*The League of Women Voters of the Claremont Area*

**PROS & CONS**

**Measure SC: Police Facility Bond**

***The Question:*** *“Shall the measure to impose an ad valorem tax on real property located in the City of Claremont at the maximum rate of $30.33 per $100,000 of assessed value, for a maximum term of 25 years, to annually raise an estimated $1.55 million through the sale of general obligation bonds with net proceeds of $23.5 million for construction of a new City police facility that will replace the existing 45-year old substandard police building, be adopted?”*

***The Situation:*** For the past 15 years, due to the age and condition of the existing station, the City of Claremont has been discussing options for a new police facility. The present facility is over 45 years old and is no longer adequate physically or technologically for modern police operations, as those who work there or have toured it can attest. Closets have been converted to working areas; trailers have been brought in to serve as locker space for female officers (a need that did not exist in 1972 when the station was built). Over the intervening four and a half decades, Claremont’s population has grown over 40 per cent and its area increased over 60 per cent. The sworn staff of the police department has almost doubled (to 40), the support staff has more than tripled (to 32), and a volunteer force of about one hundred fifty has been created.

In addition to obvious space problems, the block building with its 20-inch thick concrete ceiling does not meet requirements of the California Essential Services Buildings Seismic Act of 1986, and the area is overdue for a major quake. Furthermore, the building does not comply with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act or with other key state and federal regulations. The facility’s electrical and mechanical systems do not meet the demands of modern police operations and technology. According to the architectural report, updating the existing facility to meet seismic standards would be difficult and more expensive than a new structure. Any changes impacting the jail would force compliance with the new, far more stringent, California Corrections Standards.

In November 2015, Claremont voters were asked to approve a parcel tax of $286 per parcel per year for forty years to fund site acquisition, design, construction, and furnishing of a new public service facility, a 47,200-square-foot building and storage area to be placed on Monte Vista Avenue adjacent to the City Yard. Each parcel in Claremont, profit or non-profit, residential or commercial, large or small, would have been taxed the same amount, a flat $286 a year. The measure needed 2/3 approval to be adopted, but was rejected by three to one.

The problem of the inadequacy of the current facility remained. A 15-member committee of community citizens was appointed to address the issue. This Ad Hoc Committee dealt with size, location, cost, and financing. After several tours of other local police facilities, the committee determined what necessary functions had to be accommodated, and the size of the needed building was estimated. Since 25,000 square feet was deemed adequate, the replacement facility could fit at the current location. A new proposal based on that finding was generated by the citizens’ committee in a series of public meetings and discussions.

***The Proposal:*** Measure SC would authorize the City of Claremont to issue general obligation (GO) bonds with net proceeds of $23.5 million and a 25-year term to finance the design and construction of a new police facility, located on the same site as the current police facility. It would be approximately 26,000 square feet in size, comply with current essential services building standards, and meet the needs of a modern, co-ed police department. The actual design of the building would be subject to Claremont’s public approval process. The debt service on the general obligation bonds would be paid by imposing an ad valorem tax (i.e., one based on taxable value) on all taxable real property in the city.

***Fiscal Considerations:*** General obligation bonds are a safer investment and so financing costs are lower than with parcel taxes. Claremont will save about $2.27 million over the 25-year term of the bonds compared with the cost of a parcel tax that varies with square-footage. GO bonds are progressive: properties with higher assessed values pay more than those with lower assessed values. Debt service on the bonds will be paid by levying an ad valorem tax on all taxable property in Claremont. The maximum yearly rate will be $30.33 per $100,000 in taxable (not market) value. Thus, a property with an assessed value of $400,000 would pay $121.32 the first year; **57%** of Claremont homeowners would pay that ***or less.*** The tax rate is expected to decrease each year as total assessed value grows. The average annual rate over the 25-year period is estimated to be $24.47 per $100,000 assessed value. Funds from this assessment cannot be spent on other projects.

***Supporters say***

* The need for a new police facility is urgent and generally recognized. Residents’ concerns about size, location, cost, and pay-back period have been addressed. GO bonds are the most frugal and fairest way to meet this public responsibility. It’s time to say “yes”.
* Our local police force has substantial advantages for residents, some reducing crime directly and others less tangible. Providing safe and efficient working conditions for public employees is a shared responsibility. Measure SC is a solution within reason and reach.
* Any further delay only adds to the costs and extends the risks of the current situation.

***Opponents say***

* The issue is not the need for a new facility but the specifics of the proposal. The proposed facility is too big, too expensive, and too great a burden on Claremont residents.
* Claremont is built out. A building the size and cost of the one being proposed is not needed now or in the future.
* Bond financing unfairly burdens residents and does not spread the costs fairly across all properties in the community. The tax rate is not the issue. The problem is the burden placed on those who live here. The City is demanding too much from its residents.

A “***yes***” vote means you approve the City being empowered to sell bonds to finance the police facility project.

A “***no***” vote means you do not approve the City being empowered to sell bonds to finance the police facility project.

***2/3 of those voting must approve the measure for it to pass.***