

SALT LAKE CITY MOSQUITO ABATEMENT DISTRICT

2025 PROPOSED TAX INCREASE HEARING

19 December 2024

Presiding: Dr. Shireen Mooers, Chair

Time: 6:37 p.m.

Place: 2215 N 2200 W, Salt Lake City, UT 84116

Trustees Present: Dr. Shireen Mooers, Chair
Amanda Barth, Vice-Chair
Van Turner

Trustees Excused: Luz Escamilla
Neil Vickers, Ph.D.

Others Present: Ary Faraji, Ph.D., Executive Director
Gregory White, Ph.D., Assistant Director
Aleta Fairbanks, CPA, CFO
R. Bradley Sorensen, Aerial Operations Supervisor
Jose Davila, Salt Lake Tribune Reporter
Elizabeth Harris, Salt Lake City Resident
Courtney Henley, Salt Lake City Resident
Kevin Parke, Salt Lake City Resident

1. Roll Call:

Trustee Mooers called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m., roll call was taken, and no conflicts of interest were declared.

2. Proposed Property Tax Increase for 2025:

- **Explanation of Proposed Property Tax Increase:**

The Salt Lake City Mosquito Abatement District's main mission is to prevent mosquito-transmitted disease while being highly sensitive to protecting the

environment. Fulfilling our mission has become more and more challenging as the increasingly warmer temperatures cause the mosquito season to begin earlier and remain longer throughout each year.

Executive Director Faraji presented the public with an overview of the District's many services and goals. He highlighted the fact that we utilize Integrated Mosquito Management involving public education, training, research, surveillance, and larvicide / adulticide applications. His presentation covered all aspects of our operations and the dedicated efforts of the District to continually evaluate new formulations and methods of mosquito control to enhance our operations and maintain the environmental sustainability of the District. He discussed the various research projects, collaborations with academic and governmental entities, grantsmanship, training opportunities provided, and most importantly, what the District is planning for future-proofing our operations. As the demands for our services increase through population changes, development, climate change, insecticide resistance, and various other biotic/abiotic changes, funding for our operations has become a primary concern. In addition to seeking grant funding and negotiating an agreement with the State Prison, the District basically has only two mechanisms to increase revenues: new growth and undergoing a tax increase. New growth has only captured a 6.63% increase in revenues in the last three years, while the CPI has been documented at 19.4%. In order to keep up with the continually-rising costs of consumer goods, materials, equipment, services, etc., the District must undergo truth in taxation in order to maintain our current level of services while providing a minimal environmental impact with maximum efficacy and allowing flexibility for future scientific advances. Additional growth in services, through the acquisition of a helicopter for larvicide applications and second phase of construction will also have financial burdens on the District. Executive Director Faraji provided an overview of all these variables and discussed the financial forecasting provided by Zions Public Finance to guide the District in financial sustainability in the next few years. Executive Director Faraji concluded by reviewing the Truth in Taxation process and the financial burden on residents and businesses, should the tax increase be approved.

- **Comments from the Public:**

Kevin Parke, representing the Rose Park Community Council:

"I do understand that prices and the cost of everything have risen dramatically in the past several years. It seems that yet another tax increase just two years after receiving a 75% increase is excessive. I don't know of any families who received a 75% pay increase in 2022 to help them cope with the rising cost of inflation nor do I know families who will receive a 19 1/2% pay raise this coming year. We are always just asked to tighten our belts buy fewer drinks at Starbucks, etc.

An increasing amount of property on the west side of Salt Lake City is owned by entities other than the City. Mosquito abatement provides services to the inland port. And yet to my knowledge, they pay nothing towards this service. I would

encourage the board to reach an agreement requiring these entities pay their fair share before asking for more money from the hard-working taxpayers of Salt Lake City.”

Kevin Parke for Dr. Brian Moench, Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment:

“A few months ago, the CDC made an unprecedented recommendation that physicians consider testing their patients’ blood for PFAS or “forever” chemicals. That they have never made any such recommendation for any other toxic chemicals speaks volumes about the unprecedented danger of these chemicals. In 2022, EPA made stunningly strict drinking water guidelines for forever chemicals. For the two main categories of PFAS compounds they announced a limit of .02 ppt, and .004 ppt. That is the equivalent of one drop of water in a lake the size of six Rose Bowls, in another, one drop of water in a lake the size of 30 Roses Bowls.

Global contamination with PFAS now intersects with pesticide use because the evidence is overwhelming there is wholesale contamination of pesticides with PFAS chemicals, and many pesticides break down into still toxic, short chain PFAS type chemicals. Scientists from throughout the world are finding PFAS in many of the most commonly used pesticides. The presence of PFAS can be both intentional and inadvertent, i.e. intentionally incorporated into the active ingredient, as inactive ingredients used to enhance efficacy, or from leaching from storage containers. As a former EPA scientist, Kyla Bennett said, “If the intent was to spread PFAS contamination across the globe there would be few more effective methods than lacing pesticides with PFAS.”

There is already widespread PFAS pesticide contamination of every component of the global environment. Nearly 100% of humans carry PFAS in their blood in very disturbing amounts, including newborns, and pesticides are a major reason. Women, fetuses, infants, and children are more susceptible to the health hazards of pesticides and PFAS. European scientists said, “The extent of this contamination is shocking. It is a result of political failure at many levels.”

Now more than ever, the EPA’s allowing a pesticide on the market means next to nothing about its safety for human exposure. There is strong evidence that the mass use of pesticides is now a serious, global public health threat on an unprecedented level because of PFAS contamination.

We have been sending a letter signed by over 100 physicians and health care professionals to agency officials throughout Utah asking the state to do what Maine and Minnesota have done, which is ban the use of pesticides that are PFAS compounds. It is not a scientifically rational response to wait until the evidence of harm is even more overwhelming and irrefutable.

As a public health imperative, instead of asking the public for more money for

more business as usual pesticide spraying, SLCMAD should be altering their budget to fund routine testing of pesticides before they are used, the likely end result would be much less use of pesticides in the first place, to the benefit of everyone. Killing mosquitoes is not a more important public health goal than not exposing the public to ever more "forever chemicals."

Dr. Courtney Henley, Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment:

Dr. Henley stated that she doesn't allow poisons on her property, and she finds vacuuming up mosquitoes to be very effective. She is frustrated with the use of poisons to control insects. Perhaps the District could use more integrated methods rather than its tunnel vision of mosquito eradication by taking into account the public health burden and economic burden of using these different chemicals. It was an unpleasant surprise to learn that organophosphates are being used. These are weapons of war, and long-term exposure to them can cause a multitude of symptoms like those we are seeing in our dementia epidemic and other neurological disorders such as ADHD. This deserves a public discussion to decide if our personal health is more at risk from dementia or from encountering a virus from a mosquito bite.

Executive Director Faraji thanked Dr. Henley for her comments and reminded everyone that this meeting is a tax hearing in regards to the budget and potential tax increase. Comments should be limited to those topics. He invited her to meet with him individually to discuss all of her additional concerns. She then voiced her dislike of developing human habitations in the wetlands, such as taking tax dollars to develop the Inland Port and the Prison.

Elizabeth Harris, Salt Lake City Resident and Business Owner:

Ms. Harris is a pharmacist, and she is concerned about the financial burden the property taxes are having on businesses in her area. She has seen a lot of companies forced out of business and / or move to other states, such as Texas and Nevada. She asked the Trustees to postpone a tax increase one year.

An official letter was also provided to the Board from the Westside Coalition, dated 16 December 2024. A copy of this letter was included in the Board Packet and the Board will provide an official response back to the Westside Coalition in January.

The public was encouraged to schedule a time to come in and learn more about how our District utilizes our products and all of the studies we have conducted to determine actual human and non-target exposure to these chemicals.

- **Board Discussion:**

After input from the public, the Trustees conducted additional discussions.

Some comments are as follows: The District conducts an operation based on science, and it functions according to all local, state, and federal regulations. The Trustees ensure this undertaking is funded, runs well, and protects the public from mosquito-borne disease and discomfort. Salt Lake City's quality mosquito control is a good value and has consistently protected public health by keeping mosquito-borne diseases at very low rates. Also, service calls for individuals requiring personal assistance are provided at no extra cost to the citizens. We have conducted studies that have shown that our industry's insecticide exposure is nontoxic to humans because we use ultra-low volumes and rates of pesticide and strictly follow each product's usage labels. Our operations are at the mercy of climate change, weather patterns, and other factors, such as decisions made by the land owners and agriculture.

We received a letter from the Westside Coalition Board voicing their concerns about the tax increase. We appreciate receiving these comments and acknowledge the fact that the Westside Coalition asked several of the same questions we Board Members deliberated when discussing a tax increase. We want them to know that an agreement has been established with the State Prison to cover their mosquito abatements costs and the District has been pursuing additional income from grants. Our mission is similar to their mission to advocate for the health, safety, and quality of life of Salt Lake City residents. The District will reply to the Westside Coalition Board's correspondence by offering to attend one of their meetings and by also responding with a letter that addresses their comments and concerns.

3. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m. when Trustee Barth made a motion to close the Public Hearing on the 2025 Tax Increase Proposal. Trustee Vickers seconded the motion, and it was unanimously passed.

Ary Faraji, Executive Director

Date

Amanda Barth, Board Chair 2025

Date