fines should underwrite projects being considered.

Residents of our neighborhood have traditionally voted in favor of parcel taxes and bond measures by large margins. But if any parcel tax is put on the ballot in March, we predict that there will be strong opposition.

Pamela Speich

From: Fretz, Mike [mfretz@BiggsCardosa.com]
Sent: Tuesday, November 11, 2003 3:52 PM
To: Kelly, Sherry; Maio, Linda
Subject: E-mail to City Council

Dear Mayor Bates, Council Member Maio, and other members of the Berkeley City Council,

I am writing to express my opinion about the proposed parcel tax measure that you are currently considering for the March 2004 ballot. I read today's article in the Daily Planet regarding the recent council meeting and the lack of community comment on the proposal. Despite my failure to attend the last council meeting, I still have strong opinions about the proposal that I would like to share with you.

My wife and I purchased our modest house on Delaware Street between Curtis and San Pablo in July 2002. We initially paid parcel taxes based on the prior owner's assessed value of about \$150,000. This year, however, we have made supplemental payments for the difference between the old and new assessed values, which is \$350,000, plus taxes for the current year (taxes on a total of \$850,000).

While we know that we would have to pay these taxes when we purchased the home, we did not know that my wife would be laid-off, which happened in November 2002. This tax burden coupled with our loss of income would have been crippling if it had not been for our decision to purchase this small house based on one income and leaving some money in reserve to deal with unexpected circumstances, which became a reality.

The purpose of this story is to make you aware that property-owner resistance to these taxes is often based on real world hardships that many of us are facing. I was a renter for 16 years before we bought this house. I understand the general perception that property owners are better off and can afford to pay more taxes. While that may be true of some long-term property owners, it is not the case of all property owners. It's not the case with many new owners, like us, and it's not the case with many elderly owners in retirement and living on fixed incomes.

As others have suggested, I beg you to consider alternatives to balancing the city's budget instead of increasing the parcel tax. Here are some alternatives that I've seen:

- 1) Reopen union contracts for city staff and negotiate smaller raises. Union contracts negotiated in fall 2002 increase city employee compensation by 33% over 6 years. That's an average increase of 5.5% a year (my employer

gave me
a raise of less than 2% last year and has frozen raises for this year).
Not
only are there large annual pay increases in the current contract, but
staff
in some job categories are receiving extra "equity increases," and
pensions
have been increased by over 30%.

As a member of the Code Advisory Committee, which oversees operations at
the
San Francisco Department of Building Inspection, I know that San
Francisco
has taken similar actions with the staff in that department. Can any
supporter of the proposed tax increase name a single city or county in
the
Bay Area that has negotiated such large increases in compensation costs
in
the current economic and fiscal climate?

2) The Daily Planet reports that seven city developments didn't pay the
existing city parcel taxes over the last four years. The city should
institute accounting controls to ensure that everyone is paying existing
taxes before asking voters to create a new tax.

3) The state balanced its budget in part by increasing fees and
collecting
increased fines. Alternatives to a parcel tax should be thoroughly
explored. Each department should consider how fees and collectable fines
should underwrite projects being considered.

Michael Fretz
1191 Delaware Street
Berkeley, California 94702
(510) 526-6950