



## Perris News

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### PE Criticizes Measure C – But Offers No Alternatives

The Press-Enterprise Sept. 30 editorial offers plenty of criticism about our Measure C Public Safety ballot measure but no solutions to the current and deep budget crisis facing the City.

Even worse, the editorial cavalierly states as fact that Perris has done nothing to reduce its budget while resorting to “scare tactics” to slash police and fire protection unless voters approve the measure.

It’s disappointing and discouraging to think the editorial board failed to do even basic research before misstating the City’s response to the budget crisis and what will happen if Measure C is defeated.

It’s quite easy for someone who doesn’t live in the City to say cut public safety for the residents of Perris. And quite frankly, we are surprised the Press-Enterprise is taking an interest in this issue since the newspaper rarely sends a reporter to cover Perris council meetings, where most of the City’s business takes place.

To set the record straight, the City already has laid off temporary staff, imposed a hiring freeze and unpaid furloughs on all other employees, resulting in 10 percent wage cuts and the closure of City Hall on Fridays. We’ve also reduced operating budgets in all departments, with the exception of public safety.

Those reductions have saved more than \$4 million.

We’ve spent millions more in reserves to keep police and fire protection at existing levels. But it isn’t enough.

The State of California raided \$5 million from Perris coffers to balance its budget and the reduction of sales and property taxes from the recession means we’ve seen our general fund revenues drop from \$36 million in 2007 to \$21 million currently. No amount of belt-tightening can offset that level of budget shrinkage.

Fire, paramedic and police services are a priority for the city. Measure C is a fair and balanced way to raise revenue by eliminating an existing annual parcel tax of \$287.16 paid by only a portion of property owners and replaces it with a much lower annual parcel assessment of \$135.88 paid by all property owners in the City.

Could the assessment climb by 2 percent? Yes, but only through a public vote by the City Council after the public hearing process.

The Perris City Council authorized Measure C as a last resort to keep police, fire and emergency medical services at their current levels. We chose this option after careful consideration and following numerous informal conversations with residents and business owners who agree that while no tax is pleasant, the level of public safety protection must be maintained.

Measure C is not, repeat not, a scare tactic. Rather than just cutting public safety like we have every other department, the City Council opted to give voters the chance to voice their input. If the measure fails to pass, there will be public safety cutbacks. At least five Perris police officers will be let go, paramedic staffing will be sliced and there will be an undetermined number of firefighters laid off. Those cutbacks will increase response time to emergency calls, likely result in more graffiti and reverse the remarkable 17 percent reduction in crime Perris has achieved in the last two years.

Measure C asks all Perris homeowners and renters to pay about \$11 per month to keep existing public safety levels, not just a small portion of the City that unfairly has to bear the current burden. Given the importance of public safety, we think Measure C is more than worth it.

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