Brief History of Fire and Paramedic Services Parcel Tax

The City of Palos Verdes Estates operated a Fire Department until 1986 when Proposition 13 property tax cuts became too severe to fund fire and paramedics service in the community. In May 1986, the City closed its Fire Department and entered into a contract with the Consolidated Fire Protection District of Los Angeles County to provide fire protection, paramedic services, and the enforcement of the Fire Code. The City's contract with Los Angeles County was subsequently amended in 2006. The contract is evergreen; in other words, recognizing fire and paramedic services are an essential public safety need, the contract is constructed to continue indefinitely unless, with 12-months advance notice to Los Angeles County, it is cancelled.

Over the decades, the City instituted a variety of mechanisms to fund the on-going cost of fire and paramedic services. During the 1980's, voter-approved parcel taxes for police/fire/paramedic and parklands maintenance covered a portion of the costs of these municipal services. In 1991 and then again in 1996, property owners voted their approval of a Fire Suppression Benefit Assessment District (FSBAD) that covered 100% of the cost of the contract with Los Angeles County Fire through 2001. However, with voter approval of Proposition 218 in 1996, the FSBAD could only be used to fund fire protection, not paramedic service. Paramedic service represents 40% of the cost of the fire contract, and was deemed an essential service to continue providing. Therefore, in 2001, after examining long-term financing options, the City placed before voters a ballot measure to fund fire and paramedic services through a special parcel tax. Voters, in turn, overwhelmingly approved the tax (87%) and renewed it again in 2006 for ten years, expiring in June 2017. To continue the funding of fire and paramedic services through the special parcel tax, a ballot measure will be before voters for consideration at the March 7, 2017 general Municipal election.