

County to begin looking at tax hikes

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / August 7, 2026

The public could see a hike in the sales tax and legal cannabis growers might see an increase in the taxes they pay to help offset proposed funding cuts to Calaveras County's fire districts.

Those were two of the suggestions to emerge from county supervisors at the end of their July 28 board meeting.

The county's proposed budget, due to be finalized next month, reduces the fire district's previous 25 percent share of transient occupancy tax revenue and Proposition 172 funds by nearly \$800,000 and has sparked public outcry with a dozen people voicing their opposition to the cutbacks during the public comment portion of the July 28 board meeting.

Following the last public comment, Board Chairman Benjamin Stopper asked his colleagues whether they would consider a 10 percent increase in the tax on cannabis growers.

The adjustment to the tax would have to be in the form of an ordinance with four-fifth approval of the board.

Stopper said his proposal could raise an additional \$400,000 in revenue.

"We need some of that money to help cover our structural deficit," Stopper said. "Where that money goes will be decided in September."

He added, "Ten percent is a reasonable charge that will not kill the industry."

Supervisors agreed to consider Stopper's proposal at their Aug. 11 meeting.

District 4 Supervisor Amanda Folendorf said she would like to see "other opportunities for revenue" considered even if that means a sale tax increase.

"We need to look under every stone because we are in serious trouble," she said.

District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli said cuts were not only made in funding to the fire districts, but to every department in the county including the sheriff's office, district attorney's office, probation and public works.

The proposed cannabis tax hike was to be set for the Aug. 11 agenda, while the look at other revenue streams will be considered separately and possibly during a future meeting.

Marti Crane of Valley Springs, speaking during the public comment portion of the July 28 board meeting, said, "Most of the calls for assistance from our fire districts, 70 to 90 percent, are actually requests for medical and accident assistance." Many of those calls, she added, come from the county's elderly population.

"If people are seriously harmed or die because of your fire district revenue cuts, then mature, well-seasoned, people will spread the word," she said.

Tom Infusino from the Calaveras Planning Coalition reminded the board that three incumbent supervisors who served during the 2015 Butte Fire did not get re-elected in 2016.

"The moral to this story is that if you bungle a disaster, you don't get re-elected," he added.