



Is there really a need for a Metropolitan Park District to support the Friends Of The Pool's over \$20 million dollar Methow Aquatics Complex???

<https://nopooltaxes.com>

Methow Valley News July 26, 2023 – Letters To The Editor

Pools are for everyone

Dear Editor:

As our community ponders the pros and cons of creating the Methow Aquatics District, I hear over and over again the very legitimate concern of affordable housing come up. Having a sustainable community that all levels of income earners can thrive in is important to all of us and we all feel the effects of our housing crisis.

First I'd like to say how lucky we are to have the Housing Trust, along with all its donors and supporters, building beautiful homes for our community members to live in. While many communities have housing trusts, the norm for affordable housing development is through the federal low-income housing tax credit or LIHTC.

I am hearing a lot of folks who think we can levy our way out of a housing crisis. While levies in large cities certainly have helped develop affordable units, they are cities with their own housing authority infrastructure that we are lacking here.

I also hear the concern folks express about how a couple hundred dollars a year increase in property taxes will affect our lowest income community members and seniors. Thankfully our neighbors who own their property and are low-income or senior citizens qualify for property tax exemptions and the pool levy would not affect them. In fact, 189 Methow Valley households already utilize these exemptions.

Regardless of a pool levy or not, property taxes will increase over time. As someone who worked many years in the affordable housing world and with people trying to make ends meet, my experience has been that pools build community across income lines!

As we move forward in our discussions around the pool, our housing crisis, and how to best build a healthy community let's keep in mind that community pools are for everyone! Rich, poor, young, old and everyone in between. If we vote no on the levy quickly, only the fortunate few will have access to pools, swimming lessons and the well-being that pools offer.

Marisa Monteverde

Winthrop

Community Member Response...

Marisa,

You have to realize that the creation of a non-voter accountable, very powerful Metropolitan Parks District is not the only alternative to replacing the Wagner pool.

I wrote this following in a response to a thread here concerning decreasing Social Security benefits and it's effects on low income seniors along with increased taxes and cost of living.

"Those folks pushing their dream mega spa complex justify taking money from the low income families by saying something like 189 families (have to check that #) in the Methow are receiving a senior tax property tax exemption.

There are three levels of Senior tax exemptions based on income level, however none forgive all of the property taxes. Also many low income community members don't receive any kind of property tax break.

With the property values going up those taxes also go up. So the FOP is still proposing to take money from those who can least afford it no matter how they try to spin it.

It's stressful getting old (I'm 68) and or living pay check to pay check. Money concerns are one of those stressors.

I would argue that the FOP board members, some of whom are extremely wealthy, are proposing a tax "taking" plan that is currently detrimental to the health and well-being of the seniors around here as stress from this issue does its damage.

Taking money from the poor to fund your dream Leisure activity is also modeling poor behavior to children."

I would add that after receiving the latest increase in property value assessments, this added luxury pool tax will add around \$870 to my property taxes at the .75 per thousand rate. Way more than the \$200 per year that you stated. My Social Security is less than \$600 per month. You do the math.

Also realize that this levy could cost more money if 60% of the voters approve to raise the levy cap above the current .75 per \$1000 of assessed property value.

As stated above, a senior property tax exemption does not completely eliminate property tax liabilities for seniors. That program only reduces property taxes. So you are mistaken when you said "the pool levy would not affect them". That is what the FOP wants you to believe, but that simply isn't true.

The fact is, a luxury pool levy will be taking much needed income away from seniors and other low income families here. Many do not qualify for that tax exemption if they're not seniors. If a seniors income is above the threshold for senior tax exemption program, no tax reduction..

Again to be perfectly clear, the senior program only lowers taxes, it does not eliminate them. Check with the county Assessor's Office for the facts if you don't believe me.

Let me give you an example how important money is to a senior citizen. During the last 6 months of my father's life here in the valley, he needed 24 hour care. We did not want to put my Dad in a nursing home, instead preferring that he lived out the rest of his life in his own home. His income was just above the \$35,000 threshold to receive a senior property tax exemption (reduction). With a \$12,000 per year home mortgage, that didn't leave much money for other critical needs.

We needed to hire home health care help to supplement the care we provided. He needed every penny of his

Social Security income and retirement pension in order to survive. And that's just to live in his own home and stay alive. That's how critical money is to a senior citizen.

That is just one example of how this luxury pool tax will be affecting low income people. Food insecurity is another i.e. being forced to buy lower quality food, to save money, which of course affects a persons health.

Please don't be Hoodwinked by the FOP Spin. A no vote does not put an end to a new pool here, as you have been misinformed, and does severely affect low income people.

And lets face it, this mega pool spa proposal is really to support the tourism industry here as ever more of our tax money is spent building more and more Disneyland rides.

At this stage of our seniors lives, money is truly our lifeblood. Disneyland can exist other places.

Chris,

From a former psychologist turned construction worker turned bee keeper.