

Marijuana cultivation, sales back on Milliken ballot

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activities, economic development, police protection services, community development, events and beautification projects.

Town staff anticipates the construction of a second hotel in the near future as well, Lauricello said.

Town staff hasn't received any opposition to the tax to date, he said.

» Johnstown Fire Protection District property tax increase:

Ballot Issue 4A asks voters to approve a mill levy.

If voters favor the measure, the mill levy will not exceed 2 mills and will be used to pay for two full-time firefighters and dispatch costs, provide competitive wages and benefits, provide funding for hazard material operations and flood rescue and maintain finances. The increase would mean an additional \$2.94 in property tax for every \$100,000 of assessed value for the district.

The Johnstown portion of the Front Range Fire District includes nine full-time firefighters and shares about 30 volunteers with Milliken. The addition of two firefighters will add a fourth person per shift; each shift has three on duty now.

There will be a change in how dispatches are charged to different entities that use it starting in 2016, and if the mill levy is approved, part of the costs will go to offset the changing costs. Starting next year, every entity will pay for a portion of its call volume; in 2016, each entity using the shared dispatch will be responsible for paying the cost of 10 percent of said calls. The percentage amount will increase each year until 2020.

The 2013 floods brought light to the need for self-sustainability in case of flooding emergency, said Ron Bateman, fire chief for the Front Range Fire Rescue Authority. The department got the help it needed, but with firefighters coming from different areas, that took away resources for other communities.

"We felt vulnerable," Bateman said. "Our neighbors came out and were fantastic and helped, but we don't have the equipment needed."

The final aspect of the mill levy is to offset district revenue that will drop about \$33 million. The oil and gas industry in the area supported about \$96 million in taxes, which is projected to drop to \$63 million. Bateman said part of the loss will be compensated with the residential and commercial property values increasing, but the .094 mill and the increase is not enough to sustain the loss.

» **Milliken use tax:** Ballot measure 2H proposes a sales and use tax increase of 1 percentage point, from 2.5 to 3.5 percent.

The increase would continue for 10 years.

"We have one of the lowest sales tax increase rates in Weld County," said Kent Brown, town administrator.

The proposed increase would raise revenue for public street improvements, maintenance and repairs, sidewalks and street lighting.

"As far as streets, we do not have enough resources right now for street improvements, maintenance," Brown said. The money would go toward additional traffic controls such as street lights and stop lights, he said.

Revenue could also be allo-

cated toward capital projects, including constructions, maintenance and improvements of public works and the purchase of land and buildings.

Brown said it's important "because it shows that our community is will to take care of our town. It shows commitment to the community."



» Milliken marijuana

sales: Ballot Question 2I asks Milliken voters whether they want to allow the retail sales, cultivation and manufacturing of marijuana in town.

Kent Brown, the town administrator, said when the state vote on legalization happened, Milliken residents were split evenly, so the town board promised to put it back on the ballot.

The vote was so close that the board decided to take temporary measures and wait to see how the marijuana sales go in the rest of the state.

As marijuana sales are a large producer of sales tax revenue in most places where they are allowed, board members wanted to retain the option.

"The town board did not want to ban it indefinitely," he said. "They did not want to make that decisions. They're asking voters for their response."

Brown said there was a survey

distributed earlier this year to about 2,000 residents. Approximately 700 responded, of which about 65 percent said they don't want marijuana facilities in town.

"People may want it in the state but not on their street or around the corner from them," he said.

He said most voters indicated they want to tax it if it's approved.

» Milliken marijuana tax:

Ballot Issue 2J would establish an occupational tax on the sale of marijuana.

Because the town is not home rule, a sales tax cannot be approved for the sale of marijuana. Under an occupational tax, a flat tax amount is taken from each transaction no matter the size, whereas a sales tax's amount would fluctuate as it is based on a percentage, Town Administrator Kent Brown said.

The tax would also apply to grow facilities, marijuana stores or product manufacturing facilities, Brown said.

Earlier in the year, staff sent a survey to 2,000 of the town's residents and received about 700 responses. In the survey, residents looked favorably on the tax, while disapproving of the ballot item that would allow for marijuana sales in the town.

The tax would be limited to \$10 per transaction. The town board would decide on the exact transaction amount, depending on the estimated transaction sizes, following the approval of the item by voters.

If approved, the funds could be used for general operations, mainly for additional enforcement of businesses regulations and law enforcement. Staff does not expect the tax to dramatically increase the budget, Brown said.

» The Southeast Weld Fire Protection District property tax increase and term limit removal:

Ballot Issue 4B requests a mill levy increase.

The district includes almost 500 square miles between Weld and Adams counties, including 405 in Weld County in the towns of Kersey, Prospect Valley and Roggen as well as parts of Interstate 76 and Colo. 52 and 79.

Fire Chief Tom Beach of the Southeast Weld Fire Protection District said the last mill added was in 2002, as the department relied on grants to fund different projects, such as two brush trucks, an ambulance and a fire engine. The need for the two-mill increase now is for future plans. Beach said it's questionable as to how much longer the department can rely on grants as a main source of funding.

Another factor that contributes to the two-mill on the 2015 ballot is the oil and gas industry's decrease in the coming years. Beach said the industry didn't hit the district's area as much as others, but by the industry's decrease, between 40 percent and 50 percent of the district's budget will be affected in the next two years. If approved by voters, the mill levy will mean \$15.92 will be paid a year per \$100,000 assessed value of property; the current mill is set at 5.764.

The second measure for the fire district, Ballot Issue 4C, would eliminate term limits for its board. Board members are limited to two terms, which equals eight years. Beach said the district wants this limitation eliminated because it's raised the problem of getting people who are passionate and involved to run for the positions.

"Those in office are fully vested and have proved themselves," Beach said. "It would be unfortunate if we lose them."