5-13-1955

Multnomah County Four-Year Special Tax Levy

City Club of Portland (Portland, Or.)
REPORT
on
MULTNOMAH COUNTY FOUR-YEAR SPECIAL TAX LEVY

"Shall the Board of County Commissioners of Multnomah County, Oregon, be authorized to levy a tax of not to exceed $3,863,000 per annum over the constitutional 6% tax limitation imposed by Article XI, Section 11 of the constitution of the State of Oregon for a 4-year period beginning with the fiscal year 1955-1956.

Authorization for the 4-year period will save the expense of special elections for annual levies made necessary by the constitutional 6% limitation.

This levy will be a continuation of levies made in each of the past five years by Multnomah County to carry on essential county services including such services as the County Hospital, TB Hospital, Health Department, Juvenile Home, Public Library, County Farm Agent, and 4-H Program.

TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS,
THE CITY CLUB OF PORTLAND:

Your Committee was given the assignment of studying and reporting on the proposed four-year special tax levy to be submitted to the voters at a special election to be held Friday, May 20, 1955. In its research your Committee has interviewed M. J. Gleason, County Commissioner; George Baldwin, Multnomah County Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission executive secretary; Ivan Elder, assistant to the County Commissioners; James Gleason, Registrar of Elections; C. C. Chapman, editor of the Oregon Voter; and Louise Humphrey, acting manager, Oregon Tax and Research Institute.

HISTORY

Without specific authorization of the voters, the Constitution of Oregon prohibits an increase of property tax levied by a taxing body in an amount more than 6% of the total amount levied in any one of the three years immediately preceding the proposed levy. So far as Multnomah County is concerned, through the 1930's the permissible 6% yearly increase was not needed and therefore was not levied; however, it was levied in the early 1940's. A special levy in excess of the 6% limit was voted in 1947, and special levies have been used every year since then.

In 1950 a five-year continuing special levy of not to exceed 4½ mills per year was approved. The County Commissioners showed themselves worthy of the faith of the voters, for only in 1954-55 did the levy approach the maximum 4½ mills.

In the fall of 1952 the voters of the state approved the constitutional amendment allowing permanent increase of a tax base when approved by the voters.

In order to continue the essential county services made possible by the additional tax approved by the voters in 1950 which expires in 1955, the Multnomah County Commissioners requested voter approval of a permanent increase in the tax base of about the same amount in the regular election on November 2, 1954, but it was not approved.

THE PRESENT FOUR-YEAR SPECIAL TAX LEVY

Since the voters — perhaps due to the morass of measures presented to them in that election — did not approve the requested increase in the base, the Commissioners are now requesting approval of a four-year continuing levy not to exceed $3,863,000 per annum to provide essential services which would otherwise be drastically curtailed. The levy is not a new tax. It would only continue the type of special levy under which the county has been operating for several years. Only a 4% increase in total taxing authority is requested, from $11,260,094 to $11,706,680.

Your Committee studied the 1954 measure which requested an increase in the tax base, and feels that the points involved in that measure, and the recommendations contained in the November 1954 report apply equally to this special election measure.

State law requires that most public and veterans' assistance, and school support, must be maintained; therefore the services curtailed, in the event this measure does not pass, would undoubtedly be those general services most known to the general public, such as: hospital, library, delinquency care, and the general conduct and maintenance of county government.
CONCLUSIONS

It is the consensus of your Committee that the only way to maintain the integrity of County Government in our expanding community and economy is to pass the measure. Contrary action invites disaster: loss of efficient county employees and dangerous lowering of standards in health, hospitalization, delinquency care and general conduct of county government. In the opinion of your Committee, the Four-Year Special Tax Levy is justified.

RECOMMENDATION

Your Committee recommends that the City Club go on record as favoring the measure.

Respectfully submitted,

Basil Deacon
Don A. Ellis
Herbert Ochsner
Phillip Roth
P. S. McAllister, Chairman

Approved May 9, 1955, by the Research Board for transmittal to the Board of Governors.

ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP

Proposed by Paul R. Meyer.

Proposed by Ernest Bonyhadi.

MIAMI AREA CONSIDERS METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT

A new government has been proposed for the metropolitan Miami and Dade County, Fla., area.

If put into effect, it would be in charge of water supply, sewerage and waste disposal, major streets and expressways, and long-range planning for the whole area that now has 26 municipalities and large unincorporated but heavily-populated sections. Under the plan, the existing municipalities would turn over to the new government those functions best taken care of on an area-wide basis but would continue to take care of matters that primarily affect their own residents.

In effect, the plan would create a metropolitan government that would take the place of the present county government and would have greater authority than the county government without losing any of its powers.

The recommendations were based on a fact-finding survey conducted in 1954 by Public Administration Service, under auspices of the University of Miami. The survey was made to ease problems of government service in an area where the tempo of urban growth is so great that in less than 20 years it may have a population more than double its present 650,000. It came about when Miami officials determined to guard against hastily-chosen devices. Elsewhere, communities had tried solutions without thorough consideration. The Miami area itself had moved unsuccessfully three times in the last ten years to secure government changes without first having a full-scale analysis.

The recommendations are set forth in a report to the Metropolitan Miami Municipal Board, now published in book form by Public Administration Service under the title, “The Government of Metropolitan Miami”.

To bring about the proposed changes, the Florida Constitution will have to be amended and then area voters will have to approve a home-rule charter.

If the report’s proposals are followed, the Miami area would have a board of metropolitan commissioners consisting of a president and ten members. The president would be chosen at large by the voters of the area. Eight of the ten would be elected at large from eight commissioner districts of fairly uniform population. The entire area would be divided into those districts without reference to city boundaries. The other two members of the board would be chosen from municipalities containing more than 8 per cent of the whole area population—at present only Miami and Miami Beach fit into that category.

Direction of administration would be under a chief executive or administrative officer, appointed by the board and serving at its pleasure.