

Firefighter layoffs seen if Jarvis measure passes

Directors of the Aptos Fire District Tuesday appointed a committee to talk with firefighters about layoffs which would be forthcoming if the Jarvis-Gann property tax initiative is approved by voters in June.

(Proposition 13 on the June ballot) would sharply cut property taxes by limiting them to one percent of the fair market value of property, based on 1975-76 assessments.

Fire Chief Richard Chinn told directors Tuesday that county auditor Art Merrill had reported

The Jarvis-Gann initiative

that the fire district — which derives all its revenue from property taxes—would lose two-thirds of its funding.

Chinn said he had looked into the possibility of instituting service fees to make up for the lost tax revenues, but found that such fees could not legally be imposed.

"If this bill passes, we'd have to reduce our budget by two-thirds," said Chinn. "There's only one area where the budget can be cut, and that's manpower."

"How about having an \$800,000 cake sale?" asked director Stewart Davis.

Chinn said that if the measure is approved by voters, the fire district would have to close one of its two stations and lay off 17 employees.

He said these employees would be collecting unemployment insurance, as would thousands of firemen and policemen in Los Angeles County alone. The chief said this was one consequence of

the Jarvis-Gann measure that had not been properly discussed in public forums.

"The people are going to lose a fire department is all," said director Walt Jordan.

Board chairman Richard Duchscher said that the measure might pass because the legislature's alternative, the Behr bill, "stinks." He said, however, that he didn't want the fire district to use public funds to lobby against the measure.

Directors agreed to let Davis and Duchscher serve as a committee to meet with firefighters to develop procedures for firing employees if the measure passes.

In another matter, directors approved a contract for the district's paramedic program, and decided not to get malpractice insurance for firefighters involved in it.

Santa Cruz Ambulance had written the district, asking that its ambulance attendants be

covered by the district's malpractice insurance. Directors didn't care much for the idea.

"Given the training of our firefighters, that's just ludicrous," said Davis of the idea that a paramedic could commit an error which would result in liability to the ambulance crew. "We should ask them to insure our paramedics against their drivers."

Directors decided against getting any malpractice insurance at all after Chinn told them he had checked with six other districts and found that none of them was carrying such insurance.

Chinn further said that the state was considering amending its good samaritan laws to extend immunity from lawsuits to paramedics, and predicted passage of the measure.

The paramedic contract is expected to go to the board of supervisors for approval March 28.

REFERENCE

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APTOS - FIRE DISTRICT