



NEWS



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Election results: Voters pass Measure Z, but judge's ruling puts tax appeal in question

By Martin Estacio, VVDAILYPRESS.COM

Posted: June 7, 2022



Measure Z was the second attempt to repeal a fee that was levied on properties when the fire protection zone, known as FP-5, was expanded in 2018.

A measure on Tuesday's ballot seeking to repeal a special fire district tax won't be enforced even though voters passed the measure.

San Bernardino Superior Court Judge David Cohn ruled on May 31 that the "Initiative to Repeal the Special Tax Associated With Fire Protection District Service Zone (FP-5)," known as Measure Z on the primary ballot, was "invalid and shall not be enforced or given legal effect."

Voters, though, were supporting the appeal 59.3% to 40.7% with 100% of precincts reporting. Provisional and some mailed ballots are still to be counted but are unlikely to change the outcome.

Cohn's judgment comes after he found in March that the petition used to gather signatures to place the measure on the ballot had false or misleading information.

The San Bernardino County Fire District had sued the county's Registrar of Voters and Measure Z backers to keep the measure from being printed on the ballot.

Although Cohn had ruled in favor of the district, the Measure Z proponents filed a petition to a state appeals court, which stayed — or temporarily put on hold — Cohn's March 29 order. That meant Measure Z was printed on the ballot despite its legal status still being decided.

In May, the appeals court denied the petition from the measure's proponents and lifted the stay, essentially agreeing with Cohn.

Measure Z is the second attempt — which now appears to be unsuccessful — to repeal a fee that was levied on properties when the fire protection zone, known as FP-5, was expanded in 2018. In November 2020, Measure U failed to pass after roughly 52% of voters cast ballots against it.

After the county Board of Supervisors voted to expand FP-5, the zone annexed more than 19,073 square miles of unincorporated land and some cities. An annual tax was assessed on all parcels with the ability to raise the fee up to 3% a year.

The current fee stands at \$161.98 after county supervisors approved an increase recommended by the fire district last year.

County fire officials say the tax is necessary to fund existing emergency services. Revenues from FP-5 amount to \$42.7 million, or 18% of the Fire Department's operating budget, Fire Chief Dan Munsey told county supervisors at a meeting in January.

Without the tax revenue, 15 fire stations could be closed, which would result in delayed response times and higher homeowner insurance costs, opponents of Measure Z argue.

San Bernardino County Fire Chief Dan Munsey speaks at a county supervisors' meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2022.

Measure Z supporters believe the tax is unfair and that the expansion should have been approved by a two-thirds vote of those affected as is typically required by the California Constitution.

That argument failed in 2019, however, after Superior Court Judge Donald Alvarez ruled against the Red Brennan Group, a 501 (c) 4 nonprofit that has funded the repeal efforts and had sued to stop the tax.

Alvarez cited earlier court decisions that found language in the constitution requiring a two-thirds vote on general or special taxes didn't address those imposed in annexations like FP-5.

The fire district argued in its lawsuit filed this year that the petition used to gather signatures contained false or misleading information because statements implied that the tax was unconstitutional despite the judge's ruling.

"First, Petitioners presented false and misleading information to the voters to trick them into signing the Initiative," the fire district wrote in a legal brief opposing the appeal court's initial decision that allowed the measure to be printed. "And now Petitioners seek to trick this Court into letting their Initiative slip back onto the ballot."

An attorney for the Measure Z proponents argued that false or misleading statements must have been intentional in order for the initiative to violate elections code and that intentionality was never proven. Cohn later ruled in favor of the fire district.

Despite the judgments, Tom Murphy, president of the Red Brennan Group, said his organization was "committed to repeal" of the FP-5 tax.

"We are considering all options available to continue pursuit of this goal," he wrote in an email.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/story/news/2022/06/07/california-primary-election-results-san-bernardino-county-fire-tax-repeal-measure-z-passing-early/7476614001/>

Hesperia Fire Started by Beekeeper's Beehive Smoker Burns 95 Acres

By Jonathan Lloyd, NBCLOSANGELES.COM

Posted: June 7, 2022



A helicopter drops water on the Hesperia Fire Monday June 6, 2022.

A brush fire that started Monday in San Bernardino County grew to nearly 100 acres after it was started by a beekeeper's beehive smoker, fire investigators said.

Water-dropping aircraft were part of the fight against the Hesperia Fire burning in the Silverwood Lake area north of San Bernardino. The fire's spread near Highway 173 was stopped late Monday with firefighters working to increase containment, which was at 50 percent. The highway remained closed east of Highway 138.

One outbuilding was destroyed. Fuel moisture levels are well below historic averages in parts of Southern California, meaning vegetation is drying out more quickly this year. Dry vegetation is one significant factor in the spread of wildfires.

The state is coming of one of its driest late winters on record, leaving hillsides covered in dry brush. California continues to face longer wildfire seasons as a direct result of climate change, according to CAL FIRE.

"Extended dryness originating from January is expected to continue into the spring with little precipitation, leaving most of the state in moderate to extreme drought conditions prior to summer," the state's firefighting agency said in a 2022 fire season outlook.

"These continued dry conditions, with above normal temperatures through spring, will leave fuel moisture levels lower than normal, increasing the potential for wildland fire activity."

<https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/california-wildfires/bee-hive-smoker-hesperia-fire-san-bernardino-silverwood-lake/2911504/>

Firefighters hold Hesperia Fire to 95 acres, 50% containment

By Rene Ray De La Cruz, VVDAILYPRESS.COM

Posted: June 8, 2022



Firefighters from multiple agencies on Tuesday continued to hold the Hesperia Fire at 95 acres, with 70% containment. The vegetation fire began Monday night in the area of Highway 173 and 138 near Silverwood Lake.

Firefighters on Tuesday afternoon continued to hold the vegetation fire that began Monday night in the area of Highway 173 and 138 near Silverwood Lake.

Cal Fire and **San Bernardino County Fire** officials on Tuesday afternoon reported that from late Monday night, firefighters continued to hold the fire's progress at 95 acres, with 70% containment.

No firefighters were injured in the blaze, however, a resident was burned and was transported by ambulance to a trauma center. Their condition is unknown, fire officials reported.

The beehive smoker

One outbuilding was destroyed in the blaze, according to fire officials, who revealed that the fire was started by a suspected beekeeper's beehive smoker.

Entomologists say beehive smokers are used to calm bees while the beekeeper works around the hive.

It's believed the smoke sends a signal to the bees to consume as much honey as possible in case the fire forces them to abandon the hive. While the colony's defensive response is interrupted, the beekeeper can open the beehive and work.

The average smoker has a fire chamber that is filled with flammable material such as wood shavings or dried grass. The material is lit so that it smolders.

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The Hesperia Fire

The Hesperia Fire started south of Hwy. 138, jumped the road and began burning north as it was pushed by moderate wind conditions.

With a threat to life and property, firefighters on the ground and by fixed-wing air tankers and helicopters began attacking the fire, which had reached a moderate rate and was fueled by heavy brush and wind.

Firefighters were immediately deployed to one ranch, which was directly threatened by the fire. The property included homes, outbuildings, trailers, barns and multiple fences areas that housed animals.

Mop-up and containment

Firefighters on Tuesday will continue mop-up efforts and the containment of fire lines.

Agencies assisting include San Manuel Fire Department, Apple Valley Fire Protection District, Victorville FD, Chino FD, Ontario FD, Big Bear FD, U.S. Forest Service, SBC Sheriff's Department, California Highway Patrol and CalTrans.

Fire officials reported that cooperating agencies responded with 115 firefighters, 23 brush engines, six water tenders, five chief officers, two bulldozers, three hand crews and multiple fire investigators.

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/story/news/2022/06/08/firefighters-hold-hesperia-fire-95-acres-50-containment/7546222001/>

VIDEO BY: ONSCENE TV: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWB2bB5NS48>

YUCCA VALLEY TOWN COUNCIL MEETS: INTRO, PRESENTATION, AND TOWN BUSINESS

By Staff Writer, Z1077FM.COM

Posted: June 7, 2022



The Yucca Valley Town Council will welcome a new town employee and hear presentations from **San Bernardino County Fire** Department and Southern California Edison at the regular meeting on June 7.

Also on the agenda is town parks sport courts resurfacing project resolution and a public hearing on a solid waste handling service charge added to the property tax roll.

Additionally, a town council resolution is scheduled to direct the Planning Commission to evaluate and prepare revised native plant regulations, contingent on California's Fish and Game Commission's decision to list or exclude the Joshua Tree as endangered at their upcoming meeting on June 15.

The town council meeting is at 6 p.m. in the Yucca Room of the Yucca Valley Community Center and will also be live-streamed.

Join the Zoom Meeting at:

<https://zoom.us/j/92222679427?pwd=cU03ZW1VdXVYNjFWdWRGSVZBM2U0dz09>

Meeting ID: 922 2267 9427 Passcode: 580783 Or by phone: (669) 900-6833.

<https://z1077fm.com/144231-2/>