

10/9/2018

To: Denver Post
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From: Steve Werges
Littleton Business Chamber
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Greetings;

I am writing to submit the following story:

On November 6, 2018 the voters of the City of Littleton have a very important decision to make about approving the inclusion into the South Metro Fire District ballot issue 7B. This decision has far ranging effects on emergency services and road improvement within the boundaries within the City of Littleton.

Should the citizens vote to be included the following things will happen. \$3,000,000.00 will be allocated from the city's existing budget for road improvement, money that would not be available should this issue fail. This money would come from the savings that the City would not have to spend on the Littleton Fire Department/South Metro Fire District. Should the measure pass the property owners of Littleton will see a decrease of the city mil levy of 6.662 to a new mil levy of 2.0.

Joining the South Metro Fire District has number of positive effects. Emergency response time will improve from over 10 minutes to nearly 7 minutes. Fire truck personnel will increase to 4 responders up from the previous 3. Moreover, the quality of the service will significantly increase. SMFD is one of only 56 fire departments out a total of 45,000 fire departments across the USA to be receive accreditation from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. The city will also gain a SMFD board seat. Joining SMFD will create an economy of scale that Littleton has never seen. The 44,000 residents will join 279,000 to create one of the largest fire districts in the state. The greatest impact will happen during emergencies that require more resources than a small fire department can handle. By joining the SMFD the resources to handle large fires will automatically be available. These improvements will come with a cost. City property owners will see a new mil levy of 9.25 for SMFD. However the increase will be 11.25 (City of Littleton 2.0+SMFD 9.25) an effective increase of 4.588 mils. On a house valued at \$370,000 it will be around \$10.00 per month.

So why does all of sudden the funding for a fire department which was previously handled by the coffers of the city become a burden of the property owners of the city. The issue is a complex issue that involves the Gallagher effect on our property taxes. Also, The reality that funding for the operation of our municipality is rapidly changing due to changes of retail sales tax due to ever increasing internet sales. Littleton being the oldest fire district (established in 1890) in the area saw the growth of populations outside of the city and those new residents where covered under a more recently created fire districts that where already paying the a higher mil levy. The Littleton Fire Protection district was made of a group of partners that was considering increasing their mil levy to 10 and projecting capital shortfalls in the near future.

They realized that by joining SMFD their mil levy could decrease to 9.25 and that their future capital expenditures would not become a burden. So The partners of the Littleton Fire District voted to join SMFD leaving the city to stand alone effective Jan. 1, 2019.

In a study session on December 5, 2017 the City Council of Littleton decided to dismantle its fire department and join SMFD. The council realized that the only reasonable option the city had was to join SMFD. So the citizens will be paying for the inclusion into SMFD either way. The question comes at what cost. Should the citizens vote against inclusion the city will have to curtail other services to pay for the services it has already contracted for. The bottom line is that the citizens for Littleton where able to off load some of the cost of a modern fire department to its partners in the LFPD.

Sincerely

Steve Werges
President
Littleton Business Chamber