



NEWS



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Measure U failing by a narrow margin, but ballots still need to be counted

Jené Estrada, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: November 5, 2020



Fire Chief Dan Munsey discusses Measure U during a meeting of the Twentynine Palms City Council Tuesday, Oct. 27.

MORONGO BASIN — Thousands of ballots still need to be counted in San Bernardino County but preliminary reports show Measure U failing by a narrow margin. If passed, Measure U would repeal the special tax charged to properties in Fire Protection Service Zone Five, reducing the fire department's revenue by \$41.5 million annually.

As of Thursday morning, 51.3% of the 131,181 counted votes were marked “no” on Measure U. A “no” vote kept the special tax in effect and a “yes” vote repealed the special tax.

FP5 was expanded to most county areas in October 2018, including all of the Morongo Basin except Morongo Valley. Properties in the expanded boundaries are all subject to the tax, which amounts to \$157.26 per parcel.

Fire Chief Dan Munsey said, in an interview on Wednesday afternoon, that the early projections made him hopeful that the measure would fail, since the passing of the measure would likely have resulted in lower service to the Morongo Basin.

“This repeal would have represented a major loss in revenue for the fire district, including all of the revenue to provide the city of Twentynine Palms fire, rescue and EMS protection,” he said.

“This would have closed several fire stations in our Morongo Basin and reduced staffing.”

Munsey went on to say that he was thankful for the residents who supported the fire district by voting no on the measure.

“We appreciate the support of our residents and will continue to work hard to earn trust with transparency, careful spending habits and providing exceptional customer service.”

Petition of voters prompted petition

After the county expanded Fire Protection Zone 5 was expanded across the county, some argued it was unconstitutional since affected landowners did not vote on it. Instead, the county board used a protest process that required 25% of property owners who own at least 25% of the impacted land to submit a “no” by mailing a protest form or showing up to a public hearing. None of the affected areas reached the 25% protest standard, so the tax was implemented.

Two groups sued the county but a superior court judge ruled the FP5 tax was not unconstitutional.

One of the plaintiffs, the Red Brennan Group, then submitted a petition with 32,017 signatures calling for a repeal of the fire tax. After receiving the petition, the county board of supervisors voted to repeal the tax and put it on the November ballot.

The San Bernardino County registrar of voters reported Thursday it has more than 360,000 ballots left to count, most of which are mail-in ballots. This means Measure U could still pass if most of the remaining ballots are in favor of Measure U. To get the latest election results visit www.sbcounty.gov/rov/elections/results/20201103.

<https://hidesertstar.com/news/178361/measure-u-failing-by-a-narrow-margin-but-ballots-still-need-to-be-counted/>

Hiker airlifted out of fire zone arrested on suspicion of starting Fontana blaze

Haley Smith, Los Angeles Times

Posted: November 3, 2020



Luis Mondragon, 34, was arrested on suspicion of starting a brush fire that erupted in the Jurupa Mountains on Sunday. (Fontana Police Department)

A 34-year-old man is in custody after being arrested on suspicion of starting a brush fire that forced evacuations in Fontana on Sunday.

Luis Mondragon was reportedly seen near the blaze — dubbed the Cypress fire — which burned through 150 acres of land and threatened as many as 130 homes after igniting near the Jurupa Hills Regional Park around 1:35 p.m.

Multiple 911 callers reported Mondragon standing on a boulder in the hills as the fire burned, according to a news release issued by Fontana police. He and another hiker were both rescued from the fire by a San Bernardino County helicopter.

Mondragon was booked on suspicion of unlawfully causing a fire that causes inhabited structures or land to burn, said Fontana Police spokesman Kevin Anderson, noting that the charge is different from arson because officials do not think the fire was set intentionally.

“It’s kind of like negligence in the use of fire that causes damage,” he said, “but it’s still a felony.”

It is not yet clear what kind of device may have been used to start the fire, Anderson said. It is also not known whether Mondragon lives in the area. Officials think he may be homeless or transient.

Crews from the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**, the Riverside County Fire Department and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection all responded to the blaze, according to a news release issued by the San Bernardino County Fire Department.

Firefighters were able to gain control of the flames and lift evacuations by 6 p.m. Sunday.

Mondragon is being held at West Valley Detention Center in lieu of \$25,000 bail in preparation for a court appearance Tuesday, Anderson said.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-11-03/hiker-airlifted-fire-zone-arrested-on-suspicion-starting-fontana-blaze>

Hoist Rescue

Staff Writer, Mountain News

Posted: November 4, 2020



San Bernardino County Sheriff Department's AR306.

On Thursday, October 29, 2020, at 10:00 a.m., Skyla Miles, a 21-year-old resident of San Marcos, and Cassandra Dubois, a 20-year-old resident of San Marcos, were hiking in the Deep Creek hot springs. While hiking back to their vehicle, they became lost/disoriented, and were unable to continue due to dehydration and called 911 for help. **San Bernardino County Fire** personnel and deputies from the Twin Peaks Station responded to assist. They requested a helicopter for a hoist rescue due to the terrain where Miles and Dubois were located, which was several miles from the roadway, reported Twin Peaks Sheriffs Station. Sheriff's rescue helicopter 40king5, with a crew of Pilot Sergeant Daniel Futscher, Crew Chief Deputy Cody Korkotsakis, and SBCFD Captain Paramedic Eric Spies, responded to the location and after a quick search located both victims. While Futscher hovered the helicopter over Miles and Dubois, Korkotsakis hoisted Spies approximately 100' to their location. Spies placed Miles in a rescue harness and she was hoisted up to the helicopter and transported to deputies and fire personnel. Futscher and Korkotsakis returned and hoisted Dubois after Spies placed her in a rescue harness. They transported her to the same location, then returned and hoisted Spies back to the helicopter.

<https://mountain-news.com/news/40055/hoist-rescue/>

San Bernardino County fire tax result uncertain

Ryan Hagen, SB Sun

Posted: November 3, 2020



San Bernardino County firefighters battle the Cypress fire in vegetation west of Sierra Avenue and south of Cypress Avenue near the Riverside County line in Fontana on Sunday, Nov. 1, 2020. If Measure U passes, a fire tax would be repealed in San Bernardino, Upland, Needles and Twentynine Palms. (Photo by Terry Pierson, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

The fate of \$41.5 million that funds fire operations in San Bernardino County by taxing property owners in San Bernardino, Upland, Needles and Twentynine Palms was uncertain in early election results Tuesday, Nov. 3.

Measure U, which would repeal the tax, was narrowly behind in the first round of election results.

Fire Department officials and union leaders have warned that if Measure U passes, repealing the tax of \$157.26 per year on property owners in those areas, the loss of \$41.5 million from the annual budget would force them to close 19 fire stations.

Slightly over 1,000 Helendale voters approved the tax in 2008 as part of forming a fire protection district, and elected officials in San Bernardino, Upland and other areas later extended the fire protection district to include their jurisdictions. Parcel owners had the opportunity to protest the move, which would have triggered an election if enough returned the form, but there was no direct vote outside of Helendale.

If Measure U doesn't pass, the parcel tax can be increased by a maximum of 3% per year.

If a majority of voters cast a ballot for Measure U, the tax will be repealed.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2020/11/03/san-bernardino-county-fire-tax-result-uncertain/>

Election Results for Big Bear Valley

Steve Cassling, Big Bear News

Posted: November 4, 2020

Big Bear News – Big Bear Valley, CA – The uncertified results of yesterday’s election that effect the Big Bear Valley are as follows:

Jay Obernolte wins the 8th district congressional seat.

Abigal Medina and Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh are in a virtual tie for the 23rd district State Senate seat.

Smitty Smith wins the 33rd Assembly seat.

Sudie Smart, Steve Foulks and Jack Roberts take the win for the Bear Valley Unified School District.

Alan Lee takes the City Council first district.

Bynette Mote wins the City Council 5th district.

Rick Seifert, Julie Smith and Steve Castillo win the Big Bear Airport District race.

Steve Baker, Perri Melnick and Mark Kaliher win the positions for Bear Valley Community Healthcare District.

Measure K wins thus reducing the pay of the county supervisors and making their position part time.

Measure U fails thus keeping in place the 157.26 per parcel in the **San Bernardino County Fire Protection District**.

The election will be certified by the San Bernardino County Registrar of Voters later this month.

<https://kbhr933.com/big-bear-news-kbhr-93-3-102-5/election-results-for-big-bear-valley/>

Election results: Incumbent Swanson leading race for Hesperia City Council District 1 seat

Rene Ray De La Cruz, Victorville Daily Press

Posted: November 4, 2020



Hesperia City Council District 1 candidates (from left to right) challenger Anthony Rhoades, former Councilman Mike Leonard and Councilwoman Rebekah Swanson.

Incumbent Councilwoman Rebekah Swanson early Wednesday morning maintained a slim lead she achieved Tuesday night over former Councilman Mike Leonard for Hesperia's District 1 seat.

Results posted at 4:30 a.m. Wednesday showed Swanson with nearly 43.3% of the total vote, or 1,584 votes, to Leonard's 40.17%, or 1,471 votes. Just 113 votes separate the two candidates, according to San Bernardino County Elections Office data.

Challenger Anthony Rhoades, meanwhile, mustered just 602 votes, the results show.

As of 12:30 p.m., an estimated 364,000 votes still needed counting, including 346,000 mail ballots. There are about 2,700 unprocessed ballots that are damaged, need to be remade or require further, election officials said.

It's unclear how many of those votes will affect races in Hesperia. The next round of results are scheduled to post at 4 p.m. Wednesday.

Meanwhile, early election results found Swanson with a slightly larger lead over Leonard in Hesperia's District 1.

Unofficial numbers released at 2:30 a.m. Wednesday showed 3,586 total votes tallied, with Swanson taking about 43.3%, or 1,554 votes. Leonard, who is also a retired firefighter, amassed just over 40%, or 1,435 votes. The 4:30 a.m. results found Leonard trimming Swanson's lead by six votes.

Swanson, 58, first won her seat in 2016 during the city's at-large election. A year later, she became the District 1 representative after the Council voted to transition from an at-large to a by-district election process.

The city now includes five voting districts with approximately 18,000 residents per district.

Swanson's mission statement includes her desire to ensure that Hesperia citizens stay safe via the city providing fire and police protection at current levels without raising taxes.

Swanson, 58, first won her seat in 2016 during the city's at-large election. A year later, she became the District 1 representative after the Council voted to transition from an at-large to a by-district election process.

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Swanson's mission statement includes her desire to ensure that Hesperia citizens stay safe via the city providing fire and police protection at current levels without raising taxes.

She also said she wants to attract and keep residents in the community by offering infrastructure, jobs and safe roads, and by attracting retail and health industries to the Victor Valley's second-largest city.

Leonard, 73, who served on the Council for 12 years beginning in 2004, took a four-year hiatus after not seeking reelection in 2016.

The former councilman told the Daily Press he jumped back into the political ring because the "city is involved in a lot of projects and I still have a lot to offer."

If elected, Leonard's goals include supporting the San Bernardino County sheriff's and fire departments in efforts to train the next generation of deputies and firefighters.

He also wants to mitigate illegal dumping and littering, and add measures to cite offenders in Hesperia and throughout the High Desert.

Leonard worked for the Hesperia Fire District for 28 years. He also previously worked with **San Bernardino County Fire**. During his time in elected office, he served on the board of the San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG), which is now the San Bernardino County Transit Authority (SBCTA).

Rhoades, 35, ran for the District 33 state Assembly seat in the March primary, garnering 8.8% of the total vote and finished fifth among seven candidates.

He also ran unsuccessfully for a Hesperia Unified School District Board of Trustees seat in 2018, and a Hesperia City Council seat in 2014 and 2016.

Rhoades resigned from the city's Public Safety Commission in 2019 after former Councilman Jeremiah Brosowski selected him for that seat. Brosowski was voted off the City Council dais for alleged non-residency.

District 1 covers western Hesperia on both sides of Interstate 15, with the area stretching from the top of the Cajon Pass to Bear Valley Road.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/11/04/election-results-hesperia-district-1-city-council/6119693002/>

Winds Spread Vegetation Fire

Carl Baker, City News Group

Posted: November 3, 2020



Redlands Firefighters responded to a vegetation fire in the Santa Ana River wash

Redlands Firefighters responded to a vegetation fire in the Santa Ana River wash near Orange Street Monday, in the same area as another recent fire.

The fire, dubbed the Orange Fire 2, had burned approximately 23 acres as of 5:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 26, and briefly threatened homes in the area of Riverview Drive.

Firefighters, responding at about noon to reports of a vegetation fire in the area of Orange Street and the Santa Ana River, wash observed a large column of smoke and requested additional resources from the San Bernardino Unit of Cal Fire, the Bureau of Land Management and the City of Highland.

Additional engines from **San Bernardino County Fire Department**, the San Bernardino National Forest and the City of Yucaipa also responded. Air resources were requested but were unavailable due to 25-30 mph winds with gusts up 50 mph. Bulldozers were also unable to operate in the wash due to endangered habitat in the area.

Winds carried embers south of the Santa Ana River bed, briefly threatening homes along Riverview Drive before firefighters stopped the fire's forward momentum at about 4 p.m.

Fire crews will remain on scene overnight, improving fire lines, and are expected to remain on scene for several more days.

In September, a fire in the same area burned about 37 acres and continued smoldering for more than a week as a result of decades-old wood product left behind, following the closure of the Big Bear Lumber Company, which operated in the area from 1953 until it was closed in 1982.

The cause of Monday's fire is undetermined. No injuries or structure damage have been reported.

<https://redlands.citynewsgroup.com/articles/winds-spread-vegetation-fire>

Early election results: Measure U falling but Measure K passing

Staff Writer, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: November 4, 2020

MORONGO BASIN - Assemblyman Chad Mayes, of Yucca Valley, is holding on to his seat in the state Legislature after registering no party preference, and while Measure U to repeal the fire tax in San Bernardino County is failing, Measure K is passing and will drastically reduce county supervisors' salaries and benefits and make them part-time positions.

San Bernardino County still had 364,000 ballots to process after releasing early results Tuesday night. The Secretary of State noted it will take weeks for all ballots to be counted.

Results for local races as of 6 a.m. Monday morning are as follows. All races have one seat available unless otherwise noted.

U.S. Congress - 8th District

Republican Jay Obernolte leads with 53.3% of the votes with all precincts partially reporting.

California Assembly - 42nd District

Chad Mayes, of Yucca Valley, leads with 58.25% of the vote with all precincts partially reporting.

San Bernardino County Board of Education Area E

Andrea DeLeon leads with 38.85% of the vote. Karalee Hargrove, the Twentynine Palms woman currently serving on the Morongo Unified School District board, is in second place with 31.28%.

Copper Mountain Community College District - three open seats

Incumbent Mary E. Lombardo leads with 28.7% of the vote, followed by incumbent Greg Gilbert with 20.5% and incumbent Dick Rogers with 19.6%.

Morongo Unified School District Area 1

Robert Hamilton leads with 46.5%. Aaron J. Kyle has 30.7% and Ashley Aguilar 22.74%.

Morongo Unified School District Area 2

Cathy Nelson leads with 53%. Patrick N. Crow garnered 46.8%.

Twentynine Palms City Council District 1

Steven Bilderain was the only candidate and has 98.6% of the vote. Nine ballots had other names written in.

Twentynine Palms City Council District 2

Incumbent Joel A. Klink leads challenger Jim Krushat with 51.3%.

Yucca Valley Town Council District 2

Incumbent Jeff Drozd leads challenger David Simmons with 51.1% of the vote.

Yucca Valley Town Council District 4

Incumbent Robert Lombardo holds the lead with 35.86% of the vote.

Jeff Brady is in second place with 29.44%, followed by Travis Puglisi (20.93%) and Myra Kennedy (13.6%).

Morongo Valley CSD - 2 open seats

Incumbent Johnny G. Tolbert Jr. holds a narrow 35.21% lead over Christina L. Gorke with 34.46%. Susan Carol LeFevre is at 30.13%.

Hi-Desert Memorial Health Care District - 3 open seats

Gregory Brown, a registered nurse, leads with 39.07%, followed by incumbent Dianne Markle-Greenhouse with 22.75% and Dale Mondary with 22.14%.

Denise Cullum has 15.9%.

Joshua Basin Water District Division 5

Challenger Stacy Doolittle leads the race by 64.6%.

Incumbent Robert Johnson is in second with 19.92% and Paul Franklin Coate has 15.82% of the vote.

Measure J

The proposed new San Bernardino County charter is narrowly failing in early returns with 50.11% voting “no.”

Measure K

The initiative to limit county board of supervisors members to one four-year term (three terms are now allowed) and cap their salaries at \$5,000 a month is passing by 67.6%.

Measure U

The effort to repeal the FP5 fire tax is narrowly failing with 51% voting “no.”

<https://hidesertstar.com/news/178354/early-election-results-measure-u-falling-but-measure-k-passing/>

FOUR INJURED IN ROLL-OVER CRASH IN TWENTYNINE PALMS LAST NIGHT

Staff Writer, Z107.7 NEWS

Posted: November 5, 2020

Four people were injured in a single-vehicle rollover crash on Highway 62 in Twentynine Palms last night. **County Fire** Battalion Chief Mike McClintock said at 10:10 p.m., firefighters were called to the intersection of Sherman Hoyt Avenue and the highway for a pick-up truck that had rolled over. One person was ejected and pinned under the pick-up truck. McClintock said fire crews had to raise the truck to get to the victim. Three people received critical injuries and one patient had moderate injuries.

<http://z1077fm.com/four-injured-in-roll-over-crash-in-twentynine-palms-last-night/>

AN APARTMENT FIRE IN YUCCA VALLEY THIS MORNING

Staff Writer, Z107.7 NEWS

Posted: November 5, 2020



Fire crews responded to an apartment fire in the 56200 block of Papago Trail early Monday morning. San Bernardino County Fire Department photo

Firefighters battled an apartment fire in Yucca Valley early this morning. At 3:10 a.m., **County Fire Battalion Chief Mike McClintock** said someone called 911 about smelling smoke, which had also stained windows of an apartment in the 56200 block of Papago Trail. McClintock said crews from Yucca Valley, Yucca Mesa, and Joshua Tree entered to find a first floor room and its contents on fire. He added that no one was at home in the apartment at the time of the fire and no victims were found. The cause of the blaze is under investigation.

<http://z1077fm.com/an-apartment-fire-in-yucca-valley-this-morning/>

LOCAL AND COUNTY ELECTION RESULTS

Staff Writer, Z107.7 NEWS

Posted: November 4, 2020



The polling station in Joshua Tree was at the fire station. Tami Roleff photo

Here are the preliminary results from Tuesday's election. Another update will be issued at 4 p.m. today as absentee and provisional votes are still being counted; 44% of registered voters participated.

The presidential race is still too close to call, with several key battleground states still counting ballots.

In California, for the 8th District Congressional seat Republican Jay Obernolte is ahead of Democrat Christine Bubser by about 13,000 votes.

For State Assembly, 42nd District, Independent Chad Mayes is edging out challenger Republican Andrew Kotyuk by 239 votes, less than 1%.

In Yucca Valley, incumbent Jeff Drozd is 25 votes ahead of challenger David Simmons, while incumbent Robert Lombardo easily beat his three challengers for Yucca Valley Town Council.

The winners for city council in Twentynine Palms so far are incumbents Joel Klink beating challenger Jim Krushat by 22 votes, and Steve Bilderain, who ran unopposed.

Winners for two seats on the Morongo Unified School District board are Robert Hamilton and Cathy Nelson.

All three incumbents of the Copper Mountain College—Mary Lombardo, Greg Gilbert, and Dick Rogers—were re-elected.

Karalee Hargrove lost her bid for election to the county board of education to Andrea DeLeon.

Johnny Tolbert and Christina Gorke were elected to the Morongo Valley CSD board.

For the Hi-Desert Memorial Healthcare District board of directors, the winners are Gregory Brown, Diane Markle-Greenhouse, and Dale Mondary.

Stacy Doolittle easily won her seat on the Joshua Basin Water District board of directors.

For county measures, Measure J, the Board of Supervisors' measure to amend the county charter, failed. Measure K, a citizen initiative to limit county supervisors to one term with an annual salary of \$60,000, won by 154,608 votes, or more than 2 to 1.

And voters narrowly defeated Measure U, which would have repealed the FP-5 fire fee, by 2.04 percent.

<http://z1077fm.com/local-and-county-election-results/>