

## **Clackamas County Measure 3-476**

### **BALLOT TITLE GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS TO REPLACE OBSOLETE EMERGENCY RADIO COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM**

**QUESTION:** Shall County replace obsolete first responder's emergency radio communications system; expand coverage; reinforce for disasters; issue \$59 million in bonds? If the bonds are approved, they will be payable from taxes on property or property ownership that are not subject to the limits of sections 11 and 11b, Article XI of the Oregon Constitution.

**SUMMARY:** When the public calls 9-1-1 for help, Clackamas County's emergency communications system dispatches all fire and rescue, law enforcement, and ambulance providers countywide. Although the system has worked for decades, manufacturers no longer make key parts and towers are not designed to withstand the earthquakes predicted for Oregon.

If approved, bonds will pay for replacement of the emergency communications system including:

- \*Convert the emergency radio system to current technology;
- \*Expand coverage to county areas that currently have none;
- \*Add in-building coverage, so radios can function within hospitals, schools;
- \*Improve reliability during major disasters;
- \*Replace approximately 1000 analog radios countywide; and
- \*Purchase land, repay debt

For accountability, a citizen committee will provide oversight.

Bonds would be paid over 15 years or less.

Projected tax rate for bonds is estimated not to exceed 10¢ per \$1,000 of assessed value. Actual rate may vary depending on market conditions.

Typical homeowners with a 2016 average assessed (not market) value of \$262,514 would pay about \$26.25 annually or a little over \$2 a month.

#### **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

The existing emergency radio communications system for Clackamas County was built in the 1990s as a multi-agency effort to ensure emergency responders, including fire, law enforcement, and ambulance providers, could quickly and safely respond to emergencies.

#### **Who uses the emergency communications system?**

When a call for help is made to 9-1-1, the emergency radio system enables dispatchers to get all necessary emergency responders to the caller's location as quickly as possible. The system also provides the vital link among responders in the field to coordinate, request backup and get aid to people in crisis. The system is used by fire and rescue, city police, the County Sheriff, and EMS/ ambulance responders countywide. The system is run by the Clackamas 800 Radio Group (C800), a partnership of public safety agencies.

#### **Why does the system need to be updated?**

Four key issues prompt the need for the system upgrades contemplated by the bond:

• Changes in Emergency Communications Technology - Equipment for the current system is obsolete and reaching the end of its serviceable life. Manufacturers no longer make key replacement parts because they have transitioned to newer technology, and finding used parts for the system has become increasingly difficult.

• Growing Demand for Emergency Services - Population and emergency call volume have grown and are anticipated to increase further over the coming decades. Up-to-date equipment is necessary to ensure that the system remains effective.

• System Coverage - The existing system has limited or no coverage in rural areas including Mt. Hood, the Clackamas River drainage, and portions of South County. The existing system also has limited functioning and coverage within large buildings such as schools, hospitals, and commercial structures. Purchasing additional sites, adding towers, and expanding coverage inside buildings will increase system availability.

• Need to Improve Reliability During Major Disasters - The system must be designed, built and maintained to a much higher standard than consumer telecommunications so it can work reliably during a storm, earthquake, or other major emergency, even if land line or cell phone networks overload or fail. Updated equipment and strengthened facilities will improve reliability of the system during severe weather, major earthquakes, and other disasters.

#### **How much would the system improvements cost?**

The proposal would raise an estimated \$59 million for capital improvements, equipment upgrades, and replacement of over 1,000 analog radios currently used by first responders countywide. These funds would be generated through the County's issuance of general obligation bonds that are expected to be paid over 15 years or less.

How much would this measure cost property taxpayers? The projected levy rate is estimated to be approximately 10¢ per \$1,000 of assessed value. Actual rate may vary depending on changes in bond interest rates and assessed values. This rate would be levied over 15 years or less. A typical homeowner would pay about \$26.25 in 2016 or a little over \$2 a month assuming an average assessed (not market) value of \$262,514.