

Subject: Just Say No, Some Top 10s Why, Railway Feedback

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Conversation: Just Say No, Some Top 10s Why, Railway Feedback

Polls open Tuesday, 6am to 7 pm. Deer Park Neighbors' endorsement: VOTE NO ON SALES TAX. For those who don't usually vote in primaries, you will be asked what ballot you want. If you prefer, you can REQUEST A NON-PARTISAN ballot. If this is your first referendum, when you read the question, pick the answer NO.

If you'd like to see all the choices on the ballot you will receive tomorrow, we have links to both Lake County and Cook County information on the Elections page of <http://deerparkneighbors.com>.

We've spent a lot of time over the last few weeks LISTENING to residents and business people. The Village voted itself \$600 to send everyone an educational mailing. We have yet to get our copy, but if it arrives, we'll comment online before midnight.

Here are the TOP 10 THINGS WRONG with the referendum, from the mouths of those opposed.

1. The wording of referendum is wrong: it should have read "...for public infrastructure, LIMITED TO street and drainage improvements."
2. President Gifford said at the Road Forum that a referendum should have some "wiggle room"—his words, not ours. Wow.
3. Trustee Pratcher doesn't want to tie the board's hands when it comes to what will be included in infrastructure. Wow.
4. Timing: We could be heading into a recession, political wisdom is against tax increases now.
5. Timing: We have not seen a complete accounting of the Vehe project. Show us precisely what you've done with our public funds before you ask for more. In the last four months alone, the village has spend \$700,000 over budget on re-work for the interior of the Barn. With bills remaining to be paid, the amount in five months would have paid for the 2008 road program.
6. Last year, both Vehe and Town Center Park were declared a "public lands district." We don't know what projects there would qualify under the current referendum. Figure it out first.
7. Competitive disadvantage: Our neighbors aren't raising their sales taxes. Will this tax drive people across the street to shop?
8. Having this referendum on the primary ballot is simply cynical. Primaries have low turnouts, and low turnouts favor the powers-that-be—unless, of course, the

- electorate decides to BECOME the powers that be.
9. It's kind of greedy and unattractive to ask shoppers from other towns to make up this board's (and recent past board's) financial shortfalls.
 10. The current board—that's what's wrong. We just cannot rely on this particular board to spend any new monies wisely. (Read the board minutes of the last year.)

Many of you asked, where will money for streets and drainage come from?

- Red light cameras—Significant fines can be ours (with NO OUT OF POCKET EXPENSES) to make scofflaws pay for blowing red lights. We can use those funds for roads and drainage.
- Sales taxes we already have: There are new big-ticket stores just opened, including Crate and Barrel, Apple, Vera Bradley.
- The new hotel tax (occupancy tax), project \$175,000 a year. How will those monies be spent; what other village dollars will be freed up.
- Increased Motor Fuel Tax revenues: every indication is that gas prices are going up.
- The bonding company who covered the work of the first Vehe contractor. Hasn't even been applied to, though frankly, company appears as bogus as the contractor.
- Barn Rentals: We now have a village staff person dedicated to renting that building, with early successes. And let's be sure every cent of rent comes to the village, NOT the foundation.
- Barn events bring more people to Deer Park, who might shop and dine here. More tax revenues.
- Savings on debt service: Dahm property is paid off, the Vehe Farm debt payment will be retired (yes, folks, we borrowed money to buy that land).

Top 10 things we learned:

1. Yellow signs show up amazingly against the snow.
2. Only a very few business people in Deer Park (those who receive our emailings) even knew of the sales tax referendum.
3. Neither Town Center management (nor, apparently, our board) felt a need to discuss this tax with businesses. Wow.
4. Some customers DO come to Deer Park specifically because of the 6.5% sales tax; and until we get our own ZIP code, statistics on how many local shoppers live in Deer Park are nothing more than guesses.
5. Some Town Center employees didn't know there is a town of Deer Park? "I thought it was just a mall." Wow.
6. 95% of the people we've spoken with have never been to a village meeting of any kind—or read the minutes or seen the DVDs. Wow.
7. Failure to have seen your village government at work doesn't keep people from holding incredibly strong, yet completely uninformed opinions.
8. People who are not on our email list can quote chapter and verse on Deer Park

Neighbors. Thank you “forward email” and “Google.”

9. YouTube rocks.
10. Residents in this village are unstoppable when they work together. Evidence: countless “no sales tax” signs all over town.

What happens next, if the referendum fails?

- The board takes the time it needs to get the referendum right. Given that the current roads program goes out to 2017, and at that point, the cycle of repairs and maintenance will start all over again, the tax inflows should be earmarked for streets and drainage, and nothing else.
- The board could demonstrate that its endless spending of public funds on Vehe (or any other special interest project) stops. NOW.
- The board amends the Vehe Farm Foundation management contract to ADD both a cancellation clause and a requirement for private funding only on everything done there from now on.
- This board (or the next one starting in April 2009) could talk about business development, public infrastructure, cost accounting, no-bid contracts, conflicts of interest, an ethics officer and lots more. In other words, all the cards go back on the table, and nothing is discussed “off line.”
- The sleeping giant, once awakened, will stay alert. Okay, not a giant, but the people of Deer Park. Attend public meetings, read minutes, buttonhole trustees, whatever it takes. We’ve been deficient in our attention to how this local government does its work; we won’t make that mistake again.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY. Please see our web site, where you can download the comments form to be filled out and mailed in. Do this immediately; February 15 is the deadline. There is an online process for comments, but it is not easy. You can also make your comments by phone, full instructions included. PLEASE BE SPECIFIC about the impact this CN acquisition will have on your safety, the status of Good Shepherd Hospital (which could lose ranking if its patients come to the hospital DOA), environmental issues of hazardous materials shipping.

CUSD 220 has some meetings about redistricting, including a public hearing. See the web site Events page.

CUSD 95 is running an online Stakeholders Survey. Link from our Schools page (one of the many areas on the site that needs expansion, volunteers welcome).

HUGE KUDOS to Ela Township. Last Thursday, I drove from Highland Park to Deer Park, during that snow storm. In the three-and-three-quarter hours, I had time to really examine the road clearing in at least 10 other municipalities. The best road conditions were in Deer Park, bar none.

We try not to send too many blasts, but want you to know that the web site is updated almost daily. Pages most likely to change are the press room and the documents page (the eyeglass link). Thanks for your growing—GROWING—support.

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