Rodeo-Hercules
Fire Protection District
Community Priorities and Financial Sustainability Survey

Survey Conducted:
July 6-19, 2016
Methodology

- 312 interviews with residents likely to cast ballots in November 2016 in the Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District
- Interviews conducted July 6-19, 2016
- Interviews online, on landlines and cell phones
- Margin of sampling error of +/- 5.6% at the 95% confidence level
  - Margin of sampling error of +/-7.8% for the split samples
- Some percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding
Perceptions of the District
The District and local fire fighters are perceived very favorably.

I am going to mention a few people and organizations. For each one please tell me if you approve or disapprove of the job they are doing.

Local firefighters

- Total Approve: 87%
- Total Disapprove: 4%

- String. Approve: 65%
- Smwt. Approve: 23%
- HO/CR/NHO/DK/NA: 8%
- Smwt. Disapprove: 5%
- String. Disapprove: 0%

The Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District

- Total Approve: 77%
- Total Disapprove: 6%

- String. Approve: 50%
- Smwt. Approve: 28%
- HO/CR/NHO/DK/NA: 17%
- Smwt. Disapprove: 5%
- String. Disapprove: 0%
I would like to read you a series of statements that people have made about the Rodeo-Hercules Fire District. Please tell me if you believe it is accurate or inaccurate.

Three-in-five recognized RHFD’s role in emergency medical response.

The majority of 911 calls responded to by the Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District are related to medical emergencies.

- Very accurate: 34%
- Somewhat accurate: 27%
- Somewhat inaccurate: 7%
- Very inaccurate: 1%
- Don't know/NA: 31%

Total Accurate: 61%
Total Inaccurate: 9%
Nearly three-quarters said there is an additional need for funding for fire and emergency response services.

Would you say that to provide and maintain fire and emergency medical services, the Rodeo-Hercules Fire District has a great need for additional funding, some need, a little need, or no real need for additional funding?

- **Great need**: 33%
- **Some need**: 39%
- **A little need**: 5%
- **No real need**: 14%
- **Don't know/NA**: 9%

**Great/Some Need**: 72%

**Little/No Real Need**: 19%
Respondents see a reduction in fire stations as very concerning.

Looming reductions in existing funding sources will result in only one of our two local fire stations being open at any time, negatively impacting service levels.

There are only two local fire stations – one in Hercules and one in Rodeo – and six firefighters to serve 34,000 residents spread over 32 square miles and provide emergency fire and medical response to an oil refinery, major highway and railway.

Ext./Very Serious Concern

I am going to read a statement about the Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District. Please tell me how big of a concern it is to you personally: is it an extremely serious concern, very serious concern, somewhat serious concern, or really not much of a concern at all for you?
Structural Elements of the Conceptual Measure
Two versions of the measure were tested in the survey by randomly dividing respondents into two demographically comparable groups.

One half of the sample was read a version of the proposed measure that would provide $2.5 million annually, and the other half of the sample heard about a version that would provide $1.5 million annually.

Each version would have different implications in terms of service levels.
Measure Concepts Tested

RODEO-HERCULES FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT SAVE LOCAL FIRE STATIONS MEASURE. To prevent closing local fire stations, maintain local fire protection/emergency services, rapid 911 emergency response times, firefighter/paramedic staffing levels, and fire prevention/lifesaving rescue equipment, shall Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District replace an expiring property assessment with an $18 monthly parcel tax to maintain stable local funding until ended by voters, that cannot be taken by the State, providing $2.5 million annually, with citizen oversight, independent annual audits, all funds staying local?

$2.5 Million/ $18/Month

RODEO-HERCULES FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT PROTECT LOCAL FIRE STATIONS MEASURE. To prevent significant increases in 911 emergency response times and significant cuts to firefighter/paramedic staffing, maintain local fire protection emergency services and fire prevention/lifesaving rescue equipment, shall Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District replace an expiring property assessment with a $10.75 monthly parcel tax to maintain stable local funding until ended by voters, that cannot be taken by the State, providing $1.5 million annually, with citizen oversight, independent audits, all funds staying local?

$1.5 Million/ $10.75/Month

If there were an election today, do you think you would vote “yes” in favor of this measure, or “no” to oppose it?
Respondents were more interested in generating more local revenue to prevent fire station closures.

If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure, or "no" to oppose it?

**$2.5 Million/$18/Month**
- Definitely yes: 45%
- Probably yes: 18%
- Undecided, lean yes: 7%
- Undecided, lean no: 3%
- Probably no: 4%
- Definitely no: 19%

**Total Yes 70%**

**$1.5 Million/$10.75/Month**
- Definitely yes: 37%
- Probably yes: 15%
- Undecided, lean yes: 6%
- Undecided, lean no: 7%
- Probably no: 12%
- Definitely no: 20%

**Total No 38%**
The larger conceptual measure received stronger support across demographic subgroups.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Total Yes – $2.5 Million</th>
<th>Total Yes – $1.5 Million</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>18-49</td>
<td>81%</td>
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<td>50-64</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<td>Voters of Color</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hercules</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unincorporated/Rodeo</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>68%</td>
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Let me give you some more information about local fire protection and emergency medical response services in your community. The Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District provides fire protection services for the City of Hercules, parts of Rodeo, and other parts of unincorporated Contra Costa County. The District is overseen by a Board of Directors elected by voters and the District has its own budget. These funds can only be spent on fire protection and 911 emergency medical response services.

Statewide policy changes have resulted in a significant loss of revenues for the District. While this loss has been partially offset by a grant and local funding, these funds are scheduled to expire. This has led the District to seek replacement funding through this local ballot measure in order to **(SPLIT SAMPLE C): keep both of its existing local fire stations open** (SPLIT SAMPLE D: prevent significant increases in 911 emergency response times.)

Having heard this, let me ask you again about the **(SPLIT SAMPLE C: RODEO-HERCULES FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT SAVE LOCAL FIRE STATIONS MEASURE)** that would prevent closure of fire stations maintaining rapid 911 emergency response times by replacing an expiring property assessment with an $18 monthly parcel tax until ended by voters.) **(SPLIT SAMPLE D: RODEO-HERCULES FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT PROTECT LOCAL FIRE STATIONS MEASURE)** that would prevent significant increases in 911 emergency response times and would prevent cuts to firefighter and paramedic staffing by replacing an expiring property assessment with a $10.75 monthly parcel tax until ended by voters.)

If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure, or "no" to oppose it?
Interest for both versions of the measure grows slightly as respondents learn more.

If there were an election today, do you think you would vote “yes” in favor of this measure, or “no” to oppose it?

Total (Combining both versions)
- Def. Yes: 47%
- Prob./Undec., Lean Yes: 22%
- Undecided: 8%
- Prob./Undec., Lean No: 19%
- Def. No: 69%
- Total No: 27%

$2.5 Million/$18/Month
- Def. Yes: 48%
- Prob./Undec., Lean Yes: 24%
- Undecided: 7%
- Prob./Undec., Lean No: 16%
- Def. No: 72%
- Total No: 24%

$1.5 Million/$10.75/Month
- Def. Yes: 46%
- Prob./Undec., Lean Yes: 20%
- Undecided: 9%
- Prob./Undec., Lean No: 21%
- Def. No: 66%
- Total No: 30%
I am going to read you some different potential aspects of this ballot measure.

Requiring funds be spent locally and offering exemptions to seniors are priorities of interest in the conceptual measure.

- Requiring that all funds be spent locally: 80% agree, 8% disagree.
- Offering exemptions for seniors: 71% agree, 13% disagree.
- Requiring independent annual financial audits: 63% agree, 13% disagree.
- Continuing the measure until ended by voters: 61% agree, 25% disagree.
- Requiring citizens’ oversight of funds: 50% agree, 25% disagree.

The measure will continue until voters decide to end it.

- Establishing a $129 annual property tax, costing the equivalent of $10.75 per month: 48% agree, 30% disagree.
- Ending the measure after 9 years: 31% agree, 19% disagree.
- Ending the measure after 15 years: 37% agree, 26% disagree.
- Establishing a $215 annual property tax, costing the equivalent of $18 per month: 40% agree, 30% disagree.
- Continuing the tax ongoing annually: 34% agree, 32% disagree.
Maintaining fire protection and emergency services and ensuring fire stations are open full-time were the highest priorities to respondents.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining local fire protection and emergency services</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensuring fire stations are open full-time</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<td>86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining lifesaving rescue equipment</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining current 911 medical emergency and fire response times</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>85%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining professional firefighter and paramedic staffing levels</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining the number of on-duty local firefighters and paramedics</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining local fire prevention and emergency response</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining all current local fire stations</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am going to read you a list of some specific projects or provisions that this measure might fund.
Improving response times and maintaining fire facilities is also seen as very important.

Improving 911 emergency response times to meet national best practice standards
Maintaining local fire facilities, fire engines, and other fire and emergency response…
Preventing emergency and fire response times from increasing
Attracting and retaining qualified professional firefighters and paramedics
Ensuring fire stations are meeting federal workplace safety standards
Reducing the risk in property damage from fires
Preventing significant increases in 911 emergency response times
Preventing significant cuts to firefighter and paramedic staffing
Repairing existing local firefighting facilities and fire equipment
Purchasing protective clothing and breathing apparatuses

Improving response times and maintaining fire facilities is also seen as very important.

- Improving 911 emergency response times to meet national best practice standards: 44% Ext./Very Impt., 36% Very Impt., 11% Smwt. Impt., 10% Not Too Impt./DK/NA, Ext./Very Impt. 79%
- Maintaining local fire facilities, fire engines, and other fire and emergency response…: 43% Ext./Very Impt., 37% Very Impt., 19% Smwt. Impt., 6% Not Too Impt./DK/NA, Ext./Very Impt. 79%
- Preventing emergency and fire response times from increasing: 44% Ext./Very Impt., 34% Very Impt., 16% Smwt. Impt., 6% Not Too Impt./DK/NA, Ext./Very Impt. 78%
- Attracting and retaining qualified professional firefighters and paramedics: 41% Ext./Very Impt., 38% Very Impt., 12% Smwt. Impt., 10% Not Too Impt./DK/NA, Ext./Very Impt. 78%
- Ensuring fire stations are meeting federal workplace safety standards: 38% Ext./Very Impt., 39% Very Impt., 13% Smwt. Impt., 10% Not Too Impt./DK/NA, Ext./Very Impt. 77%
- Reducing the risk in property damage from fires: 31% Ext./Very Impt., 46% Very Impt., 17% Smwt. Impt., 6% Not Too Impt./DK/NA, Ext./Very Impt. 77%
- Preventing significant increases in 911 emergency response times: 42% Ext./Very Impt., 34% Very Impt., 16% Smwt. Impt., 9% Not Too Impt./DK/NA, Ext./Very Impt. 76%
- Preventing significant cuts to firefighter and paramedic staffing: 42% Ext./Very Impt., 34% Very Impt., 14% Smwt. Impt., 9% Not Too Impt./DK/NA, Ext./Very Impt. 76%
- Repairing existing local firefighting facilities and fire equipment: 31% Ext./Very Impt., 45% Very Impt., 17% Smwt. Impt., 7% Not Too Impt./DK/NA, Ext./Very Impt. 75%
- Purchasing protective clothing and breathing apparatuses: 37% Ext./Very Impt., 34% Very Impt., 23% Smwt. Impt., 6% Not Too Impt./DK/NA, Ext./Very Impt. 71%

I am going to read you a list of some specific projects or provisions that this measure might fund. Please tell me how important it is to you that that type of project be funded: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important.
Information of Interest to Respondents
Educational Statements about the Measure

(MASS CASUALTY INCIDENT) With an oil refinery, freeway, and railway in our community, we are at risk of experiencing a tragic incident, such as an explosion that could have thousands of victims. We need this measure to maintain both of our fire stations and professional firefighters essential to quality response in these types of emergencies.

(RESPONSE TIMES – HEALTH IMPACT) The American Heart Association says brain deterioration starts 4 to 6 minutes after a person stops breathing, but the average 911 response time in Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District is over 7 minutes. Most 911 emergencies in our community are medical, such as heart attacks and strokes; this measure is needed to make sure residents receive emergency medical care quickly. Without this measure these response times will increase even more, risking the safety of our community.

(FUNDING REPLACEMENT) Local funding in our District is scheduled to expire. This measure simply replaces essential funding to maintain our local Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services. This measure is essential to maintaining neighborhood safety by preventing the closure of our local fire stations.

(BEST PRACTICE) National best practice standards recommend 39 firefighters and 3 fire stations for a community our size. With only 6 on-duty firefighters at any given time and 2 fire stations, our Fire District is falling severely short. To make matters worse, if this measure does not pass, we will only be able to afford 3 on-duty firefighters, risking the safety and health of our community.
(Continued)

(Property Damage) Every minute, a fire doubles in size; longer 911 emergency response times not only risk public health, but also increase the risk of damage and destruction to residential and business properties. With, both a major railway and oil refinery in our community, this measure will help reduce risks to our properties and neighborhoods in the event of an accident.

(Fire Stations) Our local fire stations are deteriorating and in disrepair. If we do not repair them soon we will risk violating work safety regulations. This measure will prevent the District from having to close fire stations and will ensure our firefighters have a safe place to work, so they can continue to protect our community in the case of an emergency.

(Refinery) With our community’s proximity to the Rodeo Refinery, it is important that we have sufficient fire fighters on-duty, compliant fire protection equipment and fire stations, and adequate fire protection services, so that in the case of an emergency, our community can be protected. This measure will ensure that, in case of an emergency, residents in our District will be safe.

(Fire Insurance) Improving emergency response services is a good investment. By improving 911 emergency response times and maintaining fire stations, the number of on-duty firefighters, and equipment, including breathing apparatus, protection and radios, this measure will stabilize and ensure fire insurance rates do not increase for local residents and businesses.
Respondents were also provided information related to potential concerns they might have about the taxes, inflation, financial management, the benefit assessment and other issues.
Interest in a smaller measure fluctuates significantly with messaging.

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<tr>
<th>Total Yes</th>
<th>Initial Vote</th>
<th>Second Vote</th>
<th>Third Vote</th>
<th>Final Vote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>65%</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total No26%</th>
<th>Initial Vote</th>
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<td></td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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Und. 4% 4% 5% 6%

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<tr>
<th>Initial Vote</th>
<th>Second Vote</th>
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<th>Final Vote</th>
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<tr>
<td>$2.5 Million/ $18/Month</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<th>Initial Vote</th>
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<th>Final Vote</th>
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<tr>
<td>$1.5 Million $10.75/Month</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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Und. 4% 4% 5% 10%
Conclusions
Our team typically will only advise a District to proceed if it is above—not within—the Margin of Error on the final ballot test, which the District is not.

If the District still opts to proceed, success is by no means assured.

Under these circumstances, the District should only proceed at the 18/mo rate, with senior exemption, until ended by voters.

Additional educational outreach and mailings to update residents about the funding that is scheduled to expire and the need for a funding replacement should occur to help residents have the necessary information to make an informed decision given the number of policy issues being considered.
Appendix
A majority were uncertain whether the District has active reserve firefighters.

The Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District has an active reserve firefighter program.

- Very accurate: 13%
- Somewhat accurate: 15%
- Somewhat inaccurate: 4%
- Very inaccurate: 3%
- Don't know/NA: 65%
Few see providing smaller medical response vehicles as comparatively important.

I am going to read you a list of some specific projects or provisions that this measure might fund. Please tell me how important it is to you that that type of project be funded: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important.
Respondents are divided on the best type of vehicle to invest in.

The Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District should invest in smaller vehicles to respond to medical emergencies that are less expensive but would require the District to hire additional staff.

OR

The Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District should invest in vehicles that are more expensive, but can respond to both fire and medical emergencies and would not require additional staff.

Note: This isn’t surprising. Respondents are often more concerned about outputs (e.g., response times) than inputs (e.g., vehicle types).